

1. What is the most pressing issue facing the Whitman County District Court? What, if anything, do you plan to do about it if you are elected?

I have identified three important issues facing Whitman County District Court:

- a) **Technology:** the software we use in our District and Municipal Courts as a “case management system” is more than 20 years old. It is obsolete and is in need of replacement. Our Courts are operating in an inefficient manner, creating a hardship for our staff. Additionally, it interferes with the ability of citizens to effectively interact with the Court. As the Colfax Municipal Court Judge, I represent the District and Municipal Court Judges’ Association on the Washington Judicial Information Systems Committee. A new case management system for our Courts of Limited Jurisdiction is a top priority and we have successfully funded the new system to be implemented in within 1-2 years. In addition to many other features, the new system will increase efficiency for staff, enable electronic filing by litigants and will enhance the ability to retrieve information online.
- b) **Therapeutic Courts:** Statistical data is starting to enlighten the Courts to the fact that underlying mental health issues, including drug and alcohol addiction/abuse, often drives unlawful behavior. Our traditional probation model does not address the underlying issue(s) and, far too often, leads to re-offense, leaving both the individual and our community at risk. Most large jurisdictions have already created Therapeutic Courts (sometimes referred to as Mental Health or Drug Courts). These Courts balance accountability with rehabilitation in the attempt to both assist an individual in need while protecting our community. These Courts provide a more time and cost-effective delivery of justice. As Colfax Municipal Court Judge, I have attended numerous training sessions becoming educated on the implementation and operation of Therapeutic Courts and, if elected, plan to bring a Therapeutic Court to Whitman County.
- c) **Courtroom Security:** We have no Courtroom security in Whitman County. Whether a litigant, victim, spectator or Court staff, every citizen ought to be afforded the opportunity to attend Court proceedings safely. Unfortunately, Courtroom security has been cost-prohibitive. If elected, I plan on joining forces with other rural jurisdictions to bring meaningful Courtroom security to Whitman County at little or no cost to the taxpayer.

2. What do you believe to be the root causes of crime in Whitman County?

A common root cause to many of the Misdemeanor offenses seen in Whitman County District Court is the abuse of alcohol or other drugs. Far too often, a Defendant would have no criminal history but not for the abuse of alcohol or other drugs. Another common root cause of criminal behavior can be a diagnosed or diagnosable mental health issue. Sometimes alleged illegal behavior can be the

result of immaturity or irresponsibility. On occasion, illegal behavior is the consequence of the perception of necessity by the accused.

In the thousands of cases I have experienced as a prosecuting intern, public defender as well sitting as Judge, I see a wide variety of cases and people. My experience and training as Judge has taught me to make an individualized assessment of each case and person that comes before the Court. Each time, I ask, "what brought this person before the Court and how can the Court balance accountability and rehabilitation to assist them to make better decisions so they do not need to return?" The use of screening mechanisms can identify the root cause of the illegal behavior and allows the Judge to properly address the issue(s). As Judge, I draw from my experience and use these strategies to consider the cause of the behavior and that allows me to address the individual and the situation in the most effective manner.

3. Define what cultural awareness means to you and how it would affect your role as District Court Judge.

As Judge, I recognize that every individual has their own unique story and explanation for coming before the Court. The Judge must be aware of the role cultural background plays, both in what brought them to the Court and also how to best address their needs moving forward. All litigants are to be treated with patience and respect regardless of cultural background. Still, it is the Judge's obligation to be aware of cultural differences when facilitating justice. A common issue that arises in Whitman County District Court is the barrier language can create. This can be manifested in dialect or even in use of "legalese." The Judge has the obligation to ensure every litigant is afforded the opportunity to communicate in a language that is understood by the litigant. The Judge must use understandable terminology with litigants. When needed, resources for non-English speaking litigants are also available.

4. In what areas, if any, could the court system be more effective in reducing domestic violence?

Domestic violence cases are often complex and emotional matters for the Defendant as well as the victim. Washington's legislature has enacted many laws to ensure the safety of victims while safeguarding the constitutional rights of the accused. The Judge ought to err on the side of the safety and security of the victim when determining the issuance of pre and post trial protection orders. The Judge must also give a concerted and individual assessment of the Defendant and, when appropriate, balance punitive aspects of a judgment and sentence with the need for resources for rehabilitation. The goal of a judge in domestic violence matter is clear: protect the victim and the community while addressing the needs of the accused in an effort to break the pattern of violence.

5. List what you believe are the three most important duties of a District Court Judge.

Fairness, Respect and Justice.

Justice is about people, not about power. The Judge must uphold the Constitution and act in a manner that is neutral, detached and unbiased. 8 out of 10 litigants in Whitman County District Court appear without a lawyer. The Judge must promote open access and confidence in the Court by receiving litigants with patience, speaking to them considerately, applying the facts and issuing a fair ruling, explaining the ruling thoroughly. The Judge must be knowledgeable and ought to educate litigants, mindful of the balance between accountability and rehabilitation and place litigants in a better position leaving the Court than that of which they arrived. Whether a litigant leaves Court perceiving that they have won or lost, they know they received a fair day in Court, they were heard and spoken to respectfully by a Judge that facilitated Justice.