

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 office to bring balance back to the court. The priorities of the court have gotten out of sync with the needs of the community. While we must safeguard the rights of the accused, this cannot be at the expense of the rights of the community and public safety. The current soft on crime approach has led to a degradation in the trust and confidence that the public has in the criminal justice system.

Currently in District Court there is frequent-release, repeat and high-risk defendants without adequate conditions of release, rigorous supervision or meaningful bail conditions, resulting in high rates of failure to appear and re-offense. My approach as judge will be to utilize strict, evidence-based evaluation of public safety risks, community impact and the potential for flight; rigorous application of appropriate bail; and enforceable conditions of release set at initial appearances.

My approach is balanced between accountability and rehabilitation. For example, District Court has a vital role to play through innovative programs such as Mental Health Court. Programs like this are an important means of addressing these concerns. Participants in these programs have requirements they must comply with. If a participant has a violation, consequences should follow. To ensure this, more consistent practices are needed to make certain that therapeutic court programs follow national and state guidelines. Clallam County District Court I needs a new, more functional direction.

All residents need to feel secure in their homes and in public places. District Court provides the means to make sure all of us can live our daily lives in peace. Balancing firm accountability with restorative justice practices will improve the safety and well-being of Clallam County residents. As judge, I will give fair consideration to all who appear in my court.

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

I believe that a judge needs to have humility. A humble heart and an earnest desire to serve the people goes a long way towards instilling faith in the justice system.

Other important qualifications for a District Court Judge include rigorous legal competence, a neutral temperament and administrative capability, as district courts serve as the primary "people's court" where community members most frequently interact with the justice system.

Substantive Courtroom & Trial Experience: Direct litigation experience in high-volume dockets, such as criminal misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors, is crucial. A judge must have a deep grasp and practical knowledge of evidence rules, statutory interpretation, constitutional protections and local procedural rules to make swift, legally sound evidentiary rulings from the bench.

Candidate Questionnaire

Judicial Temperament & Demeanor: District Court cases often involve high-stress situations, self-represented litigants, and vulnerable community members. Essential temperament traits include patience, courtesy, open-mindedness, emotional discipline under pressure and active listening. A judge must ensure that every individual feels heard, respected, and treated with dignity, regardless of the outcome.

Impartiality & Ethical Integrity: Maintaining strict adherence to judicial conduct codes, avoiding conflicts of interest or political influence, and demonstrating unwavering fairness to both prosecution/plaintiff and defense. Public trust in the legal system relies heavily on consistent, unbiased application of the law.

Docket Management & Administrative Efficiency: District courts handle extensive caseloads with tight statutory timelines. A qualified judge needs strong organizational skills, decisiveness and familiarity with modern case management technology to keep calendars moving efficiently without sacrificing thorough review or fairness.

Clear Communication & Plain-Language Explanations: The ability to explain complex legal principles, rights and rulings in plain, understandable language so that non-lawyers, jurors, and litigants clearly comprehend court orders, obligations, and penalties.

A Deep Understanding of Local Community Needs & Diversion Programs: Familiarity with community resources, therapeutic alternatives (such as Mental Health Court), domestic violence interventions and restitution pathways that address root causes of behavior while maintaining community safety.

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

Extensive Local Courtroom Experience: I have direct, daily familiarity with District Court operations and trial practice. I have experience handling a high volume of cases (having prosecuted thousands of cases and over 40+ jury trials) as essential preparation for managing the docket effectively from day one. I have more relevant practical experience in District Court than anyone in Clallam County. Even while deputy prosecuting attorneys have come and gone in district Court, I have long been a source of continuity and experience over the past eight years.

Balanced Accountability and Rehabilitation: I have the ability to balance firm consequences with restorative justice and therapeutic court options (such as Mental Health Court). This includes ensuring accountability by applying clear, consistent compliance standards while supporting behavioral health and recovery pathways.

Commitment to Public Safety: I will prioritize community security through structured judicial safeguards, including thoughtful setting of conditions of release and bail to protect residents while respecting due process.

Judicial Temperament and Fairness: I will exercise impartiality, transparency, and common sense in every hearing and treat District Court as "the people's court" where every individual—defendants, victims, and litigants—is heard and treated with dignity.

Deep Local Connection: I have both lived and worked within the county for many years, giving me an understanding of the distinct needs of Sequim, Port Angeles, and surrounding areas. This enables me to be more responsive to local concerns like property crimes, drug abuse and quality of life.

Candidate Questionnaire

Practical Competency in Behavioral Health Issues: I bring experienced insight into state and regional mental health systems, competency restoration, and diversion frameworks to make informed decisions for individuals navigating the justice system.

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

District Court 1 by virtue of being a court of limited jurisdiction is often the first, and sometimes the only, interaction residents have with our judicial system. This means that many of the cases brought before the presiding district court judge present an opportunity to rehabilitate and lessen conflict.

This is borne out in both civil and criminal cases. In civil cases involving financial disputes in small claims court, individuals are encouraged and directed toward dispute resolution through a representative from the Peninsula Dispute Resolution Center (PDRC). Although not successful in all cases, this has the effect of at least giving individuals an opportunity to resolve their differences without the need for direct judicial involvement. Another civil context is civil protection orders that allow a measure of justice for a person seeking a protection order, while also potentially preventing an escalation of the situation through continued contact between the parties.

In the criminal context in District Court, there is often the opportunity to address a problem, whether it is substance abuse, mental health, anger management, domestic violence, or some combination therein, before it becomes an even bigger problem. In these circumstances, the greater discretion that is afforded a District Court Judge as opposed to a Superior Court judge is evident. In many cases in District Court, the judge can impose anywhere up to the statutory maximum or defer the imposition of sentence for a period of time. In these circumstances, a person pleads guilty, but the judge holds off imposing a sentence (no jail time imposed or suspended) and requires things like no criminal law violations or no contact with a person or location, and can require the person to obtain an evaluation and follow recommended treatment as well as be on probation with a probation officer monitoring them. At the end of the deferral of sentence, if the person is fully in compliance, they are allowed to withdraw their guilty plea and the case is dismissed.

Another area in criminal cases is the Mental Health Court. This is a therapeutic Court operating under the umbrella of District Court 1 in the same way that Drug Court operates under the umbrella of Clallam County Superior Court. Therapeutic courts are set by statute and have very specific criteria that must be met to be considered a recognized therapeutic Court. The Mental Health Court is primarily designed for those who are high risk/ high needs (high risk of re-offending and have high needs for services), but it can include nearly all criminal offenders suffering from a primarily mental health disorder, although co-occurring substance abuse treatment can be included for those who have primarily substance abuse issues that are typically directed towards Drug Court.

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

To answer this question I believe it is important to first define the term. To me restorative justice is an approach to wrongdoing that focuses on repairing the harm caused by an offense rather than simply punishing the offender. As a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the last eight years, I have practiced primarily in Clallam County District Court 1. I have seen that restorative justice can take on many forms and requires individualized application. District Court more so than any other Court lends itself to plea bargaining and negotiation.

Candidate Questionnaire

As a prosecutor, my concern is first and foremost for the victim and to a slightly lesser extent, society as a whole. However, that means that it is about more than just securing a conviction. I am a trauma-informed prosecutor. A trauma-informed prosecutor recognizes how traumatic experiences alter neurobiology, memory and behavior, and applies that understanding across charging decisions, witness prep, courtroom advocacy and office culture. It does not mean abdicating the duty to seek justice or prove cases beyond a reasonable doubt; rather, it provides a more accurate lens for evaluating evidence, building stronger cases, and preventing the legal process from causing secondary harm. As a judge I will be a trauma informed judge ensuring that all possible efforts are made to minimize traumatization of victims and survivors.

Being a truly trauma informed prosecutor means focusing on more than just conviction and obtaining the maximum appropriate sentence. Resolving a case short of trial with a disposition that does not yield as much as I was necessarily seeking is the better course if it means preventing a victim or survivor of having to be re-traumatized through trial prep, defense interviews, and the rigors of trial including cross examination. This allows for a balance of accountability and some degree of punishment for the offender while allowing the victim or survivor to continue on a path of healing and moving in with their life.

Restorative justice is most effective in cases where there is genuine buy-in from the offender, with real remorse for their actions and a willingness to make amends as well as complete necessary treatment. Restorative justice in its rawest form is most often seen by way of a misdemeanor compromise. In a misdemeanor compromise (usually seen on hit and run cases involving only damage to vehicles and/or property or malicious mischief cases), the person most directly affected by the offender's action can either be satisfied by financial compensation or repair of the damaged property and accept that arrangement in lieu of criminal prosecution.

I have had many cases where the offender paid directly for the repair or otherwise financially compensated the injured party. In other cases, the offender actually repaired the damage themselves. Although restorative justice is not effective in all cases, there can never be true restoration if there is not an appropriate level of accountability at first. It is that balance that distinguishes itself from more extreme approaches: on one hand a draconian approach with pure punishment and on the other a soft-on-crime approach that does not hold offenders appropriately accountable. Neither extreme does anyone any good. A restoration of balance is needed in Clallam County District Court 1.