Candidate Questionnaire

Clallam County District Court 1 Judge

Candidate Information

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1. Why are you running for this office?

I am running for Clallam County District Court I Judge because I believe my experience has prepared me to serve our community in this role from day one.

I began my legal career as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney here in Clallam County, where I prosecuted misdemeanor cases in both District Court I in Port Angeles and District Court II in Forks before being promoted to the felony division. As a felony prosecutor, I handled serious and violent felony cases, including murder. I later entered private practice, where I have represented people in criminal and civil matters throughout our local courts.

For nearly ten years, I have also had the privilege of serving our community as a judicial officer. That experience has given me a perspective that is fundamentally different from that of an advocate. A judge's responsibility is not to represent one side or pursue a particular outcome. It is to listen, apply the law faithfully, protect constitutional rights, hold people accountable when appropriate, and ensure that every person who enters the courtroom is treated fairly and with dignity.

District Court is where most people who encounter our justice system will experience it firsthand. The decisions made there affect public safety, individual liberty, victims, families, businesses, and the confidence our community places in the rule of law. I am running because I believe that experience, independence, sound judgment, and respect for everyone who comes before the court matter enormously in that role.

I am ready to bring the full breadth of my experience, as a prosecutor, defense attorney, civil attorney, and judicial officer, to serving Clallam County as its next District Court I Judge.

2. What qualifications do you think are most important for the position of District Court 1 Judge?

A District Court Judge should have broad legal experience, substantial courtroom experience, judicial temperament, independence, integrity, and a thorough understanding of the law.

Experience is particularly important because District Court handles an extraordinarily broad range of matters. In a single week, a judge may preside over criminal cases, DUI matters, protection orders, civil disputes, small claims, traffic infractions, motions, and trials. District Court I handled more than 7,400 cases in 2024 alone. A judge needs both the legal knowledge and practical courtroom experience necessary to make difficult decisions accurately and efficiently.

Just as important is judicial temperament. A judge must be willing to listen, remain patient, treat people with dignity, and make decisions without regard to politics, popularity, or personal preference. Judges exercise tremendous authority over people's lives, and that authority should always be exercised thoughtfully and with humility.

Finally, a judge must be independent. Prosecutors and defense attorneys are advocates; judges are not. A judge should never approach a case intending to favor the government, the accused, a victim, a business owner, or any other constituency. Every person who enters the courtroom deserves a judge who approaches the case with an open mind and decides it based upon the facts and the law.

Public confidence in the judiciary depends upon people knowing that the scales of justice will not be tilted toward either side.

3. Describe the qualifications and experience that you bring to the office.

I bring an unusually broad range of experience to this position because I have served our justice system from several different perspectives.

I began as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney in the Clallam County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in 2011. I was responsible for prosecuting misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases in both District Court I in Port Angeles and District Court II in Forks. I maintained a substantial caseload and was routinely in trial. I was promoted to the felony division in 2013, where I prosecuted serious felony offenses and gained extensive trial experience, including a murder trial and numerous violent felony cases.

After leaving the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, I entered private practice. My work has included criminal defense as well as civil matters, giving me experience representing people on both sides of the justice system and a broader understanding of how judicial decisions affect individuals, families, victims, and the community.

Most importantly, I have served as a judicial officer for nearly ten years. I have presided over trials and hearings, ruled on legal issues, evaluated evidence and witness credibility, and made the difficult decisions judges are called upon to make. That experience has taught me not only how to apply the law, but also how important temperament, preparation, patience, and impartiality are to the administration of justice.

I have spent my career in courtrooms, and I understand District Court from the perspective of a prosecutor, defense attorney, civil attorney, and judge. I believe that breadth and depth of experience will allow me to step into the position fully prepared to serve from my first day in office.

4. Describe the therapeutic and restorative justice approach employed by District Court 1.

District Court I recognizes that accountability and public safety are not always best achieved through punishment alone. In appropriate cases, the court uses therapeutic approaches designed to address underlying conditions that contribute to repeated involvement in the criminal justice system while still requiring participants to take responsibility for their conduct.

Mental Health Court is an important example. Established in 2022, it brings together the court, prosecution, defense, treatment providers, and participants in a structured program intended to address serious mental-health challenges that contribute to criminal behavior. Participants are held accountable through treatment requirements, judicial supervision, incentives, and appropriate sanctions. The goals include reducing recidivism, promoting long-term stability and recovery, reducing the costs associated with repeated prosecution, incarceration and hospitalization, and improving community safety.

District Court I also utilizes a DUI/Deferred Prosecution Court, and plans are underway for a Veterans Court.

I believe the important principle underlying these approaches is that accountability and rehabilitation are not mutually exclusive. If someone repeatedly enters the criminal justice system because of untreated mental illness or substance-use disorder, simply processing that person through the same system again and again may do little to prevent the next offense. An appropriately designed therapeutic intervention can require accountability while addressing the condition contributing to the criminal behavior.

When successful, that benefits everyone: the participant, potential future victims, law enforcement, the courts, taxpayers, and the broader community. But therapeutic justice must also include accountability and measurable outcomes. Programs should be evaluated based upon whether they actually reduce recidivism, improve compliance, and enhance community safety.

5. What is your experience with restorative justice? In what types of cases is this approach most effective?

My experience with restorative and therapeutic approaches comes from my work as a prosecutor, defense attorney, and judicial officer. Throughout my career, I have seen both the strengths and limitations of a justice system that relies primarily upon traditional prosecution and punishment.

There are certainly cases in which punishment and incarceration are necessary. But I have also seen individuals return to court repeatedly because an underlying problem, such as substance-use disorder or serious mental illness, was never successfully addressed. When an appropriate intervention can address that underlying problem while maintaining accountability, it can produce a better long-term outcome than simply repeating the same cycle of arrest, prosecution, incarceration, release, and rearrest.

These approaches are most effective when there is an identifiable underlying issue contributing to the person's criminal behavior, when an appropriate evidence-based intervention is available, and when the individual is both eligible and willing to meaningfully participate. Mental-health and substance-use-related cases are obvious examples. Certain lower-level offenses may also present opportunities for restorative approaches when accountability, treatment, restitution, or repairing harm can more effectively prevent future offending than punishment alone.

But restorative or therapeutic justice is not appropriate in every case or for every person. A judge must consider the nature and seriousness of the offense, the person's history, the interests and safety of victims and the community, the available legal authority, and whether the proposed intervention offers a realistic prospect of success.

I do not view this as a choice between accountability and compassion. The question should be: What lawful response is most likely to hold this person accountable, protect the community, address the harm that has occurred, and reduce the likelihood that there will be another victim?

That is the practical approach I would bring to these cases as District Court Judge.