

31st Legislative District Democrats Candidate Questionnaire

1. Your name: Johanna Bender

2. Candidate for: King County Superior Court, Department 28 (incumbent)

Party

Affiliation: N/A as a judicial candidate (see Judicial Canon 4.1)

3. Campaign information:

Manager:

Phone: 425-686-8466

Fax:

Address: P.O. Box 23026, Seattle, WA 98102

Website: Retainjudgebender.com

E-mail: Retainjudgebender@gmail.com

4. If elected, what positive changes will you champion that will benefit the 31st LD?

As a Judge, I must avoid any appearance of bias. In particular, I cannot make “pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of judicial office.” Judicial Canon 2.10(B).

I can share my judicial philosophy, however, and comment on how I believe my commitment to equal access to justice is to the benefit of all members of the community. As a judge, I believe that we serve several distinct and equally important roles. Inside the courtroom, we must approach each case prepared, curious, and committed to fair and easily understood decision-making. Our work as judges, however, does not end when court is in recess. Outside the courtroom, judges should collaborate with other community members and leaders to advance a system of justice that is open, trusted, and accessible.

I have been actively involved in such endeavors. I was appointed by Governor Inslee to serve from 2013-2016 as a Trustee of the Legal Foundation of Washington. LFW distributes millions of dollars in funding annually to civil legal organizations throughout Washington State. In 2012, I was appointed by the board of the District and Municipal Judges Association to serve as liaison from that organization to the Statewide Access to Justice Board. I held that position until my appointment to the Superior Court bench in 2015.

I am actively involved in the education of attorneys and the creation of a diverse and capable judiciary. For example, I have taught at the National Institute for Trial Advocacy and have coached the Seattle Preparatory Academy Mock Trial team. Since 2013, I have served as a planner and faculty member for the Judicial Institute. The mission of this program is to train and mentor diverse candidates who are interested in judicial careers.

From 2013-2015, I led the County’s Regional Mental Health Court and Regional Veterans Court programs. These programs provide intensive supervision and services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community, promoting both recovery and community safety. In furtherance of that work, I sat on the Systems Workgroup of the Seattle Police Department Crisis Intervention Committee and on the District and Municipal Court Association Therapeutic Courts

Committee. In 2014, I was elected as Co-Chair of the County Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Oversight Committee. This committee advises the County Executive and County Council regarding the priorities for deployment of MIDD tax levy revenue. I continue to serve in this role, and am actively involved in the current evaluation of the MIDD program in anticipation of renewal of the MIDD tax levy in 2016. See <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MHSA/MIDDPlan/MIDDReviewandRenewalPlanning.aspx>

5. What are the three most critical issues you expect to encounter in the office you are seeking?

Like many public programs in Washington State, the courts are facing a dire budget crisis. Washington courts receive less state funding than almost any other court system nationally. Washington courts will continue to have to manage resource limitations. I serve on the Court's budget committee and will continue to seek opportunities to steward the Court's resources effectively and frugally.

It is well-recognized that the justice system, like our other public institutions, are impacted by – and at times reinforce – disproportionality and implicit bias. As judges, we must continually strive to identify and respond to these phenomena. I am actively involved in leading endeavors to make the bench more diverse and responsive to the public we serve, and I will continue to seek similar opportunities.

The court system has become the repository for community members experiencing behavioral crisis, whether in the form of drug addiction or mental illness. As co-chair of the King County Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Oversight Committee, I collaborate with other county leaders as well as with behavioral health providers to support wellness and recovery programs that reduce unnecessary episodes of hospitalization and incarceration.

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.

Every week, I am called upon to make sentencing decisions in serious felony cases. This involves considerations of public safety as well as recovery and rehabilitation. There is little more humbling and difficult than deciding whether to imprison another person and, if so, for how long. I have learned to listen carefully to all interested parties, which may include lawyers, crime victims, family members of the victim and the defendant, victim advocates, and the defendant. I cannot be mindful of the negative feedback I may get from those who are disappointed by my decisions. Instead, I carefully consider all input and make the best decision I can with the facts available to me.

7. What methods will you employ to communicate with your constituency on a regular basis?

I post regularly on my judicial Facebook page about my community service and about initiatives and programs sponsored by King County Superior Court. See www.facebook.com/judgejohannabender. I also post regularly on my twitter account @judgejbender. Finally, I present at continuing education events and other public speaking forums.

8. What other information would you like us to consider?

I can think of no more rewarding way to serve our community than as a judge. I believe that our justice system promotes the meaningful and fair resolution of civil and criminal disputes. Our courts, however, require stewardship and oversight. As a judge, I have worked hard to ensure that our courts are open to, and trusted by, the myriad communities we serve.

I declare under penalty of perjury the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed at Seattle, WA

Signature

A handwritten signature in red ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish, is written over a solid black horizontal line.

Please return to:

Mark Boswell, Chair
31st District Democrats
P.O. Box 161
Sumner, WA. 98390

Or email to: webmaster@31stdistrictdemocrats.org