

**2024 Pierce County Democrats Endorsement Questionnaire
-Judicial Races-**

Candidate Name: Doris Walkins

Position sought: Judge, Dept 9, Pierce County Superior Court

Date submitted: 03/08/2024

For judicial endorsements, the Pierce County Democratic Central Committee (PCDCC) seeks to endorse well-qualified candidates with the education, experience, ability, and temperament to reach just decisions in the cases brought before them, who will also work to make the justice system more understandable, accessible, and equitable for all. The Endorsements Committee screens candidates and then makes endorsement recommendations to the PCDCC.

The PCDCC may withdraw endorsement of any judicial candidate if they determine the candidate has acted in conflict with the answers provided during the screening process or it determines the candidate has violated the letter or the spirit of the Code of Judicial Conduct or the Rules of Professional Conduct.

*You may respond N/A (not applicable) if appropriate. Expand or decrease space as needed.

Questions

1. Why are you running for this position? I am running for this position to help bring a diversity of thought to the Pierce County bench as to how we can serve our most vulnerable populations in a more remedial services-oriented manner, as opposed to a focus on punitive measures or punishments. I also want to help parties navigate their cases towards resolution in a manner that comports with the law, and in a manner that gives the litigants a sense of equity and fairness when they are in my courtroom.
2. What are your qualifications for seeking this office, and what was the nature of your legal background and experience? I am a current Superior Court Commissioner—I have held this position for almost 2 years. In this role I preside over family law, domestic violence, juvenile criminal, probates, unlawful detainers, involuntary treatment dockets, and much more, in terms of subject matter. I finalize cases and also make temporary order rulings. Prior to that, I was an attorney in private practice for 16 years. I handled family law, dependency, terminations, adoptions, misdemeanor criminal, traffic infractions, estate planning. I was also a Title 26 GAL conducting parenting investigations for over to 14 years. I am admitted to the Washington State Bar, Puyallup Tribal Bar and Federal Bar for the Western District.
3. If your past legal practice emphasized one area of law, how will you prepare to decide other disputes? My solo practice was multifaceted, but if there was an area of law I was unfamiliar with I would do the requisite legal research to get up to speed on the question at bar, and would not hesitate to reach out to a more seasoned colleague for guidance.

4. What are the most important issues for the jurisdiction you would serve or for the court you seek to join?
There are various dockets handling a myriad of different subject matters, but I think the most pressing matters for the community as a whole are our substance use affected community members, and mental health affected community members. I am a staunch advocate of therapeutic courts to offer litigants remedial service opportunities, in lieu of incarceration at first blush. I will also advocate for future and consistent funding sources so that these therapeutic courts remain a permanent fixture, and not subject to annual budget issues.
5. Why should the Pierce County Democratic Party support you for this position?
I believe you should support me because I am the most knowledgeable candidate for my department and have the most experience as a judicial officer on a myriad of topics that a new judge will have to face on their first day on the job. I have attended Judicial College and various on the job trainings and CLE's to be as up to speed as possible on changes to the law and local ordinances such as the Landlord Fairness Initiative. I also have the background of various practice areas from my 16 years as an attorney, as opposed to being in one position throughout my career.
6. Please list your key endorsements:
Justice Helen Whitener, WA State Supreme Court
Justice Mary Yu, WA State Supreme Court
Judge Kitty Ann VanDoorninck, Pierce County Superior Court, Retired
7. Provide ratings from any Bar Associations, either in this election or a prior one.
PCMBA-Exceptionally Well Qualified
Latina/o Bar Association—Exceptionally Well Qualified
Q Law—Exceptionally Well Qualified
8. Has any professional or disciplinary body made a finding that you violated any rule or code of judicial or professional conduct? If so, please provide a full explanation.
No.
9. To what Bar groups or sections do you belong now or have belonged to in the past?
In the Past I belonged to PCMBA, QLaw, HRC.
10. How have you supported pro bono or low-cost legal services?
Yes, in my private practice, I had an OPD public defense contract and provided legal services to those clients at no cost to them. I would also often perform no cost legal services for my OPD clients, unrelated to the OPD contract, for free. Very often I provided discounted services to clients who did not have the resources to pay my full fee but nonetheless needed my services—I would do this on a case-by-case basis depending on the need of the client.
11. Do you have a judicial philosophy? If so, please describe:

12. How is being a judge different than being an attorney?

Being an attorney, you advocate for the position of your client; as a judge you are not an advocate, you are a neutral trier of fact.

IF ELECTED TO THIS POSITION.....

13. How would you educate and inform the public about your court and the justice system?

I would use my position to go into the community and hopefully speak at schools about the function of a judge and give them a sense of being able to speak to a judge and relate to them on a human level. I want to help give the court the community partnership that we need in order to be a functioning source of resolution to the public. I want members of the public to feel that we are fair and respectful of them as people.

14. What would you do to provide greater access to the civil judicial system, regardless of economic status?

Ensure I advocate to the legislator and decision maker that we have to have a robust public defense system, that is supplying competent counsel to members of the community who cannot otherwise afford to pay for an attorney.

15. Do you believe the judicial system produces different results for different demographics? If so, what would you do to remedy that problem?

It is undisputed that our judicial system produces different results for different people and it is our job as judicial officers to ensure that we are fostering a culture of fairness and equity in our courtrooms by ensuring we are following the guidance that is being given to us by our current Supreme Court in their mandates for access to justice and equitable outcome across racial demographics.

16. Do you believe there is a problem with the way legal financial obligations (LFOs) or other costs and fines are currently imposed upon criminal defendants? If so, what would you do to remedy that problem?

I believe this is a problem that is being effectively addressed by current mandates that have eliminated fines for juvenile offenders and their parents, as well as setting alternatives to money payments of fines for adult offenders. LFO's have been major barriers to resolution of cases for indigent defendants.

17. Do you support or oppose alternatives to criminal prosecution, such as drug courts, mental health courts, diversion programs, etc.? What changes would you make, if any?

I support alternatives to criminal prosecutions whole heartedly; rehabilitation and restoration efforts should always take precedent—of course with community safety in mind as well. Defendants do more for our communities as rehabilitate members of society, as opposed to languishing in jails/prisons with no meaningful chance at rehabilitation prior to re-entry into society.

18. How would you approach any caseload or court congestion issues? Meaningful recruitment of more public defense attorneys and use of pre-filing diversions for adults as well, as opposed to charging them and having them go through the system.

19. Is there anything else you would like to share with the Committee?

I would like the committee to know I am deeply committed to Pierce County. I have lived here since 1998, when I was only 19 years old. I moved here with my then husband and 1 year old son and have called it home ever since. I got my post-secondary education here, started my career as an attorney here, and my

career as a judicial officer here. This area has embraced me, and I have always been so enamored with the diversity of race, ethnicity, thought and gender expression of our community.