Homicide in Alaska

While the rate of homicide in the nation as a whole has remained fairly constant since 1975, in Alaska the rate per 100,000 people has fluctuated dramatically. At times it has been much higher than the overall national rate, but in recent years it has tended to be lower. Table 1 presents totals of homicides reported, rates per 100,000 and population figures for the country, Alaska, Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. Figure 1 reveals the pattern of homicide rates since 1975 for the nation, Alaska and Anchorage.

In 1975, nationwide, 20,505 homicides (classified as murder and nonnegligent manslaughter in the FBI Uniform Crime Reports) were reported—a rate of 9.6 per 100,000. In 1982, when 81 homicides resulted in a rate of 8.8 per 100,000. The 8 additional homicides reported in 1978 caused the rate to rise to 12.9. Nationwide, the 19,121 murders in 1977 resulted in a rate of 8.8, while in 1978 the 19,555 homicides caused the rate to rise only to 9.0.

Please see Homicide in Alaska, page 6

Table 1. Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter in Alaska, 1975-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Anchorage Population</th>
<th>Murders</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Fairbanks Population</th>
<th>Murders</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Juneau Population</th>
<th>Murders</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Alaska overall Population</th>
<th>Murders</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Nationwide Population</th>
<th>Murders</th>
<th>Rate</th>
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<td>382,000</td>
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<td>9.1</td>
<td>262,755,000</td>
<td>21,597</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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</table>


** Population figures were not given for years in which no murders or nonnegligent manslaughters were reported.

In 1995, 56 persons were executed in the United States. The number of persons executed was 25 greater than in 1994. It was the largest annual number since the 56 executed in 1960 and the 65 in 1957. The executions occurred in the following states: 19 in Texas; 6 in Missouri; 5 each in Illinois and Virginia; 3 each in Florida and Oklahoma; 2 each in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania; and 1 each in Arizona, Delaware, Louisiana, Montana, and South Carolina. All were men. Thirty of the executed prisoners were non-Hispanic whites; 22 were non-Hispanic blacks; 2, white Hispanics; 1, Asian; and 1, white with Hispanic origin not identified. Forty-nine of the executions were carried out by lethal injection and 7 by electrocution.

The prisoners executed during 1995 had been under sentence of death an average of 11 years and 2 months, about 12 months more than the average for inmates executed the previous year.

From January 1, 1977, to December 31, 1995, a total of 4,857 persons entered state and federal prisons under sentences of death, among whom 51 per cent were white, 41 per cent were black, 7 per cent were Hispanic, and 1 per cent were of other races.

During this 19-year period, a total of 313 executions took place in 26 states. Of the inmates executed, 171 were white, 120 were black, 19 were Hispanic, 2 were Native American, and 1 was Asian.

Also during 1977–95, 1,870 prisoners were removed from a death sentence as a result of dispositions other than execution (resentencing, retrial, commutation, or death while awaiting execution). Of all prisoners removed from under a death sentence, 52 per cent were white, 41 per cent were black, 1 per cent were Native American, 0.5 per cent were Asian, and 5 per cent were Hispanic.

In 1995 eight jurisdictions did not specify a minimum age for which the death penalty

| Table 1. Status of the Death Penalty, December 31, 1995 |
| Executions during 1995 | Number of prisoners under sentence of death |
| Texas 19 | California 420 |
| Missouri 6 | Texas 404 |
| Illinois 5 | Florida 362 |
| Virginia 5 | Pennsylvania 196 |
| Florida 3 | Ohio 155 |
| Oklahoma 3 | Illinois 154 |
| Alabama 2 | Alabama 143 |
| Arkansas 2 | North Carolina 139 |
| Georgia 2 | Oklahoma 129 |
| North Carolina 2 | Arizona 117 |
| Pennsylvania 2 | Georgia 98 |
| Arizona 2 | Tennessee 96 |
| Delaware 1 | Missouri 92 |
| Louisiana 1 | 22 other jurisdictions 549 |
| Montana 1 | |
| South Carolina 1 | |
| Total 56 | Total 3,054 |

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

| Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Prisoners Under Sentence of Death, 1995 |
| Characteristics | Yearend | Admissions | Removals |
| Number of prisoners | 3,054 | 310 | 161 |
| Sex | Male 98.4% | Female 1.6% |
| Race | White 56.6% | Black 41.7% |
| Hispanic origin | Hispanic 8.5% | Non-Hispanic 91.5% |
| Education | 8th grade or less 14.7% | 9th-11th grades 37.2% |
| Marital status | Married 25.6% | Divorced/separated 21.6% |
| Note: Calculations are based on those cases for which data were reported. Missing data by category were as follows: Hispanic origin 257, Education 422, Marital status 247. |

* At yearend 1995, “other” consisted of 24 Native Americans, 17 Asians, and 8 self-identified Hispanics. During 1995, 4 Asians were admitted; 2 Native Americans and 2 Asians were removed.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Figure 1. Persons Executed in the United States, 1930–1995
could be imposed. In some states the minimum age was set forth in the statutes that determine the age at which a juvenile may be transferred to criminal court for trial as an adult. Thirteen states and the federal system required a minimum age of 18; one state, age 19. Sixteen states indicated an age of eligibility between 14 and 17. The preceding article was derived from Bureau of Justice Statistics report “Capital Punishment 1995,” NCJ-162043. Copies of the entire report may be obtained from the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit or on the World Wide Web from the Bureau of Justice Statistics web site at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/.

Recent BJS Reports
In addition to the report summarized in the accompanying article, the following recent studies and reports from the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available from the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit or on the World Wide Web at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/ or http://www.ncjrs.org/:

“Felony Sentences in State Courts, 1994,” data from a biannual survey by the National Judiciary Reporting Program, NCJ-163391.


“Female Victims of Violent Crime,” data on the incidence of violence against women derived from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the Uniform Crime Reporting System, NCJ-162602.


“Juvenile Delinquents in the Federal Criminal Justice System,” analysis of data on juveniles charged or prosecuted in 1995 in the federal system, NCJ-163066.

“Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1996,” summary data on incarceration in state and federal prisons, NCJ-162843.

“Presale Firearm Checks,” data on background checks since the enactment of the Brady Bill, NCJ-162787.

“Campus Law Enforcement Agencies, 1995,” an examination of crime and law enforcement at colleges and universities throughout the country, NCJ-161137.

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Capital Offenses, by State, 1995

**Alabama.** Intentional murder with 18 aggravating factors (13A-5-40).

**Arizona.** First-degree murder accompanied by at least 1 of 10 aggravating factors.

**Arkansas.** Capital murder with a finding of at least 1 of 9 aggravating circumstances (Ark. Code Ann. 5-10-101); treason.

**California.** First-degree murder with special circumstances; train wrecking; treason; perjury causing execution.

**Colorado.** First-degree murder with at least 1 of 13 aggravating factors; treason. Capital sentencing excludes persons determined to be mentally retarded.

**Connecticut.** Capital felony with 9 categories of aggravated homicide (C.G.S. 53a-54b).

**Delaware.** First-degree murder with aggravating circumstances.

**Florida.** First-degree murder; felony murder; capital drug-trafficking.

**Georgia.** Murder; kidnapping with bodily injury or ransom where the victim dies; aircraft hijacking; treason.

**Idaho.** First-degree murder; aggravated kidnapping.

**Illinois.** First-degree murder with 1 of 15 aggravating circumstances.

**Indiana.** Murder with 14 aggravating circumstances. Capital sentencing excludes persons determined to be mentally retarded.

**Kansas.** Capital murder with 7 aggravating circumstances. Capital sentencing excludes persons determined to be mentally retarded.

**Kentucky.** Murder with aggravating factors; kidnapping with aggravating factors.

**Louisiana.** First-degree murder; aggravated rape of victim under age 12; treason (La. R.S. 14:30, 14:42, and 14:113).

**Maryland.** First-degree murder, either premeditated or during the commission of a felony, provided that certain death eligibility requirements are satisfied.

**Mississippi.** Capital murder; capital rape; aircraft piracy.

**Missouri.** First-degree murder (565.020 RSMO).

**Montana.** Capital murder with aggravating circumstances.

**Nebraska.** First-degree murder.

**Nevada.** First-degree murder with 10 aggravating circumstances.

**New Hampshire.** Capital murder.

**New Jersey.** Purposeful or knowing murder; contract murder; murder solicitation thereof by a leader of a narcotics trafficking network.

**New Mexico.** First-degree murder (Section 30-2-1 A, NMSA).

**New York.** First-degree murder with 1 of 10 aggravating factors. Capital sentencing excludes persons determined to be mentally retarded.

**North Carolina.** First-degree murder (N.C.G.S. 14-17).

**Ohio.** Aggravated murder with 1 of 8 aggravating circumstances (O.R.C. secs. 2929.01, 2903.01, 2929.04).

**Oklahoma.** First-degree murder in conjunction with a finding of at least 1 of 8 statutorily defined aggravating circumstances.

**Oregon.** Aggravated murder (ORS 163.095).

**Pennsylvania.** First-degree murder with 16 aggravating circumstances.

**South Carolina.** Murder 1 of 10 aggravating circumstances.

**South Dakota.** First-degree murder with 1 of 10 aggravating circumstances.

**Tennessee.** First-degree murder.

**Texas.** Criminal homicide with 1 of 8 aggravating circumstances.

**Utah.** Aggravated murder; aggravated assault by a prisoner serving a life sentence if serious bodily injury is intentionally caused (76-5-202, Utah Code Annotated).

**Virginia.** First-degree murder with 1 of 9 aggravating circumstances.

**Washington.** Aggravated first-degree murder.

**Wyoming.** First-degree murder.
The Death Penalty: An International Perspective

According to Amnesty International, during 1995 at least 2,931 individuals were executed throughout the world and 4,165 sentenced to death. These figures include only those known to Amnesty International; the actual figures are probably higher. Three countries were responsible for 86 per cent of the executions: China, 2,535; Saudi Arabia, 192; and Nigeria, over 100.

Since 1990, five countries are known to have executed individuals who were younger than 18 at the time of the crime: Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Yemen. The largest number of known executions of juvenile offenders was in the United States — 6 since 1990.

According to Amnesty International, over half the nations in the world have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice. By October 1996, 58 countries and territories had abolished the death penalty completely, and 15 had abolished it for all but exceptional crimes such as certain crimes committed during time of war. Twenty-six countries retained the death penalty in law but had not invoked it for the past ten years or had made an international commitment.

### Table 1. Countries Which Have Abolished the Death Penalty, 1996

Countries and territories whose laws do not provide for the death penalty for any crime (58 countries).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of last execution</th>
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<th>Date abolished for all crimes</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1992</td>
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<td>Monaco</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1988 *</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palau</td>
<td>1903 *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1849 *</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marino</td>
<td>1468 *</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sao Tome and Principe</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican City State</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Countries whose laws provide for the death penalty only for exceptional crimes, such as crimes under military law or crimes committed in exceptional circumstances such as wartime (15 countries).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of last execution</th>
<th>Date abolished for ordinary crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1979 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Date of last known execution.
** The last execution in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic took place in 1988; the death penalty was abolished there in 1990. On January 1, 1993 the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic divided into two states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.
*** The last execution in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) took place in 1949; the death penalty was abolished there in 1949. The date of the last execution in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is not known; the death penalty was abolished there in 1987. The FRG and the GDR were unified in October 1990.
**** No executions since independence.

now revoked it for all crimes. Over the same period four countries reintroduced capital punishment, but one of these four again abolished it. Several international treaties prohibit the execution of anyone who was younger than 18 at the time of the offense: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the American Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. More than 100 countries have specifically prohibited the execution of juveniles or have signed one of these treaties, indicating acceptance of the prohibition.

not to carry out executions. In October 1996, 95 countries retained and continued to use the death penalty. Since 1985 over 25 countries have legally abolished the death penalty or, having abolished it previously for ordinary crimes, have now revoked it for all crimes. Over the same period four countries reintroduced capital punishment, but one of these four again abolished it.

Several international treaties prohibit the execution of anyone who was younger than 18 at the time of the offense: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the American Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. More than 100 countries have specifically prohibited the execution of juveniles or have signed one of these treaties, indicating acceptance of the prohibition.
Homicide in Alaska (continued from page 1)

The rates for homicide in Anchorage also fluctuated dramatically between 1975 and 1995, from a high of 13.3 per 100,000 in 1978 when 16 murders were reported to a low of 4.4 in 1991 with 10 homicides reported. Like the rates for Alaska as a whole, Anchorage rates have been both higher and lower than the national rates, but as Figure 1 reveals, the pattern for the Anchorage homicide rate shows an overall decline over the twenty years for which data are presented.

According to Alaska Department of Public Safety figures, murder is the least common of violent crimes. Over the ten years from 1986 through 1995, murder ranged from a low 0.8 per cent of all violent crime in 1994 to a high of 2.2 per cent in 1987.

Murder Victim-Offender Relationship

Murder by a stranger is not as frequent an occurrence as is commonly believed. As Table 2 shows, homicides in which the victim is known to the offender are, in general, much more common in Alaska than homicides committed by strangers. For all ten years for which data are presented, murders committed by family members or acquaintances, when the relationship of the victim to the offender could be determined, outnumber those committed by strangers. Even if it were assumed that all cases in which the victim-offender relationship is not reported were, in fact, murders by strangers, only in one year—1994—would stranger murders outnumber those committed by family members or acquaintances.

Murder Weapons

Handguns or other firearms were the most common murder weapons over the period from 1986 through 1995. In 1986, firearms totaled 69.4 per cent of murder weapons; in 1987, 61 per cent; in 1988, 62 per cent; in 1989, 61 per cent; in 1990, 51 per cent; in 1991, 44.5 per cent; in 1992, 61.3 per cent; in 1993, 48.3 per cent; in 1994, 64.9 per cent; and in 1995, 56 per cent.

Table 2. Relationship of Victim to Offender for Murders and Nonnegligent Manslaughters in Alaska, 1986-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family member</th>
<th>Outside family but known to victim</th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Relationship unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>6 12.2%</td>
<td>27 55.1%</td>
<td>6 12.2%</td>
<td>10 20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>11 21.6%</td>
<td>31 60.8%</td>
<td>3 5.9</td>
<td>6 11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>9 27.3%</td>
<td>18 54.5%</td>
<td>3 9.1</td>
<td>3 9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>12 27.9%</td>
<td>21 48.8%</td>
<td>8 18.6</td>
<td>2 4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>11 29.7%</td>
<td>18 48.6%</td>
<td>6 16.2</td>
<td>2 5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>11 24.4%</td>
<td>21 46.7%</td>
<td>8 17.8</td>
<td>5 11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6 13.6%</td>
<td>22 50.0%</td>
<td>5 11.4</td>
<td>11 25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>6 11.5%</td>
<td>22 42.3%</td>
<td>10 19.2</td>
<td>14 26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2 5.4%</td>
<td>15 40.5%</td>
<td>11 29.7</td>
<td>9 24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>10 18.2%</td>
<td>25 45.5%</td>
<td>10 18.2</td>
<td>10 18.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Row percentages.

Source of data: Crime Reported in Alaska, Uniform Crime Reporting, Alaska Department of Public Safety, 1985-1995
Homicide as a Cause of Death

Looking at homicide in the context of all causes of death also reveals its relative infrequency. According to figures reported by the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, in 1994—the last year for which data have been assembled—homicide ranked as the ninth most frequent cause of death in Alaska (ninth in the U.S.) in 1994, and accidents ranked third (fifth in U.S.).

Cancer and heart disease, which claimed 534 and 566 victims respectively, were the first and second leading causes of death in Alaska in 1994. Three hundred nineteen individuals committed suicide.

Table 3 presents the various subdivisions of the overall category of accidents. The numbers included in these subcategories reveal that several types of accidental death—motor vehicle accidents, drowning, and air transport accidents—were also more frequent in Alaska in 1994 than death by homicide.

Table 4. Causes of Death by Accidents and Adverse Effects in Alaska, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause of death</th>
<th>Number of deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other road vehicle</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water transport—drowning</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water transport—other</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non—transport—drowning</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air transport</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisoning</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complications resulting from medical procedure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire/burns</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors—heat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors—cold</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors—other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffocation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other accidents</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>387</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1998–99 Judicial Fellows Program

The Judicial Fellows Commission has opened its application process for the 1998–99 Judicial Fellows Program. The Program, established in 1973 and patterned after the White House and Congressional Fellowships, seeks individuals from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds who are interested in the administration of justice and who show promise of making a contribution to the judiciary.

Up to four Fellows will be chosen to spend a year, beginning in late August or early September 1998, in Washington, D.C. at the Supreme Court of the United States, the Federal Judicial Center, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, or the United States Sentencing Commission. Candidates must be familiar with the federal judicial system and have at least one postgraduate degree and two or more years of successful professional experience. Fellowship stipends are based on salaries for comparable government work and on individual salary histories, but will not exceed the GS 15, step 3 level, presently $78,857.

Information about the program is available from:

Vanessa M. Yarnell
Administrative Director
Judicial Fellows Program
Supreme Court of the United States
Room 5
Washington, DC 20543
(202) 479-3415

The application deadline is November 15, 1997.