

## 31st Legislative District Democrats Candidate Questionnaire

1. Your name: Claire Sussman
2. Candidate for: Pierce County District Court Judge Position 2 Party Affiliation: Non Partisan
3. Campaign information:
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4. If elected, what positive changes will you champion that will benefit the 31<sup>st</sup> LD?

Although I would not necessarily say it's a change to all Courts, I would add to the achievements of those Judges who strive to assure that every citizen "who gets his/her day in court" comes away with the feeling that justice has been fairly and impartially served. This is achieved by assuring that (i) each person's testimony is conscientiously listened to (ii) decisions are made and explained based on the law and the evidence, and (iii) every citizen before the bench is treated evenhandedly with dignity and respect. I believe that this is an essential ingredient of maintaining citizen respect for justice in our society.

5. What are the three most critical issues you expect to encounter in the office you are seeking?
  - a. high volume dockets: District Court dockets are typically of very high volume. It is critical to be able to handle these dockets justly and efficiently. For the past seven years, I have been asked to Pro Tem in every District Court department in Pierce County, and am known for being able to responsibly move through high volume dockets. For example, the Monday after 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend is known to be exceptionally heavy due to the large number of in-custodies taken over the long holiday weekend. I was already booked for this day back in March.
  - b. reduced resources due to the economy: District Court like all other facets of society is needing to make do with less. The bench will need to strategize with administration on how to best accomplish this in a manner that won't reduce the integrity and efficiency of the court. My experience in working in other jurisdictions as a Judge Pro Tem, namely in Puyallup Municipal and Sumner Municipal Court, and experiencing what other jurisdictions have done to manage their courts in this current economy, will allow me to give insight to this process.
  - c. jail overcrowding: This issue has been a constant. District Court handles a variety of criminal cases, many suitable for alternative means of confinement such as community service and work crew. It takes an experienced judge to discern which cases are appropriate for incarceration due to public safety issues or punishment, and which are more appropriate for court ordered counseling or alternatives to confinement.

6. Please give us an example of when you had to make a critical decision that, due to its impact on others, was difficult. Tell us why you made your decision and what, if any, actions you took to mitigate any negative results.