

King County Democrats

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Judicial Level

Candidate Name	Jason Poydras	
Position Sought	King County District Court Southeast Division, Position One	
Home County and Legislative District	King County – 11 th Legislative District	
Campaign Contact Information	Mailing address: PO Box 23125 Seattle, Washington 98102	Phone: (425)686-9651 Fax: n/a
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Campaign manager or point of contact	See below.	
Consultant(s)	Shayna Daitch (206) 400-8987	

Part I – Candidate Background

Please briefly describe your qualifications, education, employment, community and civic activity, past union affiliation, and other relevant experience. Attach a resume with more complete history.

I completed my undergraduate coursework at Xavier University of Louisiana, a historically Black university located in New Orleans, Louisiana. After graduating from college, I moved to Seattle and attended Seattle University School of Law.

A fundamental desire to assist others led me to pursue the legal field, and it has consistently been the primary source of inspiration and motivation throughout my legal career. I began my legal practice, first as a public defender, and next as a deputy prosecutor. Early on in my career, I began to see that I could broaden and expand the reach and impact of my efforts to serve the public as a judicial officer.

I have served full-time as a judge or neutral decision maker for over 10 years now. I began adjudicating hearings as a Hearing Examiner with the Washington State Department of Licensing. Next, I was appointed as an Administrative Law Judge with the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). In addition to holding administrative hearings for individuals and administrative agencies looking to resolve significant legal disputes at OAH, I joined the management team in the Seattle Field Office as a Senior Administrative Law Judge.

In April, 2017, I had the privilege of being unanimously appointed to the King County District Court by the King County Council. The desire to expand the reach and impact of my efforts to serve is what led me to become a District Court judge. I am honored, and extremely fortunate, to have the privilege of serving the people of King County as a District Court judge.

I additionally serve the community outside of work. I am a mentor for new attorneys, law students, prospective law students, prospective judges, and I have also served a judge for mock trial competitions with the YMCA, and Seattle University School of Law. Additionally, I previously volunteered as a judge for Kids' Court, and prior to my appointment, I completed a two-year term as a Seattle Human Rights Commissioner, and a two and half year term on the Loren Miller Bar Association's Judicial Evaluation Committee.

I am not currently a member of a union; however, I was previously a member of the Washington Federation of State Employees (AFSCME), and prior to that, I was a member of the Pierce County Prosecuting Attorneys' Association.

Describe your history of involvement in Washington state politics. What offices have you previously sought election or appointment to? What campaigns have you worked on?

In April, 2017, I was unanimously appointed to the King County District Court by the King County Council. I have not previously worked on any other campaigns or sought appointment to any other elected positions.

What prompted you to run for this office?

I am seeking to be retained as a District Court judge. As noted above, I became a District Court judge to broaden and expand the reach and impact of my efforts to serve the public. District Court is sometimes referred to as "the people's court" and it is where most individuals have their first, and sometimes only, experience with our justice system. I sincerely believe that as a district court judge, I am in the best position to use my legal training, my commitment to integrity, fairness, and due process to serve others and make a positive impact on the community.

Describe the progress of your campaign so far. What kind of reception is your campaign getting? Are you running unopposed, or do you have an opponent? How will your campaign appeal to the voters?

I work hard to be the best judge that I can possibly be every day. I have obtained excellent judicial ratings from several bar associations, and I have done my best to educate myself about campaign rules and procedures to run a successful campaign. I have additionally hired highly qualified, trustworthy and hardworking individuals to assist me as my campaign consultant and treasurer, and I have done all that I can to meet with people and introduce myself to individuals in the community by attending outreach events on the average of 2-3 times per week, and I plan to attend even more as the election draws closer.

I am currently running unopposed, and I have been extremely honored to receive support and positive feedback from individuals in the community that I speak with, and from community leaders. In addition to being endorsed by a significant number of judicial officers at all levels of court, including the State Supreme Court, I have also been fortunate to receive endorsements from non-judicial elected officials, such as Dana Ralph, the mayor of Kent, Federal Way Councilmember Martin Moore, and Pete Holmes, the Seattle City Attorney.

I have a solid campaign plan and I am taking nothing for granted. In the last month, my campaign committee raised \$4,500 on behalf of my campaign. We are actively recruiting volunteers and supporters and will have an official kickoff at the end of April. In the event that another person files to run in this race, I will launch a very proactive campaign, and have already had many conversations with my consultant, my family, fellow elected judges, and my campaign supporters about what that will look like.

Please answer the following questions.

		Yes*	No
1	Have you ever failed to pay any taxes or court ordered judgments?		X
2	Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?		X

* If you answered "Yes" to either of the above, please explain your answer:

N/A

Part II – Ratings and endorsements

What endorsements and ratings from bar associations have you received to date?

Bar Association ratings:	Exceptionally Well Qualified - King County Bar Association (KCBA) Exceptionally Well Qualified – The GLBT Bar Association of Washington (QLaw) Exceptionally Well Qualified – Latina/o Bar Association of Washington (LBAW) Well Qualified - Joint Asian Evaluations Committee (JJEC)
Endorsements:	Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst, WA State Supreme Court Justice Steven Gonzales, WA State Supreme Court Justice Mary Yu, WA State Supreme Court Justice Susan Owens, WA State Supreme Court Justice Charlie Wiggins, WA State Supreme Court Justice Charles Johnson, WA State Supreme Court Justice Debra Stephens, WA State Supreme Court Judge Matthew Williams, King County Superior Court Judge Nicole Gaines Phelps, King County Superior Court Judge David Keenan, King County Superior Court Judge Leroy McCullough, King County Superior Court Judge Wesley Saint Clair, King County Superior Court Judge Veronica Alicea-Galvan, King County Superior Court Judge Michael Diaz, King County Superior Court Judge John Chun, King County Superior Court Judge Catherine Moore, King County Superior Court Judge Charles J. Delaurenti II, King County District Court Judge Matthew York, King County District Court Judge Gregg Hirakawa, King County District Court Judge Anne Harper, King County District Court Judge Janet Garrow, King County District Court Judge Lisa O’Toole, King County District Court Judge David Steiner, King County District Court Judge Peter Nault, King County District Court Judge Michael Finkle, King County District Court Judge Anita Crawford-Willis, Seattle Municipal Court Dana Ralph, Mayor of Kent Washington Pete Holmes, Seattle City Attorney Martin Moore, Federal Way City Council

If you have previously sought elected office, what notable endorsements did you receive?

This is my first election.

What other organizations are you planning to ask for an endorsement?

Democratic and Republican organizations in the 5th, 11th, 30th, 31st, 33rd, 37th, 41st, and 47th Legislative Districts
IAFF 27
IAM 751
FUSE/Progressive Voter Guide
Metropolitan Democratic Club
Teamsters 117
WSCCCE Council 2, Local 21 AD

*This list is not exhaustive. My campaign team and I are continuing to expand the list of groups and individuals that I will seek an endorsement from.

Part III – Legal experience, technology, and court costs

Please describe your pro bono activities over the last five years.

I currently mentor pre-law students, law students, attorneys new to practice, and prospective judges. In 2017, I volunteered as a judge to speak with children that were witnesses and/or victims to criminal offenses for Kids' Court. In 2017 and 2018, I served as a volunteer judge for the YMCA High School Mock Trial Competition, and in 2017, I volunteered for a mock trial at Seattle University School of law. Prior to my judicial appointment, I previously volunteered as a member of the Loren Miller Bar Association's (LMBA) Judicial Evaluation Committee between 2014 and 2017, and as a commissioner on the Seattle Human Rights Commission between 2014 and 2016.

What law firms or public law offices (i.e. King County Prosecutor's Office) have you worked for? Have you served as a prosecutor or a public defender? Please include dates, and title for each position that you have held, as well as areas of law practiced.

I worked as a Rule 9 Intern doing public defense with the Associated Counsel for the Accused between August, 2005 and May, 2006. I additionally worked as a Deputy Prosecutor at the Pierce County Prosecutor's Office between May, 2006 and January, 2008. Next, I served as a Hearing Examiner for the Department of Licensing between January 2008 and November 2012. I was subsequently appointed as an Administrative Law Judge for the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), from November 2012 through April 2017. At OAH, I began my service as a Line Administrative Law Judge, and I was promoted to Lead Administrative Law Judge in 2014. In 2016, I was promoted to Senior Administrative Law Judge.

Have you ever served as a mediator or arbitrator? (If so, please describe your experiences.)

I have not served as a mediator or arbitrator in an official capacity.

What do you believe are the most important qualifications for a judge or justice?

The most important qualifications for a judge are knowledge of the law, a commitment to due process, fairness, integrity, compassion, the desire to continuously evolve and improve, and a strong work ethic. A judge must have a strong knowledge of the law to make accurate decisions. A judge must then use his/her legal knowledge, commitment to due process, integrity, and compassion to fairly and justly apply the law to the facts and make decisions that are consistent, but also balance the unique and specific circumstances presented in each case. Judges must also foster an environment where people feel heard and able to meaningfully participate in the process. This will allow the parties appearing before the judge to feel as though they had access to justice and were treated fairly, regardless of the outcome in their case. Lastly, using his or her strong work ethic, a judge must call on his/her desire to continuously evolve and improve; stay current with the law; examine and improve his or her judicial philosophy; and to look for ways to improve not only as an individual judge, but to also make improvements in the justice system as a whole. This will foster the public's confidence in the judicial system; allow the judge to continually grow and learn; and reduce stagnation and complacency. All of these things in turn will improve our justice system and also improve access to justice.

Have you been a judge pro-tem? If so, what was that experience like? What did you learn from it? Have you completed the pro-tem training in King County? For which judges do you regularly pro-tem?

My rigorous hearing schedule as an Administrative Law Judge limited my ability to serve as a pro tem judge because I was already working as a judge full-time. Nonetheless, I did have the opportunity on vacation days and flex days to serve as a pro tem judge. I successfully completed the Attorney Training for Service as Pro Tem: District and Municipal Court training in 2012, and the King County District Court Pro Tem Training in 2015. I subsequently had the privilege of serving as a pro tem judge in Tukwila Municipal Court, Edmonds Municipal Court, and King County District Court between August 2015 and February 2017. As a pro tem judge, I was able to apply the judicial skill set and tools that I regularly used as an Administrative Law Judge and I gained experience working with the high volume calendars that judges in courts of limited jurisdiction often encounter. I also was able to keep my knowledge of criminal law current due to the fact that I did not hear criminal cases as an Administrative Law Judge. Overall, it was a challenging, rewarding, and enriching experience. I no longer serve as a pro tem judge now that I am a King County District Court judge.

Do you support making it easier for Washingtonians who are not members of the bar to access public records, particularly at the Superior/District court levels, where per-page fees are charged?

As a judge, I have a duty to follow the laws of Washington; however, I also have a duty to act with fairness and impartiality. With that framework in mind, all individuals that seek access to the courts should be entitled to receive it within the authority provided by law, and to the extent that a person qualifies as indigent, there should be a means for the court to determine whether fees to access the court can legally be reduced or waived, and if so, those fees should be reduced or waived to facilitate access to the Courts. A person's inability to pay should not bar their access to crucial documents they need.

Do you have any thoughts on how our courts should address the growing use of smartphones during court proceedings, particularly by jurors?

Smartphones have become tools that are almost standard in the lives of many people in society today, and they are an important means of communication between jurors and their families, jobs, or other responsibilities. Courts need to balance jurors' ability to remain connected with the world with the vital requirement that jurors not conduct independent research for a case they have been impaneled on. As a judge, I always instruct jurors in my trials that they are not to do any independent research, and I personally believe that we have to trust our jurors to follow the law and the instructions given by the court. If we cannot trust our jurors to do so, then we also cannot trust them to do other things that we expect like putting aside their biases and prejudices. Thus, I believe the court should continue allowing jurors to use smartphones during breaks (e.g. lunch), but should also stress the importance of jurors not using their smartphones to conduct research related to the case they are serving as jurors on.

Is Washington relying too much on court fees to cover the cost of operating our judicial system? How do you believe our courts should be funded?

Fines and fees can be appropriate in certain cases as tools for punishment; however, courts should be careful not to impose more legal financial obligations than a person can afford to pay. Furthermore, courts should never be used as a means of generating income. I personally believe that courts should be independently funded from state or local general funds like schools, police, or firefighters, for example. This will help to reduce the risk of courts having to fund themselves and potentially being used as revenue streams to fund other areas.

Part IV – Access to justice

If elected, how will you work to improve access to justice, particularly for communities and constituencies that do not understand the American legal system?

I will work to improve access to justice by ensuring that interpreters are provided for limited English proficient individuals. I also hope to encourage the court to develop forms and instructions in languages other than English to assist individuals that unable to read the English language.

Additionally, I will do my best to provide explanations of the hearing process and procedures for individuals that do not understand the process, especially for individuals who do not have attorneys in civil cases.

Language barriers, poverty and income inequality are primary reasons that individuals are not able access justice. Too many people cannot afford to take time off work to come to court, or they cannot pay for childcare, or they have other obstacles such as having a suspended license and not having the funds to pay for alternative transportation to get to the courthouse. I will continue working to find ways to make the court more accessible.

What does the phrase *Black Lives Matter* mean to you as a judicial candidate?

To me, the phrase *Black Lives Matter* does not mean that the lives of others do not matter, or that the lives of African Americans are more important than the lives of others. The Black Lives Matter movement is a complex one with many different interpretations; however, I see the Black Lives Matter movement as a movement where some individuals are working to promote awareness of the disparate treatment of African Americans in this county, especially surrounding the issue of police shootings of African Americans.

What do you see are the legal issues in the #timesup and #metoo movements?

A legal issue that impacts the #timesup and #metoo movements is the statute of limitations. There are many reasons that victims of sexual assault and sexual harassment do not come forward to reveal their stories right away, and as a result there are times in which the statute of limitations may run, and as a result may impact a victim's ability to seek justice in criminal and sometimes civil legal proceedings. Furthermore, it can also be more difficult for victims to receive the support that they should receive when they decide to come forward due to procedural bias and prejudice. Nonetheless, I see #timesup and #metoo movements as movements that are shining a light on these and other issues, and are creating an environment where positive changes will result.

What ideas can you offer to make our judicial system more open, transparent, and responsive?

Our judicial system can improve in openness and responsiveness by doing more to serve the individuals that need to access it. A seemingly small change that I believe would potentially result in a large impact to the criminal justice system that I hope to bring to my court is court date reminders. There are a significant number of individuals that have pending criminal cases that are homeless, or lack stable housing, and those individuals often lose their paperwork for court or get their court dates mixed up, especially if they have multiple cases. I would like to begin a practice of giving individuals that wish to opt in for court reminders the ability to receive a call, text message, or email reminding them of their court dates. I believe that the failure to appear rate would significantly decrease if individuals received reminders prior to their scheduled court appearances. This in turn would result in less warrants being issued for the arrest of individuals that fail to appear for court, and thus, result in less individuals being placed in jail for missed court appearances. This could further result in a decrease to people losing their jobs, housing, children, etc. because they were placed in jail for a missed court date.

Another concept that I would like to assist my court with implementing is a community court. Community Courts have demonstrated success around the country, and in June 2017, I visited Spokane Municipal Court's Community Court. Although the implementation of Community Courts around the country have variations unique to each court, the underlying philosophies are very similar in that they all aim to divert nonviolent low-level offenders away from the traditional criminal court model. Participants must opt in, and individuals usually demonstrate some accountability for their criminal conduct through restitution, community service or some other form of punishment that is less severe than a jail sentence. The prosecutor, the defense attorney, and the judge all work together along with social service providers to connect individuals with resources they need, such as substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, assistance with obtaining or maintain housing and/or employment, etc. Ultimately, in exchange for their successful participation in Community Court, individuals can earn the ability to have their criminal charges or citations dismissed, and hopefully be connected with community resources and other forms of assistance in the process. King County District Court began a pilot Community Court in Redmond this month, and I hope to be instrumental in assisting with a Community Court begin available in southeast King County in the future.

I affirm that all the information provided in response to this questionnaire is true, complete and correct, to the best of my ability, and that no relevant matter has been omitted.

Signature		Date: 04/08/2017
Printed Name	Jason Poydras	