

Candidate

Barbara Madsen

Email

madsenbarbaradon@gmail.com

Position Sought

Position 5, Washington state Supreme Court

Precinct

28th

Have you sought an endorsement from any other political party?

No

Have you ever failed to pay any taxes or court-ordered judgments?

No

Have you ever been found in violation of any requirements of the Public Disclosure Commission or Federal Election Commission?

No

Have you ever been convicted of an ethics violation, a felony, or a crime of moral turpitude (such as fraud, bribery, false statements, etc.)?

No

Have you ever been convicted of a drug or alcohol related offense? A domestic violence offense? Or an offense involving racial or sexual harassment?

No

Have you ever been disciplined by a state bar association, whether it be Washington or elsewhere?

No

Has anyone filed a complaint against you with a state bar association, whether in Washington or elsewhere?

No

Have you ever been fired from a job?

No

Campaign Information

Campaign Name

Retain Barbara Madsen

Campaign Email

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[Map It](#)

Candidate's Statement

What prior experience is relevant to the position?

I earned a BA from the University of Washington in 1974 and a J.D. from Gonzaga University School of Law in 1977.

After law school, I worked as a public defender in King and Snohomish counties. In 1982, I joined the Seattle City Attorney's Office and was appointed Special Prosecutor in 1984. Mayor Charles Royer appointed me to the Seattle Municipal Court in 1988, where I served as Presiding Judge for two terms. In 1992 I was elected as the third woman to serve on the Washington Supreme Court in 1992, and re-elected in 1998, 2004, 2010, and 2016. I served two terms as the 55th Chief Justice, from 2010-2017.

Why do you feel you are qualified for the position for which you are running?

I have devoted my career to making the justice system accessible and fair for everyone. As a public defender I saw firsthand the disparity in our criminal justice system based on race. As a judge in Seattle Municipal Court I made it a priority to encourage attorneys of color to act as pro tem judges. Additionally, I organized the first domestic violence roundtable, which brought together stakeholders to find solutions to the scourge of domestic violence in our community. After joining the Supreme Court, I was appointed chair of the Washington State Gender and Justice Commission. The Commission, partnering with other community groups, succeeded in passing legislation banning the shackling of women prisoners during labor. The Commission has produced the Domestic Violence Manual for Judges, the Sexual Orientation Benchguide, the Sexual Offense Benchguide, and the Immigration Resource Guide for Judges, in partnership with the Minority and Justice Commission, as well as developing judicial education on a wide variety of gender issues and model policies designed to enhance the safety of victims of domestic violence. In 2001, I facilitated Washington's first Glass Ceiling Study. In 2004, I co chaired the Crystal Brame Committee which secured legislation requiring all police agencies to adopt investigation protocol for police perpetrated domestic violence and sexual assault. In 2005, I helped establish the Initiative for Diversity, a program encouraging legal employers to commit to and implement organizational plans to increase diversity. I led development of a limited legal license technician program, the first in the nation, to address the critical justice gap for low and moderate income people. In 2013, I led the Supreme Court efforts to develop the Tribal State Court Consortium, encouraging and building partnerships among tribal and state judicial officers. In 2019, I was appointed co-chair of the Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care, in which stakeholders work to improve court processes, laws, regulations and policies so children can move safely and quickly into stable homes, through reunification with parents or through adoption. In 2020, I was appointed chair of the Judicial Information System Committee. The committee oversees information technology for Washington courts, automating and supporting the daily operations of the courts and maintaining a statewide network connecting the courts and partner criminal justice agencies to the JIS database.

Why did you decide to run?

I was riveted to the confirmation hearing for Clarence Thomas to the US Supreme Court. I was appalled at the treatment Anita Hill received from the Senate. I had experienced similar treatment as a woman attorney. I decided to run for the Supreme Court because I thought change in our profession needed to come from the top. I have spent my career trying to reform the justice system and legal profession in order to make opportunities for women and people of color, as well as to make the courts more accessible and fair to everyone, including marginalized communities and people of color.

What is your involvement, if any, in promoting diversity in your workplace, in organizations in which you are a member, etc...?

In June last year I cosigned a letter with the rest of the Supreme Court members. I include this in relevant part because it is a commitment that I have made to work for justice.

“As lawyers and members of the bar, we must recognize the harms that are caused when meritorious claims go unaddressed due to systemic inequities or the lack of financial, personal, or systemic support. And we must also recognize that this is not how a justice system must operate. Too often in the legal profession, we feel bound by tradition and the way things have “always” been. We must remember that even the most venerable precedent must be struck down when it is incorrect and harmful. The systemic oppression of black Americans is not merely incorrect and harmful; it is shameful and deadly.

Finally, as individuals, we must recognize that systemic racial injustice against black Americans is not an omnipresent specter that will inevitably persist. It is the collective product of each of our individual actions—every action, every day. It is only by carefully reflecting on our actions, taking individual responsibility for them, and constantly striving for better that we can address the shameful legacy we inherit. We call on every member of our legal community to reflect on this moment and ask ourselves how we may work together to eradicate racism.

As we lean in to do this hard and necessary work, may we also remember to support our black colleagues by lifting their voices. Listening to and acknowledging their experiences will enrich and inform our shared cause of dismantling systemic racism.

We go by the title of “Justice” and we reaffirm our deepest level of commitment to achieving justice by ending racism. We urge you to join us in these efforts. This is our moral imperative.”

I am making good on my promise. I am part of the court wide consortium that meets weekly to work on targeted solutions to injustice in our court system. Additionally as cochair of the commission on children in foster care I am working with stakeholders to address the racial disproportionality in the foster care system.

List some of your most important values

After years of judging I have learned that understanding my own biases is a critical component of being a fair jurist. Additionally, compassion, integrity and impartiality are central. Hard work and an open mind are also critical.

Any other information that would be of assistance to the Committee

I believe it is important to help educate members of the bench and bar and have organized many educational programs for the Washington judiciary. These programs have included such topics as; when bias compounds-the intersectionality of race and gender; the neurobiology of rape; girl trouble-how to connect with juvenile female offenders; overcoming challenges to immigration for victims of domestic violence to name a few.

Additionally I have been a presenter at many continuing legal education presentations, including Jurisdiction: Across Invisible Lines-panelist 62nd Judicial Conf (9/13/21); Overview of CR 82.5-panelist DMCJA Spring Conf. (6/7/21); Reimagining Justice in Child Welfare/Dependency-presenter (CITA-5/24/21); Reconnecting and Looking Ahead-presenter -Tribal State Court Consortium Spring Regional Meeting (4/16/21); Path to the Bench-presenter Judicial Fellows Clinic, Judicial Institute (3/23/2019); The Role of the Courts in Referendum & Initiatives-panelist, Bench Bar Conf. KCBA (11/11/16); The Promise and Challenges of Limited Licensing, 65 S.C. L. Rev. 533 (2014); Lessons Learned and Insights Concerning Effective Briefing and Oral Advocacy Before the Supreme Court, panelist-Thurston County Bar Ass'n (2013); Power and Reach of the Internet-presenter, 55th Judicial Conf. (9/23/13); Ethics, Elections, and Judicial Independence-presenter-SCJA Spring Conf (4/29/13); GR 31 Update-presenter-SCJA Spring Conf (4/29/13); 100 Years of Justice-presenter-WA Courts Historical Soc'y (11/13/10); Presenter/Panelist, WA Appeals: New Rules and Expert Guidance Through the State Appellate Process seminar, WSBA-CLE; Panelist: Mock Trials, Future of the Law Institute (11/20/10); Civil Legal Representation and Access to Justice , ____ Seattle Journal for Social Justice ____ (fall issue 2010) Seattle U School of Law CLE (2/19/10) (fwd to Journal for publ on 4/27/10); Panelist, 2d Annual Chief Justice Ronald George Distinguished Lecture, "Women Chief Justices," Golden Gate University Sch. of Law, (10/12/10); Understanding Domestic Violence- Panelist-(10/26/10); Keynote, Racial Bias in the Criminal Justice System, 47:2 Gonzaga L. Rev. 243 (2011, 2012); Panelist-"My Path to the Bench: Diverse Judges & Comm'rs Share Their Stories," Fifth Annual Statewide Diversity Conf., WA Minority Bar Ass'ns (6/25/10); Panelist-"What Does the Judge REALLY Think of Your Brief?," AGO Legal Writing CLE (12/8/09); Guest Lecturer, WA Const. Law seminar, J. Johnson's Seattle U class (11/23/09); Panelist-"Interpreting Our State Const. (since Gunwall)," The WA State Const. CLE, WA Courts Historical Soc'y (10/8/08); Panelist, "Civility: A Professional & Effective Necessity in the Practice of Law," American Inns of Court (12/7/07); Panelist-"Interpreting Our State Const. (since Gunwall)," The WA State Const. CLE, WA Courts Historical Soc'y (11/30/07)