

King County Democrats

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Judicial Level

Candidate Name	Rhonda Laumann	
Position Sought	King County District Court, Southeast Electoral District	
Home County and Legislative District	King – 41 st LD	
Campaign Contact Information	Mailing address:	Phone: 425-466-0619 Fax:
	Laumann for Judge Committee PO Box 20792 Seattle, WA 98102	
	Website: www.laumannforjudge.com Email: laumannforjudge@gmail.com Twitter: @ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Rhonda-Laumann-116395755847588/	
Campaign manager or point of contact	Mary Ann Ottinger – 425-466-0619	
Consultant(s)	Same	

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 have a broad range of experience as a lawyer, in criminal and civil law. For the past 9 years, I have worked almost exclusively as a Judge Pro Tem in District Courts and Municipal Court, as an Arbitrator, and a Mediator – helping ordinary people settle their disputes. I also have teaching experience, and I believe the skills I've used as a teacher, by providing clear direction to a wide variety of people, are very helpful in the courtroom.

Resume attached.

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?

This is the first elective office I have sought. In 2016, I sought appointment to a position on the King County District Court bench, and in 2017 I sought appointment to the Black Diamond Municipal Court.

What prompted you to run for this office?

I have gained a great deal of experience with King County District Court, in addition to many other district

and municipal courts, and want to make my service to the community full time.

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 have filed for an open seat. To date, I have no known or rumored opposition. My campaign has been well received, and I'm grateful to have already received many endorsements. I believe my campaign will appeal to the voters of South King County because I am a person who has lived through many of life's challenges, and I understand the challenges faced by working families.

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:

Part II – Ratings and endorsements

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

Bar Association ratings:	Loren Miller Bar Association – Exceptionally Well Qualified QLaw – Exceptionally Well Qualified Joint Asian Judicial Evaluation Committee – Exceptionally Well Qualified Latino/a Bar Association – Well Qualified KCBA - Qualified
Endorsements:	See endorsement list attached. It is up to date as of this submission. Also, my endorsement list, updated daily, is at www.laumannforjudge.com .

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

N/A

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

Democratic Legislative Districts 5, 11, 30, 31, 33, 37, 41, and 47
MLKing County Labor Council
Machinists 751
Teamsters Joint Council 28
Pacific NW Regional Council of Carpenters
Building Trades
AFSCME
Northwest Women's Political Caucus

Other organizations, as opportunities present themselves

Part III – Legal experience, technology, and court costs

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

I frequently teach and lecture pro bono, as detailed in my resume with attorneys who work for non-profit organizations that advise individuals who cannot afford counsel. In August 2017, I taught a 3 day immigration law CLE in Los Angeles to the Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project. This CLE included lecture, demonstration, and participant critique to dramatically improve their performance as attorneys. In October 2017, I was the program director for a Deposition Advocacy Program that combined deposition and trial skills for public service attorneys, including ACLU, Columbia Legal Services, Northwest Justice Project, Columbia Legal Services and Team Child.

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.

King County Prosecuting Attorney, August 1992 to November 1992

Floater prosecutor for District Court, responsible for pre-trial hearings, motions, and jury trials.

Kitsap County Prosecuting Attorney, November 1992 to December 1996

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney responsible for all aspects of vertical prosecution, including assisting police officers with investigation and search warrants, probable cause and charging decisions, arraignment, pre-trial hearings and extensive motion practice, witness interview and preparation, trial, and appeals to Court of Appeals, Division II and Washington State Supreme Court. *State v. Trevino*, 903 P.2d 447, 127 Wn.2d 735 (1995).

SAFECO Insurance Companies, January 1997 to February 2003

Staff Attorney position, representing SAFECO insureds and SAFECO Insurance Companies in all aspects of insurance defense, including adjuster and client relations, discovery, depositions, motion practice, mediation, arbitration, bench and jury trials.

Progressive Insurance Companies, February 2003 to May 2006

Civil insurance defense at level Staff Attorney III, representing Progressive insureds and Progressive Insurance Companies in all aspects of insurance defense, including adjuster and client relations, discovery, depositions, motion practice, mediation, and arbitration. Frequent motions and arbitration practice and jury trials

Middleton & Associates, PS, May 2006 to June 2008

Represent Plaintiffs in all aspects of personal injury actions, including motor vehicle accidents and slip and fall injuries, from initial client intake to arbitration and trial. Frequently appointed by King County and Pierce County Superior Courts as arbitrator for personal injury lawsuits in claims with stated value of less than \$50,000.00.

City of Lakewood, May 2009 to December 2012

Contract prosecution for overflow prosecution services, including arraignment, pre-trial,

motions, trial and reviews. Police department training and advice regarding infraction and traffic enforcement.

The Laumann Firm, PLLC, July 2008 to present

Mediation services focused on dispute resolution in all forms, emphasizing balanced, focused, and creative win-win resolutions.

Represent Plaintiffs in personal injury actions, including motor vehicle accidents and slip and fall injuries. Frequently appointed by King County and Pierce County Superior Courts as arbitrator for personal injury lawsuits in claims with stated value of less than \$50,000.00.

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

Yes, for the past 9 years, arbitration and mediation have been a significant part of my legal work.

I frequently arbitrate and mediate personal injury cases. In my practice before 2008, I arbitrated hundreds of cases as an advocate. I can only recall a handful of times that the arbitrator explained his or her decision, either orally at the hearing or in writing. From the litigant's perspective, not knowing what a decision maker finds important or not important was frustrating. When I am appointed to be an arbitrator, at the end of the hearing, I orally tell the litigants what I believed to be important and why, then give counsel the opportunity to address any issue s/he believes I may have not taken into account. After the hearing, I prepare a written opinion so that all parties will have a documented record of what facts I determined to be the facts of the case and why.

In a mediation, the parties have different perceptions of each other and the facts, yet usually share the goal that they want to resolve their lawsuit. Part of my method is to start with the common goal and take the parties through their perception of the case, frequently asking questions about the other side's perspective to shift the other party's perspective, increase empathy and humanize the opponent. I enjoy mediating cases, as I attempt to create an environment that empowers ordinary people to take back authority many feel they have lost. Many people want to get through a conflict, and the lawsuit reminds them of the injury that was not their fault. Being able to accept a settlement that is offered and move past a conflict to live their lives, as it is, is very restorative for many people.

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

Integrity, patience, compassion, flexibility and open-mindedness, common sense, creativity, ability to clearly communicate, courtesy, ability to control a courtroom, tact, and ability to deescalate extreme emotional reactions to situations.

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?

Yes, I completed the King County pro tem training in 2012. I frequently serve as a judge pro tem in King County, in Kent at the Maleng Regional Justice Center, Auburn, Seattle, Redmond, Issaquah and Burien. I have sat for the following Judges in King County District Court: Judge Arthur Chapman, Judge Lisa Paglisotti, Judge Anne Harper, Judge Ketu Shah, Judge Nathaniel Green, Judge Mark Chow, Judge Marcine Anderson, Judge Gregg Hirakawa, Judge David Meyer, Judge Mark Eide, Judge Susan Mahoney, Judge Corinna Harn, Judge Jason Poydras, Judge Matthew York, Judge David Steiner, Judge Lisa O'Toole, Judge Peter Nault, Judge Michael Finkle, Judge David Christie, Judge Laurel Gibson, Judge Elizabeth Stephenson,

and Judge Charles Delaurenti.

I have learned a great deal in the many hours and locations I have been a judge pro tem and the following list is not exhaustive, as I continue to learn something new every day.

First, I have seen that there are many different ways to perform the same function, in terms of court administration. Second, I have increased my decision making capability to quickly make decisions that take into account the particular person and situation before me. Third, I have expanded my ability to handle a courtroom and emotional outbursts from those who are under stress. Fourth, my level of patience has increased, so that I am able to withhold judgment about a situation until I have all the necessary information to make a just decision. Fifth, my ability to have compassion for a person while still imposing appropriate sanctions for failure to follow court orders has increased. Being a judge pro tem has been excellent training for running for the position of 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?

Yes, I support the ability of the public to access electronic court records and choose what they wish to print, at a reduced cost at the courthouse. If individuals receive any form of state or federal public assistance, the fee should be waived. Additionally, I support public access to download public documents from devices outside the court.

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

Yes, I believe that temporary, secure locking devices such as Yondr should be used when juries are in session. Pattern jury instructions have been modified to include admonitions to not perform independent research on smartphones, and securing the devices would be a non-invasive means of insuring that jurors followed the instructions.

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?

After the decision in *State v. Blazina*, 182 Wash.2d 827 344 P.3d 680 (2015), directing courts to make an individualized inquiry about the financial ability of defendant to pay discretionary costs and fees, I would anticipate that source of funding to be reduced. With the Washington Supreme Court recognizing that imposition of discretionary legal financial obligations can impose an unreasonable burden, particularly for those receiving SSI or similar fixed benefits, the dollar amount of court fees imposed will be going down. Different sources of funding will be necessary, as the majority of funds for District Court come from local funds, rather than relying on court fees.

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?

King County has a wealth of communities that speak languages other than English. Working with those communities to give them an explanation of the legal system, translated in different languages, would be a

step toward providing basic knowledge of how the Court functions. Topics of information could include a breakdown of jurisdiction, e.g., as to what type of court hears what type of case. For example District Court hears traffic infraction, small claims, anti-harassment and some protection orders, civil cases under \$100,000 and misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor crimes. Examples of Superior Court jurisdiction could include divorces, juvenile offenses and dependencies, wills, unlawful detainers, personal injury cases and felony crimes. When people are given a clear explanation about which Court could properly hear their case and potentially grant relief for their problem, they have a better opportunity for justice.

I would also support having an on-site District Court facilitator, similar in function to the Family Law facilitator, who is able to work with people one-on-one to insure all necessary paperwork is completed and filed to limit confusion and multiple trips to the courthouse. Providing education to ESL educators and community centers, who can in turn speak to many individuals about common topics, would be helpful to increase access to justice. If people do not know about potential remedies and how to ask a court for those remedies, opportunities for justice are lost. Some common questions include: What are my options when I get a traffic ticket? What am I required to do if I get a summons in the mail? How do I ask for an anti-harassment order? When people are educated about what options are available and how to access those options, access to justice can be increased.

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

To me, Black Lives Matter means acknowledging the implicit biases that systemically exist, which have created barriers to individuals having the same access to education and employment opportunities, knowing they are safe when they walk down the street or are in their homes; that the law protects all people equally, regardless of where a person was born, where they currently live, or the color of their skin.

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

The #metoo movement is focused on empowerment through empathy by letting survivors of sexual abuse and harassment know they are not alone. The movement is a grass roots based networking of people who have suffered sexual violence and abuse by linking survivors with resources and each other. Similarly, the #timesup movement is also focused on ending sexual violence and harassment, as well as ending the systemic denial of opportunities afforded to women and people of color in the entertainment industry, as well as in leadership positions in business and government. #Timesup also seeks to have those in leadership positions reflect those who are lead or governed by those in authority in terms of gender and racial representation.

One of legal issues in the #timesup movement involves potential conflicts of interest of the lawyers who are skilled in the area of sexual harassment law. In many cases, these lawyers have corporate clients that would potentially be defendants in actions brought by plaintiffs. Having adequate legal funding for plaintiff attorneys to pursue cases where the plaintiff is a lower or minimum wage earner could insure these plaintiffs could seek justice.

Second, given the current focus, lawsuits based on sexual assault and harassment claims are likely to increase, as statistical evidence reports that many women have not pursued these types of claims. Insuring the right to due process for all parties is integral to the public perception that all parties are treated fairly in the legal system.

Finally, another issue is in the jury selection process. The judge's duty is to insure that all parties are afforded due process, which includes being diligent in the jury selection process to insure all parties have a fair trial by neutral jurors.

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

The public should be able to download publicly accessible documents at any computer, in addition to at the courthouse. By having the official business of the courts, both substantive and procedural, clearly available to the public with reasonable limits to protect security and privacy, the Court is more open to the community.

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: March 9, 2018

Printed Name

Rhonda Laumann