

King County Democrats 2024 Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate name
Paul Crisalli
Candidate pronouns
He/Him
Campaign Filer_Name
Paul Crisalli for Judge
Campaign email
judgepaulcrisalli@gmail.com
Campaign phone
(360) 768-4489
Number we can text or call if we have questions about this form
(206) 819-6367
Campaign website
https://www.judgepaulcrisalli.com
Campaign manager name
Paul Crisalli
Campaign manager email
judgepaulcrisalli@gmail.com
Campaign manager phone
(206) 819-6367
What type of position are you running for?
King County Superior Court
What position are you running for?
King County Superior Court, Position 41
Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?
Yes
List your Bar and legal association ratings.
Exceptionally Well-Qualified by Latina/o Bar Association of Washington Well-Qualified by King County Bar Association Well-Qualified by QLaw Well-Qualified by Joint Asian Judicial Evaluation Committee Well-Qualified by Cardozo Society
How does your lived experience inform your understanding of justice?
Our lived experiences inherently shape our understanding of justice. These experiences form who we are, our core values, and how we respond to certain situations, which all relate to our understanding of justice. In some ways, this can be a positive thing, in that our experiences shape our principles and moral code. It can also have its challenges, in that these experiences can create or enforce explicit and implicit biases. Personally, as a white male who lives a privileged life, I know and accept that my lived experiences (and thus understanding of justice) is different than those who are different than me. It is incumbent upon me to constantly listen, learn, and self-critique as to how my lived experiences might affect my understanding of justice differently than those who appear before me in Court. I try to understand what different lived experiences people have had that lead to their own understandings of justice. I try to not just adapt my decisions but how I communicate my decisions to account for the differences in my understanding of justice and those who are before me.
What role do you see for the judiciary in addressing injustices from the criminal justice system?

The judiciary has a primary role in addressing injustices from the criminal justice system. While there are statutory and legal constraints at times, Courts must recognize injustices when they are apparent, and when appropriate, take action to stop or prevent the injustices from occurring. For a superior court judge, it is necessary to listen carefully to the parties, review all relevant materials, ask about the facts and effects of decisions, and try to understand the full picture to prevent unintended injustices from occurring. Judges are also given a wide range of discretion when dealing with the criminal justice system, from search warrants to pretrial detention decisions to evidentiary rulings and even sentencing options. A judge must be ever mindful that their decisions can create or endorse an injustice in the criminal justice system. When appropriate, a judge must recognize the injustice and address it.

One area that can lead to many injustices are lack of resources, whether it be funding or attorneys. This leads to lengthy delays, which is a denial of justice. Courts must advocate for better funding and work to support lawyers to enable them to ably prepare and defend.

How do you balance adherence to precedents against changes in society?

As a superior court judge, I am bound to follow precedents established by the appellate courts that review my decisions. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that some precedents are antiquated or based on flawed assumptions or biases. In such situations, it is important to carefully analyze whether those precedents remain in fact, good law or whether more recent legal principles that have accounted for the changes in society are more applicable. If the precedent still applies and must be followed, it is necessary to explain to the parties and hopefully the appellate courts the flaws as well as why the precedent has to be followed. Both the parties and the appellate courts can then have a better record and understanding to analyze the issue.

How will you make sure racial, sexual, gender, and other implicit and explicit forms of discrimination are not responsible for guilty pleas or excessive sentences in criminal cases in your jurisdiction?

The key is to listen carefully and ask questions to get as full of an understanding as possible about the circumstances leading to the guilty plea or sentence. It is also necessary to constantly inform myself about how racial, sexual, gender, and other implicit and explicit forms of discrimination can lead to guilty pleas or excessive sentences. This can happen through courses I attend discussing these forms of discrimination, discussing the issues with those who have different lived experiences than myself, and making sure that each plea or sentence adds to my education so that I can have a better ear for instances when these forms of discrimination are occurring. The last step is to ensure that regardless of the arguments presented, it is clear to the parties that my rulings are free from discrimination.

How will you ensure people have equal access to the law, considering the prohibitive cost of civil litigation?

I believe that it is my responsibility to be as nimble of a court as possible to limit areas where courts create unnecessary costs and thus limited access. As a result, my court is paperless, so parties do not have to worry about copying costs; I offer virtual hearings to avoid travel costs; and I stay on top of the statuses of my civil cases to avoid unnecessary litigation. Since there are an extraordinary number of unrepresented parties in our court system, I point these individuals to resources that can help them navigate the process. I also try to speak as plainly as possible, free from legal jargon. I try to explain in simple terms what is going on and why I'm deciding the way that I'm deciding. I try to make sure that regardless of who is before me, whether represented or unrepresented, they are in a safe place where the community comes to have their disputes heard and explained in a simple way. Outside the court, I am an advocate for additional resources (and lawyers) to better ensure equal access to the law.

What public interest work have you done in the last five years?

My career has been primarily working in the public sector. I currently serve as a judge on King County Superior Court. Before that, I worked for nearly 12 years for the Washington State Attorney General's Office, in the Labor and Industries' Division (working on complex worker safety matters and appeals) and then in the Complex Litigation Division. In that later role, I worked on campaign finance enforcement matters; defending Washington's Reproductive Parity Act from constitutional challenges; bringing affirmative litigation against the prior administration's federal agencies for their proposed rules on religious rights, reproductive rights, and educational funding; and working to return fraudulently stolen CARES Act funds. I also managed the Complex Litigation Division's cases in the appellate courts and co-chaired the AGO Ethics Committee.

Outside the AGO, I was Secretary of the Board of Trustees for the King County Bar Association, and I chaired the Membership Committee and Appellate Section. I also served on and chaired the Washington State Bar Association's Court Rules and Procedures Committee and the Judicial Recommendations Committee.

As a member of the legal profession, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

As a lawyer, I am most proud of the matters where I felt I did my part to improve the lives of my community and fellow Washingtonians. As a judge, I have the honor to get to interact with our community to address difficult situations. It is fulfilling when I provide a decision, consistent with the law, that recognizes the crux of the dispute with humanity and compassion, that helps the parties move forward with their lives.

At the Washington State Attorney General's Office, I worked on matters that led to improvements in worker safety, so that workers could go home to their families at the end of the day. I challenged proposed federal rules that would have deprived Washingtonians access to health care, including reproductive and contraceptive services, and funding for public educational institutions. I worked on matters dealing with campaign finance enforcement—trying to ensure that Washington voters had access to information necessary to decide their votes in elections and to hold those accountable that hid or refused to disclose political donations or information.

What conditions compel you to sentence below the minimum standard?

There are several factors I consider for sentencing below the minimum standard. It is necessary to understand the relative

age and brain development of the individual and whether the minimum range will be counter-productive to helping this individual become a productive member of society. As a judge, I want to do my part to prevent causing a cycle of incarceration that can be avoided. It is also necessary to consider the existence of programs and support systems to help this individual address the behaviors or decision that led to the sentence. I review whether the facts (or law) support the proposed sentence. I carefully review the factual basis for the conviction or plea and sentence. This includes trying to understand what I can about the individual and why they are interacting with me in the criminal justice system. If I'm not satisfied that the proposed sentence is supported by the facts or the law, I act consistent with my obligation as a judge, including imposing a sentence below the minimum standard. For many cases I see, I tell the individual that my goal is that they never have to see me again because they are out in society, helping their community.

Fines and fees present an obstacle for many people seeking justice. How can you address that issue?

Between recent case law and changes to the statutes, judges are given broad discretion (and sometimes are required to) waive assessment of fines and fees when the individual would be unable to pay. During sentencings, I almost always ask about the individual's ability to pay fines or fees. I regularly waive fines and fees when the individual is unable to pay or it would present an obstacle for them. I am also proud of the initiatives our Court has taken to create simpler processes to waive fees in civil matters and protection orders.

CERTIFICATION: The candidate hereby certifies that, to the best of their knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes

Created on: May 11th, 2024