

Judge Ronald Costeck

Retain For District Court Judge Island County

Campaign To Elect Judge Costeck Press Release:

Dear Friends, Whidbey and Camano Community Members:

As Island County approaches the 2026 candidate filing period, I am proud to announce my intention to seek election to continue serving our community as Presiding Judge of the Island County District Court. It has been my honor to serve as a full-time Judicial Officer on the Island County District and Municipal benches since 2018. In 2024, I was entrusted with the role of Presiding Judge for Island County's District Court and the Municipal Courts of Coupeville, Oak Harbor, and Langley. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue the work of strengthening our courts and serving the people of Island County. While no other candidate has announced an intention to run for District Court Judge, the work of District Court has a direct and meaningful impact on our community. For that reason, it is important that every voter understands what their Presiding Judge stands for and the principles guiding the court.

Having served on the bench for more than eight years, I bring to this position the benefit of experience in every aspect of the role. More than half of District Court cases involve civil matters, and I have presided over cases ranging from straightforward claims to highly complex disputes. As Presiding Judge, I have developed a proven track record of managing large civil and criminal calendars while also fulfilling the significant administrative and managerial responsibilities of the office. My years on the bench also mean that I am virtually free of the conflict-of-interest issues that can arise when a local public criminal attorney is appointed or selected to the position—an issue that can create delays and unnecessary costs for taxpayers.

Experience on the bench matters. Handling thousands of cases, developing efficient systems, and exploring effective alternatives has allowed me to cultivate the judgment necessary to balance individual rights and needs with the broader goal of reducing recidivism and maintaining a safe community. A judicial officer must possess the skill to remain fair, impartial, and steadfast in upholding the rule of law. My experience has given me a balanced perspective. My perspective is shaped not only by my time on the bench, but also by my career prior to becoming a judge. I have served as both a prosecutor and a defense attorney, handling cases ranging from quality-of-life offenses to serious felony matters. As the founder of a private law firm, I also built a practice and handled complex civil, domestic, and family law cases. This civil background directly complements my responsibilities on the bench, helping me better understand the diverse legal issues that come before the court and enables me to effectively train and guide court staff. With over twenty-eight years in the legal community—as a judge, prosecutor, and private attorney—I have encountered nearly every type of legal issue that arises in District Court.

Beyond legal experience, I believe a judge must bring genuine concern for the people and the community they serve. Throughout my career I have taught as an adjunct professor and lecturer at Temple University, Lummi, Skagit, and Whatcom Colleges, as well as in law-enforcement training programs. I carry that

commitment to education into the courtroom by taking time to explain my legal reasoning rather than simply issuing a ruling. This approach promotes understanding and fosters a sense of fairness among those who appear before the court. I also believe strongly in civic engagement and public education. I have volunteered myself and your courtroom to teachers from Camano and Whidbey Islands who want to expose their students to the judicial system. I coach a high school mock trial team and routinely speak to community groups and at the U.S. Navy's Sailor Safety programs, to help residents better understand how District Court affects their lives.

My judicial philosophy is straightforward: the primary mission of the court is to uphold the law through the fair and impartial administration of justice. Every person who enters the courtroom deserves respect and a meaningful opportunity to be heard. Effective judicial discretion requires listening carefully, understanding both sides, and applying the law and rendering a decision with the balanced perspective that experience provides. During my time serving on the Therapeutic and Education Committees for the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association, I recognized the value of progressive alternatives within the justice system. Rehabilitative programs can reduce recidivism and help individuals rebuild their lives. However, rehabilitation must always be balanced with accountability and deterrence in order to protect victims and maintain community safety.

District Court is, at its core, a community court. With roughly three times the case volume of Superior Court, it is the court most residents are likely to encounter—whether as a civil litigant, a defendant, or a victim of a crime. Our community deserves a court that is accessible, transparent, and efficient.

Over the past two years as Presiding Judge, I have worked to expand access to the court for residents who may struggle to travel to the courthouse. I have overseen improvements to the District Court website, expanded online resources and forms, and enhanced virtual court proceedings. We are also preparing for the implementation of the statewide electronic filing system scheduled for October 2026, which will further improve public access for individuals seeking protection orders, filing civil petitions, or participating in other court proceedings. Additionally, I have worked to update local court rules to ensure compliance with state requirements, provide clearer guidance for attorneys, and improve the overall efficiency of our court system.

Equally important is supporting the dedicated staff who keep our courts running. As Presiding Judge, I have advocated strongly with the Board of County Commissioners for fair and livable wages for court employees. Addressing the long-standing funding disparities of the judicial branch—and the wage gap between our staff and those in comparable jurisdictions—is essential to reducing the high turnover experienced during the prior administration and preserving the stability, public access, and professionalism that our court system requires. I will continue to pursue a living wage for staff if I am retained as your presiding judge.

Serving as your Presiding Judge has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life. I remain committed to ensuring that Island County's courts are fair, accessible, efficient, and grounded in respect for every member of our community. More information on my candidacy can be obtained by access www.JudgeCosteck.com.

This November, I respectfully ask for your support so that I may continue the work we have begun together—strengthening our judiciary, improving access to justice, and upholding the rule of law for the people of Island County.

Ron Costeck
District Court Judge