You created a resume for me in May 2014 (I got the job, thanks!). Is your company offering ALJ application assistance again this year? As I’m sure you’ve heard, OPM will be reopening testing within the next few months.”

The Resume Place was invaluable in my preparations for becoming an ALJ. They made the process simple and helped me understand exactly what OPM is looking for. Resume writing and assistance with the essays was invaluable. But the coaching was probably the most beneficial, as it prepared me for every stage in the ALJ application process. Thank you, Nicole!”

“The ALJ Writing Guide simplified the process for me. As a lawyer, there are so many things that you can write about yourself. But the ALJ Writing Guide walks you through each step, breaking down examples of what OPM is looking for in the ALJ application process. I could not have successfully completed the ALJ application process without this invaluable tool.”

“Developing strong narratives to address the competencies and document your experience is not something we do every day. The narratives account for 50 points of your score and you need at least 40 to get on the register. You need around 60 points to be competitive. You are two-thirds of the way there if your narratives are good. A competitive written application is the only part of the process under your exclusive control. Don’t waste time – getting the help you need can be a deciding factor. The coaching will give you confidence as you go through the remaining process. Do yourself a favor. Do your loved ones a favor (you will torture them less if you get professional help). Retaining the coaching services of The Resume Place was the best money I spent on the process.”

“I will recommend your services to EVERYONE. You have been great.”

“I really appreciate your excellent advice and efficiency in helping me.”

“I want to thank you for everything. If I get invited for an interview, it will only be because of your hard work and expertise! … I was blessed to get the best!”
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The ALJ qualification requirements include:

- A full seven (7) years of experience as a licensed attorney preparing for, participating in, and/or reviewing formal hearings or trials involving litigation and/or administrative law at the Federal, State or local level;

- A professional license and authorization to practice law under the laws of a State, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or any territorial court established under the U.S. Constitution; and

- Passing OPM’s competitive examination process, during which the competencies essential to performing the work of an ALJ are tested.

What serves as qualifying experience? Per OPM, the types of cases handled must have been conducted on the record under procedures at least as formal as those prescribed by the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), set forth in 5 U.S.C. §§ 553–559. This would include cases heard pursuant to the very similar Model State Administrative Procedure Act (Model State APA).

The requisite experience can be gained in handling cases in which a complaint is filed with a court, or a charging document (e.g., indictment or information) was issued by a court, a grand jury, or appropriate military authority, and includes:

- Participating in settlement or plea negotiations in advance of trial;
- Preparing for trial and/or participating in trial of cases;
- Preparing opinions;
- Hearing cases;
- Participating in or conducting arbitration, mediation, or other alternative dispute resolution process approved by the court; or
- Participating in appeals related to the types of cases above.
JAMES CHARLEMAGNE
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U.S. Citizen • Selective Service Registered

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

MAGISTRATE 01/2007–Present
County Common Pleas Court, Miles, Iowa 12345 $75,000/yr
Contact Supervisor: Yes, Hon. W. Wyatt Earp, 515.123.4567 40+ hrs/wk

PRESIDE OVER 60+ HEARINGS AND TRIALS ON THE RECORD and MANAGE A DOCKET of 600+ CASES PER YEAR as a trial court magistrate in a court with general jurisdiction. Also, hear and decide preliminary motions, discovery motions, motions to exclude, summary judgment motions, motions concerning the admission of expert testimony, dispositive motions, motions concerning the jury, and post trial motions.

RESEARCH/ANALYZE ISSUES OF LAW AND FACT; MAKE BINDING DECISIONS. Review briefs, research law, interpret and apply statutes, regulations and codes, decide cases, and enter 300+ judgments per year on disputed matters for the Court. Analyze and interpret complex matters in both civil and criminal cases. Render clear oral and written decisions in sometimes highly difficult and contentious disputes.

POSSESS A COMPOSED AND PROFESSIONAL JUDICIAL TEMPERAMENT. Preside over difficult cases while maintaining a professional demeanor; at all times preserve the decorum of the courtroom, free of personal and societal prejudices and consistent with my judicial authority. Handle rancorous or emotionally difficult issues with calmness and compassion for the lives and interests at stake. Through effective dispute resolution techniques, I mediate and settle 300+ cases per year.

JUDICIAL MANAGEMENT includes personal injury, worker’s compensation, real estate foreclosures, collections, breaches of contracts, judgment enforcement, zoning, and election disputes. Manage my own docket of general civil cases referred under Iowa Civil Rule 53 for disposition by trial.

Representative Accomplishments:

• RESOLVED LARGE COMMERCIAL LEASE DISPUTE between 2 nationwide corporations; 1,000 jobs were at stake. Sub-lessee of former retail property earned profits not properly accounted for in rent when payments were made. Following major ruling for landlord, presided over settlement talks leading to sale of property to tenant and preservation of 1,000 jobs in region with depressed local economy.

• PRESIDED OVER 1,000+ HOME FORECLOSURES in County Common Pleas Court. Successfully mediated 100s of cases involving homeowners unable to pay mortgages. Mediations have provided diverse, distressed community members a second chance at homeowner.

• RENDERED WELL-ANALYZED TRIAL COURT OPINION IN COMPLEX CASE. Held that new collateral source abrogation statute did not overrule prior cases limiting medical expenses to amounts actually accepted in full payment for medical services because the statute did not address evidence of write-offs by providers. My approach was subsequently adopted by Iowa’s Supreme Court.

• REWROTE RULES OF COURT for County Common Pleas Court governing the procedures applicable to the 1,500 real estate foreclosures filed each year, following adoption of new Iowa state law.
In 2013, applicants who cleared the qualifications screening were next required to participate in multi-part online testing. This consisted of a Situational Judgment Test (SJT), which was avatar-driven, an online Writing Sample (WR), and a multiple choice Experience Assessment (EA). The highest-scoring applicants, based on those who completed the online testing, were next invited to participate in an onsite, proctored exam. This included a Written Demonstration (WD) and a Logic-Based Measurement Test (LBMT). This was followed, on the next day, by a Structured Interview.

This was a much more complicated process than that employed in 2009, although in 2009, the application process itself was much more onerous. The purpose of the new, multi-phase process was to better evaluate applicants’ competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities), essential to choosing high-quality, hard-working ALJs who would be accountable for producing high volumes of quality decisions, principally at the Social Security Administration.

Six (6) competencies were evaluated in the 2009 ALJ exam. The 2013 announcement expanded this list to thirteen (13):

- Decision Making*
- Interpersonal Skills*
- Judicial Analysis*
- Judicial Decisiveness
- Judicial Management*
- Judicial Temperament
- Litigation and Courtroom Competence
- Oral Communication*
✦ Problem Solving
✦ Professionalism
✦ Reasoning
✦ Self-Management
✦ Writing*

*Included and defined in 2009

The 2009 announcement expressly defined the six (6) competencies, and required accomplishment narratives dedicated to each of them as part of the application process. In contrast, the 2013 ALJ announcement failed to define any of the competencies, and narratives addressing them were not required, at least not as part of the initial application.

No one can predict with certainty what form the 2016 ALJ announcement will take. Nevertheless, it is worth studying these competencies and reflecting upon one’s specific accomplishments and experiences—ones that are probative of the candidate’s potential to perform well as an ALJ.

As an actual candidate, beyond merely thinking about these competencies, take time to write down your recent, relevant career achievements and pro bono accomplishments. In what manner are they probative of your own propensity to perform well as an ALJ? These written examples may be used to

✦ Craft accomplishment summaries for your ALJ resume;
✦ Prepare accomplishment narratives in preparation for an online exam;
✦ Draft accomplishment narratives for extended competency writing if required in the 2016 announcement; and/or
✦ Prepare accomplishment stories for your Structured Interview.

For each example, provide a general statement of the situation or circumstances (Challenge/Legal Context). Describe exactly what you did, including how you addressed challenging aspects of the situation or problem (Actions). Finally, describe the outcome (Results). Applicable to nearly all civilian agencies’ hiring and performance evaluation processes, across the Federal government, this is known as “CCAR” or accomplishment writing. On the Resume Place website, at http://www.resume-place.com/resources/ccar-builder/, you will find a tool that facilitates accomplishment writing using the CCAR format. Under the “Results” category, make sure to include client outcomes as well as institutional or organizational outcomes.

Here is an example:
Administrative Law Judges (ALJ) serve as independent impartial triers of fact in formal proceedings requiring a decision on the record after the opportunity for a hearing. In general, ALJs prepare for and preside at formal hearings required by statute to be held under or in accordance with provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), codified in relevant part, in sections 553–559 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). ALJs rule on preliminary motions, conduct pre-hearing conferences, issue subpoenas, conduct hearings (which may include written and/or oral testimony and cross-examination), review briefs, and prepare and issue decisions, along with written findings of fact and conclusions of law.

The Federal Government employs ALJs in a number of agencies throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Cases may involve Federal laws and regulations in such areas as admiralty, advertising, antitrust, banking, communications, energy, environmental protection, food and drugs, health and safety, housing, immigration, interstate commerce, international trade, labor management relations, securities and commodities markets, social security disability and other benefits claims, and transportation.

Individuals who wish to apply for a position as an ALJ with the Federal Government should read this ALJ Job Opportunity Announcement in its entirety before preparing an application. Applicants must meet all the qualifications requirements for an ALJ position as described in this announcement.

OPM reserves the right to verify information provided by the applicant during the examination process and through any part of the selection process. Information that cannot be verified may result in
Appendix C

Frequently Asked Questions

When will the ALJ Announcement be posted?
The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, which passed on November 2, 2015, requires the testing to begin no later than April 1, 2016. Although the announcement could be posted anytime, there will probably be at least a 2-week warning. In 2009, a press release was issued nearly two weeks in advance. In 2013, OPM released news of the upcoming announcement approximately one month ahead of time. The 2016 OPM news release will likely be posted here: https://www.opm.gov/news/latest-news/.

Do I need prior judicial experience?
No. Most ALJs were not judges beforehand, although former state and local judges do well in the process. Perhaps half of all Social Security ALJs have no prior SSA experience, but statistics suggest roughly half come into the process from ODAR or from the private disability bar. To debunk another myth, no political connections are required. ALJs are the only U.S. judges appointed solely on merit. They are rated and ranked based on the information provided in the published exam process.

Will the exam close after a certain number of applications are received?
When the announcement is posted, the application will be open for the designated period of time. In 2013, OPM advised that the number of applications would not be limited as in prior years. Instead, all applications received within the specified filing period were processed. In comparison, only 600 applications were allowed in 2008, and that number was reached on the second day the announcement was posted. In 2009, 700 applications were received in 30 hours. As of this writing, it is not yet known how long the new announcement will remain open.
Your accomplishment cannot exceed one page in length. To ensure consistency in the length requirements of documents, the sample MUST be in a 12-point font, single spaced. Any additional information beyond one page will not be evaluated.

In your response, follow these important guidelines as you write your accomplishment. Include the following information:

• Describe the SITUATION – a general statement of the situation or circumstances surrounding what you accomplished/achieved (i.e., the challenge faced, the problem to be solved, or the objective to be achieved -as it relates to the competency being addressed)

• Describe the specific ACTIONS – a precise description of exactly what you did (i.e., activities you performed, duties, and responsibilities) in your own words. Do not quote someone else describing what you did. The actions you describe are particularly important in evaluating your accomplishment.

• State the OUTCOMES – a description of the outcomes (the direct or indirect results or long-term impact of your accomplishment)

• The start and end dates of the time period during which the activities were performed. Please be specific and provide the month and year for the start and end dates (e.g., June 2006 to November 2006).

• The name and a telephone number or email address or other method of contacting someone who can verify the information you provide. Be sure to indicate whether this person was your supervisor, co-worker, friend, instructor, chairman of a committee, etc. If you do not want your current employer contacted, do not list your employer as a verifying person. Instead, provide the name of another person who can verify your accomplishment. Do not use a spouse or a close relative (father, mother, etc.) or a person who is presently a direct subordinate as a verifier. The verifier must be reachable within a reasonable period. You MUST provide a reference for verification of your Accomplishment Record. If you do not provide a reference, your Accomplishment Record will NOT be read or evaluated. Please note that once the Accomplishment Record has been evaluated, verifiers may or may not be contacted.
Nicole Schultheis has helped hundreds of attorneys and other senior candidates compete successfully for federal positions. In addition to Administrative Law Judge candidates, she has helped aspiring Administrative Judges, Hearing Officers, Immigration Judges and Administrative Patent Judges. She has supported legal and law enforcement candidates at the Department of Justice, FBI, ICE, CBP, DHS, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Defense, as well as applicants to numerous agency Offices of General Counsel, Inspectors General, and Legislative Counsel offices.

She has conducted trainings and given workshops on federal resume writing and executive writing for lawyers and other professionals. She teaches autobiographical writing to continuing education students at Anne Arundel Community College, Arnold, Maryland, and is a past president of the Maryland Writers’ Association.

Schultheis is also a former appellate judicial clerk and a trial lawyer with significant state and federal trial and appellate experience. She has contributed chapters on litigation subjects to legal treatises, and her articles have been published in The Maryland Daily Record, Maryland Bar Journal, Maryland Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues, and elsewhere.

Schultheis holds a Bachelor of Science in biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Juris Doctor from Boston University School of Law. Since 2005, she has maintained an AV Preeminent® rating from Martindale Hubbell, their highest possible rating, earned by only 5 percent of all female attorneys. She is a member of the Maryland bar.
Kathryn Troutman

Kathryn Troutman is the founder and president of The Resume Place Inc., located in Baltimore, Md., and specializes in writing and designing professional federal and private-sector resumes, as well as coaching and education in the federal hiring process. For more than 30 years, Troutman has managed her professional writing and consulting practice, publishing, and federal career training business, and, with her team of 20 Certified Federal Resume Writers, The Resume Place advises and writes more than 300 federal resumes per month for military, private industry, and federal clients worldwide.

Internationally recognized as the “Federal Resume Guru” by federal human resources specialists and jobseekers, Troutman created the format and name for the new “federal resume” that became an accepted standard after the SF 171 form was discontinued in 1995. She is the pioneering designer of the federal resume based on her first book, the Federal Resume Guidebook, now in its sixth edition. Some of Troutman’s other federal career publications include the award-winning Student’s Federal Career Guide (Third Edition), Ten Steps to a Federal Job (Third Edition), Jobseeker’s Guide (Seventh Edition), and the Military to Federal Career Guide (Second Edition), which is used in every Navy and Marine Corps base in the world, as well as most Air Force career transition centers.

A frequent radio, TV, and online guest, Troutman answers questions about federal careers, resume writing, and job search techniques. Troutman currently serves as Monster.com’s Federal Career Coach, where she writes a monthly column. She has been quoted and published hundreds of times on the topic of federal resume writing and job searching through syndicated news articles by Joyce Lain Kennedy and numerous career columnists. Troutman is a frequent guest on washingtonpost.com’s Federal Diary Live Online and federalnewsradio.com.

Troutman is a member of Professional Association of Résumé Writers, National Résumé Writer’s Association, Independent Book Publishers Association, and the Association of Women Business Owners.
ALj Writing / Consulting Services
Application Preparation for the 2016 Announcement

Our full service package includes the following components:

- Federal ALJ-style, outline format resume for upload to www.USAGJOBS.gov (typically 3–5 pages)
- Two qualifications narratives, documenting 7+ years of qualifying litigation and administrative law experience
- Two hours of phone consulting/coaching, spread over the project
- A homework assignment in accomplishment/past performance writing, addressing ALJ competencies
- A selection of additional written materials to assist with exam preparation

Additional Optional Services:

- Developmental Editing and Proofreading of the optional Listing of Cases
- Structured Interview preparation and recorded mock interview
- Additional preparation services may also be added, depending upon the requirements of the 2016 ALJ Announcement and exam.

For More Information & Assistance
www.resume-place.com/alj
ALJ Writing Guide
2nd Edition by Nicole Schultheis & Kathryn Troutman

The ONLY comprehensive writing guide for 2016 Administrative Law Judge candidates by federal resume writing and application experts.

Includes:
• History of Federal ALJ Hiring and Recent Initiatives
• ALJ Application and Test Procedures
• Position Standards, Minimum Qualifications and How to Prove Them
• The Federal Outline Format Resume Tailored for ALJ Applicants – with Samples
• Qualifications Narratives and Accomplishment Writing – with Samples
• Online and In-Person Testing Procedures – with Links to Federal Samples
• Definitions of 13 Judicial Competencies Used by Judicial Selection Experts and OPM
• Techniques for Managing the ALJ Structured Interview – with Sample Q&A
• Links to Additional Free Resources, Curated by the Authors

“To bring you up to date, after approx. 1.5 years, I was solicited by the OMHA to be an ALJ in [City 1] this week, counter offered and accepted appointment as ALJ for SSA in [City 2] today. Thank you!”

-- Successful candidate from 2013, James, long-time private practice attorney (7+ years litigation and administrative law experience) with his own small law firm.

NICOLE SCHULTHEIS holds a B.S. in Biology (MIT) and a J.D. from Boston University. After completing an appellate clerkship, she practiced trial law for 25 years, with cases ranging from employment law to mass torts. In 2005, she began to engage in broader forms of advocacy and strategic communications. She has helped 100s of attorneys and other senior candidates compete successfully for federal positions, including many aspiring ALJs. She has also assisted aspiring Administrative Judges, Hearing Officers, Immigration Judges and Administrative Patent Judges. Nicole has supported legal and law enforcement candidates at the Department of Justice, FBI, ICE, CBP, DHS, Secret Service, civilian military, as well as applicants to numerous other agency Offices of General Counsel, Inspectors General, and Legislative Counsel offices. Since 2005, she has maintained an AV Preeminent® rating from Martindale Hubbell, their highest possible rating, earned by only 5 percent of all female attorneys.

KATHRYN TROUTMAN is the leading expert in federal resume writing. President of The Resume Place® and creator of the Ten Steps to a Federal Job®, Kathryn is a highly-recognized consultant, speaker, trainer, and author who has been helping people land new jobs for over 40 years.