

PIMA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE CATHERINE WOODS (R)

<u>POTENTIAL HITS FROM THE LEFT</u>	<u>POTENTIAL HITS FROM THE RIGHT</u>
• Woods Sided With The Conservative Goldwater Institute To Block A \$15 Million County-Backed Economic Development Deal.	• <u>N/A</u>

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- **Woods Received A Negative Judicial Performance Review In 2014, But Her Subsequent Reviews Improved.** In 2014, the Arizona Commission on Judicial Performance Review voted 22-7 that Woods did not meet judicial performance standards, making her one of two Arizona judges to receive a negative determination that cycle. The finding was published in the state's official voter guide. Woods was nevertheless retained with approximately 59% support, compared with 73% to 80% for the other Pima County Superior Court judges on the ballot. Woods subsequently received positive judicial performance evaluations and remains on the bench.
- **Woods's Judicial Record Does Not Show A Clear Partisan Pattern.** Woods issued mixed rulings in the Goldwater Institute's litigation over Pima County's \$15 million World View agreement, initially ruling against the county before later ruling for the county on a separate claim. She has also issued ballot-access decisions affecting candidates in different political circumstances, including removing a Democratic county supervisor candidate from the ballot in 2016 and keeping an independent Tucson City Council candidate on the ballot over a Democratic challenge in 2017.
- **Woods Issued Mixed Rulings In Litigation Over Pima County's \$15 Million World View Economic Development Deal.** Woods initially sided with the conservative Goldwater Institute and ruled that Pima County violated state requirements by entering a lease-purchase agreement for a publicly financed World View facility without first obtaining an appraisal, publishing notice, setting a minimum price, or holding a public auction. She later ruled for the county on a separate competitive-procurement claim.
- **Woods Was Appointed By Republican Gov. Jan Brewer, But Limited Evidence Of Woods's Personal Political Views Was Identified.** Brewer appointed Woods to the Pima County Superior Court in 2011 through Arizona's merit-selection process. Woods's current party registration was not reliably established, and no verified campaign website or political social-media account was identified.

JURISDICTION SUMMARY

Pima County is located in southern Arizona and includes Tucson, the county seat and Arizona's second-largest city. The county has generally favored Democratic candidates in recent federal and statewide elections.

In presidential elections, Hillary Clinton carried Pima County by about 14 points in 2016, Joe Biden by about 19 points in 2020, and Kamala Harris by about 15 points in 2024. The county has also supported Democratic candidates in competitive statewide races, including Katie Hobbs in the 2022 gubernatorial election.

Pima County Superior Court judges are selected through Arizona's merit-selection system. A judicial nominating commission recommends candidates to the governor, who makes the appointment. Judges subsequently face county voters in nonpartisan retention elections every four years rather than running against an opponent. Judge Catherine Woods was appointed to the Pima County Superior Court in 2011 and currently serves in Division 17. She is scheduled to face voters for retention in the November 2026 general election.

BACKGROUND

PERSONAL LIFE

Woods Graduated From The University Of Arizona College Of Law And University Of Michigan. "Woods is an attorney with Rusing & Lopez and focuses on professional malpractice and business litigation. She graduated from the UA College of Law and the University of Michigan. Bergin is an attorney with Lewis Brisbois & Smith and does a lot of insurance defense tort litigation." [[Arizona Daily Star](#), 9/10/2011]

PROFESSIONAL, CIVIC, LITIGATION, & PUBLIC SECTOR BACKGROUND

Woods Practiced Professional Malpractice And Business Litigation At Rusing & Lopez , PLLC Before Joining The Bench. "Woods is an attorney with Rusing & Lopez and focuses on professional malpractice and business litigation. She graduated from the UA College of Law and the University of Michigan. Bergin is an attorney with Lewis Brisbois & Smith and does a lot of insurance defense tort litigation." [[Arizona Daily Star](#), 9/10/2011]

2011: Republican Gov. Jan Brewer Appointed Woods To The Pima County Superior Court. "Gov. Jan Brewer announced replacements for retired Pima County Superior Court Judges Hector Campoy and Michael Cruikshank on Friday. Catherine Woods and Jeffrey Bergin 'possess the highest ethical standards and are well-respected by their peers in the legal community,' the governor said in a news release. 'Their legal expertise and commitment to serving the citizens of Pima County make them well-qualified to serve on the Pima County Superior Court.'" [[Arizona Daily Star](#), 9/10/2011]

Woods Previously Served On The Juvenile Bench And Currently Serves On The Criminal Bench. "Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Benjamin Norris, who currently serves on the

family-court *bench*, and Pima County Superior Court *Judge* Catherine Woods, a juvenile-court *judge*, were found to be below the state's Judicial Performance Review standards.” [[Arizona Republic](#), 10/21/2014] [[Pima County Superior Court](#), accessed, 8/11/2026]

Woods Has Served On The Arizona Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee.

Arizona Judicial Branch records list Woods as a member of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee, and meeting records document her participation in the committee. [[Arizona Judicial Branch](#), accessed, 8/12/2026]

2014 Judicial Performance Review

August 2014: The Arizona Commission On Judicial Performance Review Voted 22-7 That Woods Did Not Meet Judicial Performance Standards. “The last time a Superior Court *judge* was rated below standard was in 2008, but that *judge* also was retained. ‘That's why it's essential to vote these people out, so that it isn't a lifetime appointment,’ said Mark Harrison, a lawyer who specializes in attorney ethics. The *Arizona Performance Commission* on Judicial Retention has 30 members, including six *judges*, six attorneys and 18 public members who are neither attorneys nor *judges*. They evaluate the judicial performance reviews, which are conducted twice during each term. Mike Hellon, the *commission* chairman, said the reasons Norris and Woods were found *unfit* for the *bench* were decided during executive session and cannot be discussed. Hellon, a public member of the *commission*, said his own reading of the low evaluations had to do with their courtroom courtesy and demeanor. Page 2 of 2 Panel deems 2 judges unfit to be retained ‘I personally place a very high value on the notion that everyone who appears in court, regardless of the outcome, needs to walk out confident that his version of events has not just been heard by the *judge* but listened to,’ Hellon said. Norris was appointed to the Maricopa County *bench* in 2008 and first served as a juvenile-court *judge*. Before that he was an attorney in private practice and had been a U.S. Justice Department trial attorney. The commissioners voted 25 to 3 that Norris did not meet Judicial Performance Review standards. ‘I'm not aware of a *judge* ever getting 25 votes not to retain,’ said Hellon, who has been on the *commission* since 2005 and has been chairman for eight years. Woods has been a Pima County *judge* since 2011. The *commission* voted 22 to 7 that she did not meet standards.” [The Arizona Republic, 10/14/2014]

2014: The State Included Woods's Negative Finding In Its Official Voter Guide.

RESULTS OF THE COMMISSION'S VOTE ON THE PIMA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES

The following judges DO NOT MEET Judicial Performance Standards

Catherine M. Woods

The following judges MEET Judicial Performance Standards

Jeffrey T. Bergin
Christopher Browning
Javier Chon-Lopez
Charles Harrington
Danelle B. Liwski

James E. Marner
Richard D. Nichols
Kathleen A. Quigley
Kenneth C. Stanford

Judge	JPR Votes "Meets" Judicial Standards	JPR Votes "Does Not Meet" Judicial Standards	Did Not Vote	JPR Commission Member Did Not Vote on Self	Details JPR Page
Bergin, Jeffrey	29	0	0	0	52
Browning, Christopher	29	0	0	0	52
Chon-Lopez, Javier	29	0	0	0	52
Harrington, Charles	29	0	0	0	52
Liwski, Danelle	29	0	0	0	53
Marner, James	29	0	0	0	53
Nichols, Richard	29	0	0	0	53
Quigley, Kathleen	29	0	0	0	53
Stanford, Kenneth	29	0	0	0	54
Woods, Catherine	7	22	0	0	54

[[Arizona Secretary of State](#), accessed, 8/12/2026]

2014: Woods Was Retained With Approximately 59% Support. Pima County voters retained Woods, but she received substantially less support than the other Superior Court judges on the ballot. Woods received approximately 59%, while the other nine judges received between approximately 73% and 80%. [[Arizona Daily Star](#), accessed, 8/12/2026]

Woods Continued Serving After Her 2014 Retention. Woods remains on the Pima County Superior Court more than a decade after the negative evaluation and is listed for another retention election in 2026. [[Pima County Superior Court](#), accessed, 8/12/2026] [[Arizona Judicial Performance Review](#), accessed, 8/12/2026]

INTEGRITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

2024: A Federal Civil Rights Lawsuit Naming Woods Was Dismissed. A pro se plaintiff sued Woods and the Pima County Superior Court over judicial actions involving an order of protection, but the claims against Woods were dismissed with prejudice based on judicial immunity and related grounds. The lawsuit did not result in a finding of misconduct against Woods. [[Garza v. Pima County Superior Court](#), 12/4/2024]

POLITICAL AFFILIATION & ACTIVITY:

Ideology & Politics

2011: Republican Gov. Jan Brewer Appointed Woods To The Pima County Superior Court.

“Gov. Jan Brewer announced replacements for retired Pima County Superior Court Judges Hector Campoy and Michael Cruikshank on Friday. Catherine Woods and Jeffrey Bergin ‘possess the highest ethical standards and are well-respected by their peers in the legal community,’ the governor said in a news release. ‘Their legal expertise and commitment to serving the citizens of Pima County make them well-qualified to serve on the Pima County Superior Court.’” [[Arizona Daily Star](#), 9/10/2011]

Woods Was Identified As A Republican During The 2011 Judicial Appointment Process And Was Subsequently Appointed To The Pima County Superior Court By Republican Gov. Jan Brewer.

Cattani, Kent

From: Haney, Vanessa [VHaney@courts.az.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 26, 2011 3:27 PM
To: Baumstark, Mike; Byers, Dave; Davis, Norman; Human Resources - AOC; Joe Sciarrotta; Landau, Jerry; Liewer, Jennifer; Lundgren, Kathleen; Simmons, Sarah; Smith, Lorraine; Supreme Court; Tim Eigo; Williams, Henrietta
Subject: NEWS RELEASE: Judicial Nominees Announced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2011

Contact: Vanessa Haney
(602) 452-3308

JUDICIAL NOMINEES ANNOUNCED

The Pima County Commission on Trial Court Appointments has recommended four candidates to Governor Jan Brewer for two openings on the Pima County Superior Court.

Nominees for the opening created by the retirement of Judges Hector Campoy and Michael Cruikshank are **Jeffrey T. Bergin**, 48, Republican, a partner in the law firm of Lewis, Brisbois, Bisgaard and Smith; **Kenneth C. Stanford**, 55, Democrat, a Commissioner for the Pima County Superior Court; **Pamela A. Treadwell-Rubin**, 50, Democrat, a partner in the law firm of Goering, Roberts, Rubin, Brogna, Enos and Treadwell-Rubin, PC; and, **Catherine M. Woods**, 49, Republican, a partner in the law firm of Rusing and Lopez, PLLC.

Governor Brewer will make the appointments.

[[Arizona Superior Court Maricopa County](#), accessed, 8/17/2026] [[Arizona Daily Star](#), 9/10/2011]

Affiliation with political figures/organizations:

No findings of note

Partisan posts

No findings of note

Campaign Background & Infrastructure

Woods Faces A Nonpartisan Retention Vote Rather Than A Traditional Candidate Election.

Pima County Superior Court judges appear before voters in yes-or-no retention elections and do not face opposing candidates. Woods previously survived a 2014 retention vote with approximately 59% support despite receiving a negative Judicial Performance Review recommendation. ([Arizona Judicial Performance Review](#); [Arizona Daily Star](#))

Legal & Ethics

No findings of note

Endorsements

No findings of note

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

No findings of note

PERSONAL POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

No findings of note

WEALTH

No findings of note

ISSUES

DEMOCRACY & ELECTION STANCES:

2016: Woods Removed Democratic Candidate Jeff Farrell From The Pima County Board Of Supervisors Ballot. “U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva is one step closer to an unopposed re-election this year after his Republican challenger withdrew from the race Tuesday in Arizona's 3rd Congressional District. The only person challenging him on the ballot was Republican Edna San Miguel, who was in Pima County Superior Court Tuesday for a hearing to challenge her candidacy. She withdrew from the race. She asked the judge to allow her to run for the seat as a write-in candidate, but state law does not allow someone who has failed to qualify for the ballot for another reason to run as a write-in. San Miguel's withdrawal clears the race for Grijalva, D-Tucson, unless another candidate seeks the seat as a write-in before mid July. Other candidates

who sought political office this year also will not be on the ballot. In Pima County Superior Court Friday, Judge Catherine Woods removed Democrat Jeff Farrell from the ballot for the county Board of Supervisors in District 1. That leaves Brian Bickel as the only Democrat in the race. He will face the winner of the Republican primary between incumbent Ally Miller and challenger John Winchester.” [[Arizona Public Media](#), 6/22/2016]

- **June 2016: Woods Removed A Democratic Pima County Supervisor Candidate From The Ballot After A Challenge To His Nominating-Petition Signatures.**

Democrat Jeff Farrell faced a legal challenge to the signatures he submitted to qualify for the Pima County Board of Supervisors District 1 primary. After Farrell lost the signature challenge, Woods ordered him removed from the ballot, leaving Brian Bickel as the only Democratic candidate in the race. [[Arizona Daily Star](#), 6/23/2016]

2017: Woods Kept An Independent Tucson City Council Candidate On The Ballot Over A Democratic Challenge After The Validity Of His Petition Signatures. “Watson will face the winner of the Democratic Party primary, which includes candidates Felicia Chew, Paul Durham and Tom Tronsdal. Watson had filed 536 signatures at the deadline in May, but an analysis of his nominating petitions by the Pima County Recorder's Office found he was a single name short of the 377 valid signers required. The Pima County Democratic Party moved to have him barred from the ballot, with attorney Vince Rabago suing on behalf of Ward 3 voter Sheila Yamanaka. Watson had sought to run as a Republican, but the local party refused to back his campaign because of his support for the recently approved Proposition 101 sales tax increase to fund public safety and transportation projects. Although his campaign is yet so nascent that Watson represented himself in court, rather than hiring an attorney, the Democrats worked to clear the decks for their eventual general election candidate. There are no Republican or third-party candidates seeking the seat being vacated by Councilwoman Karin Uhlich. But, while the Dems have had frequent success with ballot challenges in previous elections, Watson successfully pressed his case before Superior Court Judge Catherine Woods. Watson, a firefighter for Northwest Fire District, found that while one of the signers of his petitions had been disqualified for having earlier signed a petition for Tronsdale, the signature on file with the Recorder's Office more closely matched the one on Watson's paperwork. Because voters can only sign a single petition for each office, the first valid signature is the one that is counted. Due to the matching issue, Woods ruled that the signature on Tronsdale's petitions was invalid, and that Watson had just reached the minimum number of necessary signers. Tronsdale's ballot status was unaffected. He filed 369 signatures in May, needing just 232 to earn a spot on the primary ballot.” [[Tucson Sentinel](#), 6/30/2017]

IDEOLOGY, RHETORIC & EXTREMISM SIGNALS

No findings of note

POLITICAL POWER

No findings of note

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY & ABUSE OF POWER

No findings of note

CORRUPTION & LEGAL

2018: Woods Ruled For Farmers Insurance In A Dispute Over Medical-Payment Coverage.

Woods dismissed Samuel Doneson's breach-of-contract, bad-faith, and related claims against Farmers after the insurer denied medical-payment benefits under a workers' compensation exclusion. The Arizona Court of Appeals affirmed Woods's ruling. [[Doneson v. Farmers Insurance Exchange](#), 10/3/2018]

2018: Woods Denied Class Certification In A Similar Insurance Dispute; The Decision Was Affirmed.

Cynthia Ferrara sought to represent a multistate class of insured individuals whose medical-payment claims had been denied by 21st Century based on a workers' compensation exclusion. Woods denied class certification after finding the proposed class failed to satisfy several Rule 23 requirements, and the Arizona Court of Appeals affirmed. [[Ferrara v. 21st Century North America Insurance Co.](#), 10/18/2018]

GOVERNANCE & COMPETENCE

2017: Woods Voided Pima County's \$15 Million World View Agreement After Finding The County Failed To Follow Requirements Governing Public Property.

“Judge ruled Thursday that Pima County violated state laws in not having its lease with World View appraised before signing an agreement to construct a facility for the high-altitude tech company. Judge Catherine Woods rules in favor of a Goldwater Institute lawsuit to block the lease. The building was completed at the end of December. The conservative think tank sued in April over the deal, approved last January, claiming that the county also violated state and county procurement codes, with World View paying below-market rent and no competitive bidding having been done. The Court finds that there exists no genuine dispute as to any material fact of Goldwater's suit, Woods wrote in her ruling, released Thursday. ‘Defendants did not obtain an appraisal of the land or building, publish notice of the proposed lease, set a minimum price, and/or hold a public auction prior to entering the Lease-Purchase Agreement with World View.’ Pima County had agreed to build a \$15 million office and manufacturing facility near Tucson International Airport and Raytheon Missile Systems for World View. The company will pay rent on the plant for two decades, with the county eventually slated to be repaid more than the construction costs and interest, officials have said. Arguing that such economic development efforts weren't subject to the restrictions noted in the legal complaint, the county had sought to have the suit dismissed, but Woods declined to toss it out in August.” [[Tucson Sentinel](#), 2/2/2017]

August 2016: Woods Allowed The Goldwater Institute's Lawsuit Challenging Pima County's World View Deal To Proceed. "The company will pay rent on the plant for two decades, with the county eventually slated to be repaid more than the construction costs and interest, officials have said. Arguing that such economic development efforts weren't subject to the restrictions noted in the legal complaint, the county had sought to have the suit dismissed, but Woods declined to toss it out in August." [[Tucson Sentinel](#), 2/2/2017]

February 2017: Woods Ruled That Pima County Violated State Law By Failing To Follow Required Procedures Before Leasing The World View Facility. "Judge ruled Thursday that Pima County violated state laws in not having its lease with World View appraised before signing an agreement to construct a facility for the high-altitude tech company. Judge Catherine Woods rules in favor of a Goldwater Institute lawsuit to block the lease. The building was completed at the end of December. The conservative think tank sued in April over the deal, approved last January, claiming that the county also violated state and county procurement codes, with World View paying below-market rent and no competitive bidding having been done. The Court finds that there exists no genuine dispute as to any material fact of Goldwater's suit, Woods wrote in her ruling, released Thursday. 'Defendants did not obtain an appraisal of the land or building, publish notice of the proposed lease, set a minimum price, and/or hold a public auction prior to entering the Lease-Purchase Agreement with World View.' Pima County had agreed to build a \$15 million office and manufacturing facility near Tucson International Airport and Raytheon Missile Systems for World View. The company will pay rent on the plant for two decades, with the county eventually slated to be repaid more than the construction costs and interest, officials have said. Arguing that such economic development efforts weren't subject to the restrictions noted in the legal complaint, the county had sought to have the suit dismissed, but Woods declined to toss it out in August." [[Tucson Sentinel](#), 2/2/2017]

Goldwater Framed Woods's Ruling As A Taxpayer-Protection Victory. "Pima County had agreed to build a \$15 million office and manufacturing facility near Tucson International Airport and Raytheon Missile Systems for World View. The company will pay rent on the plant for two decades, with the county eventually slated to be repaid more than the construction costs and interest, officials have said. Arguing that such economic development efforts weren't subject to the restrictions noted in the legal complaint, the county had sought to have the suit dismissed, but Woods declined to toss it out in August. 'Judge Woods' ruling protects Pima County taxpayers from having to foot the bill for World View's untested business model,' said Jim Manley, a Goldwater attorney. "Instead of relying on a sweetheart deal from taxpayers, World View will need to pay market rates to lease its building, just like every other business in Pima County.'" [[Tucson Sentinel](#), 2/2/2017]

World View Enterprises Was A High-Altitude Technology Company That Pima County Agreed To Support Through A \$15 Million Publicly Financed Facility. "Judge ruled Thursday that Pima County violated state laws in not having its lease with World View appraised before signing an agreement to construct a facility for the high-altitude tech company. Judge Catherine Woods rules in favor of a Goldwater Institute lawsuit to block the lease. The building

was completed at the end of December. The conservative think tank sued in April over the deal, approved last January, claiming that the county also violated state and county procurement codes, with World View paying below-market rent and no competitive bidding having been done. The Court finds that there exists no genuine dispute as to any material fact of Goldwater's suit, Woods wrote in her ruling, released Thursday. 'Defendants did not obtain an appraisal of the land or building, publish notice of the proposed lease, set a minimum price, and/or hold a public auction prior to entering the Lease-Purchase Agreement with World View.' Pima County had agreed to build a \$15 million office and manufacturing facility near Tucson International Airport and Raytheon Missile Systems for World View. The company will pay rent on the plant for two decades, with the county eventually slated to be repaid more than the construction costs and interest, officials have said. Arguing that such economic development efforts weren't subject to the restrictions noted in the legal complaint, the county had sought to have the suit dismissed, but Woods declined to toss it out in August." [[Tucson Sentinel](#), 2/2/2017]

2017: Woods Ruled For Tucson In A Damages Lawsuit Stemming From A Public-Records Dispute, But Her Decision Was Based On Timeliness Rather Than The Underlying Transparency Allegations. Cecilia Cruz sued Tucson officials after an earlier public-records case in which a court found the city had intentionally obstructed her records request and made false representations to the court. Woods granted summary judgment to the city after finding Cruz's subsequent notice of claim and lawsuit untimely; the Arizona Court of Appeals affirmed. ([Cruz v. City of Tucson](#), 8/1/17)

2016: Woods Made Findings Against A Sheriff's Deputy In A Police-K9 Use-Of-Force Case. In litigation involving Brian McDonald, Woods wrote that there was no evidence McDonald behaved aggressively or reached for a weapon before a Pima County sheriff's deputy used a police dog to apprehend him. A jury subsequently awarded McDonald \$617,500 plus legal fees. ([KGUN9](#), 4/18/16)

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

No findings of note