

20-311d. Change of judge; procedure; grounds. (a) If a party or a party's attorney believes that the judge to whom an action is assigned cannot afford that party a fair trial in the action, the party or attorney may file a motion for change of judge. The motion shall not state the grounds for the party's or attorney's belief. The judge shall promptly hear the motion informally upon reasonable notice to all parties who have appeared in the case. If the judge disqualifies the judge's self, the action shall be assigned to another judge by the chief judge. If the judge refuses to disqualify the judge's self, the party seeking a change of judge may file the affidavit provided for in subsection (b). If an affidavit is to be filed it shall be filed immediately.

(b) If a party or a party's attorney files an affidavit alleging any of the grounds specified in subsection (c), the chief judge shall at once determine, or refer the affidavit to another district judge for prompt determination of, the legal sufficiency of the affidavit. If the affidavit is filed in a district court in which there is no other judge who is qualified to hear the matter, the chief judge shall at once notify the departmental justice for the district and request the appointment of another district judge to determine the legal sufficiency of the affidavit. If the affidavit is found to be legally sufficient, the case shall be assigned to another judge.

(c) Grounds which may be alleged as provided in subsection (b) for change of judge are that:

- (1) The judge has been engaged as counsel in the action prior to the appointment or election as judge.
- (2) The judge is otherwise interested in the action.
- (3) The judge is related to either party to the action.
- (4) The judge is a material witness in the action.
- (5) The party or the party's attorney filing the affidavit has cause to believe and does believe that on account of the personal bias, prejudice or interest of the judge such party cannot obtain a fair and impartial trial or fair and impartial enforcement of post-judgment remedies. Such affidavit shall state the facts and the reasons for the belief that bias, prejudice or an interest exists.

(d) In any affidavit filed pursuant to this section, the recital of previous rulings or decisions by the judge on legal issues or concerning the legal sufficiency of any prior affidavits filed by counsel for a party in any judicial proceeding, or filed by such counsel's law firm, pursuant to this section, shall not be deemed legally sufficient for any belief that bias or prejudice exists.

History: L. 1971, ch. 198, § 3; L. 1972, ch. 97, § 1; L. 1973, ch. 130, § 1; L. 1978, ch. 110, § 1; L. 1985, ch. 104, § 1; L. 1986, ch. 115, § 34; L. 1999, ch. 57, § 15; July 1.