

King County Democrats 2026 Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate name

Tricia Grove Johnson

PDC Filer_name

Tricia Grove Johnson

Campaign phone

425-466-0619

Number we can text or call if we have questions about this form

425-466-0619

Campaign email

grovejohnsonforjudge@gmail.com

Campaign manager name

Mary Ann Ottinger

Campaign manager email

grovejohnsonforjudge@gmail.com

Campaign manager phone

425-466-0619

Consultant name

Mary Ann Ottinger

Consultant email

grovejohnsonforjudge@gmail.com

Jurisdiction of office sought

District Court

Specific office

Southeast District Court, Judge Pos.3

Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?

Yes

Will you share a link to your code of conduct?

https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules/?fa=court_rules.list&group=ga&set=CJC

Please describe your background (education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation and political activity).

I graduated from the University of Washington in 1992 and Seattle University School of Law in 1996. For nearly 30 years, my work has focused on public interest law. I serve as Chief Public

Defender for the Cities of Renton, Auburn and Pacific, overseeing representation for individuals who cannot afford counsel. I also work as the Prosecuting Attorney for the City of Maple Valley, developing charging practices that emphasize fairness and community impact. I serve on the Blake Advisory Committee, helping guide statewide implementation of the State v. Blake decision and the process for vacating past drug convictions. My volunteer work includes participating in the Renton Domestic Violence Task Force, The Friends Project connecting first responders with the special needs community, leading Maple Valley Rotary and raising funds for Fred Hutch as a cancer survivor. I also have family ties to organized labor, with a nephew who is a member of IBEW Local 46.

Please tell us about your proudest accomplishment either through your civic, public and/or community involvement?

As a lawyer, being on the ground floor in creating the King County Community Court for the City of Auburn has been transformative. I've had the privilege of helping individuals navigate the legal system, access resources, and rebuild their lives. Seeing people grow and succeed through support and accountability has reinforced my belief that justice must be both fair and compassionate. As the Prosecuting Attorney for Maple Valley, the community where I was born, raised, and now live with my own family—I carry a deep personal commitment to public service. This role is more than a professional responsibility; it is a calling rooted in love for my community. Every day, I strive to uphold justice, protect the vulnerable, and ensure that our legal system reflects the values of equity, dignity, and opportunity for all. These experiences have taught me that justice is not one-size-fits-all, and I am proud of my perspective.

What injustices have you perceived, either within or outside the courtroom, and what was your response to those events?

As a public defender, I saw firsthand how mental illness and homelessness were too often treated as criminal issues. I worked to connect people with services, sought appropriate evaluations, and advocated for alternatives to punitive outcomes. I also witnessed systemic racial and socioeconomic disparities in treatment and sentencing. In response, I shifted into the role of chief prosecutor in my own community, where I monitored biased patterns and ensured charging decisions were based on evidence and law rather than assumptions about race, income, or background. As a Judge Pro Tem, I've seen how heavy caseloads can challenge effective representation, and I make sure counsel has the time and resources needed, granting continuances when required for fairness and ensuring every defendant understands their rights.

What will you do to restore faith in the integrity of the justice system?

As a judge, I would ensure that every person who enters the courtroom is treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. I would uphold constitutional rights, safeguard due process, and maintain transparency in all proceedings. I would work to identify and address disparities that arise in the legal system, including those related to race, income, or mental health challenges, and use judicial discretion carefully to avoid unnecessarily harsh outcomes in bail and sentencing decisions. I would apply the law consistently while supporting evidence based diversion and restorative justice approaches when appropriate and authorized by law. Although judges do not set policy, I would fulfill the role as a guardian of justice by applying the law equitably and maintaining public trust in the courts.

In cases involving “malicious harassment” or hate crimes, what are some of the issues in balancing free speech rights against the need to control offensive activity?

Balancing free speech rights with the need to address malicious harassment or hate crime conduct is one of the most challenging issues in the legal system. Our Constitution protects

even deeply offensive speech, so the court must be careful not to criminalize ideas simply because they are hateful or unpopular. At the same time, judges have a responsibility to recognize when speech crosses the line into conduct that threatens safety or targets individuals with intimidation, true threats, or bias motivated harm. The key is ensuring that laws focus on actions—violence, threats, or harassment—rather than viewpoints. As a judge, I would apply these principles by safeguarding constitutional rights while holding people accountable when their conduct moves from protected expression to unlawful, targeted harm. That balance is essential to protect both community safety and the integrity of free speech.

New technologies like AI and advances in practice are continually changing. How would you approach cases involving novel legal issues or emerging technologies?

When faced with emerging technologies and novel legal issues, a judge's role is to remain grounded in core legal principles while staying open to new information. I believe judges must approach these cases with humility, curiosity, and a commitment to understanding the technology well enough to evaluate it responsibly. This includes asking focused questions, ensuring transparency about how a technology works, and carefully assessing risks such as bias, reliability, or evidentiary integrity. I would rely on established legal frameworks—due process, evidentiary standards, constitutional protections—while avoiding broad rulings that outpace the technology. My goal would be to make decisions that are thoughtful, well reasoned, and rooted in fairness, ensuring that innovation does not outstrip the rights and protections our justice system is built to preserve.

A 2021 Gender Justice Study of Washington Courts found evidence of many gender inequities. How would you support a criminal justice system that rectifies these historical and systemic inequities?

The 2021 Gender Justice Study showed that gender inequities persist across Washington courts, with the greatest impact on Black, Indigenous, and women of color, LGBTQ+ people, and women living in poverty. As a judge, supporting a justice system that addresses these inequities begins with acknowledging that gender still affects how people experience the courts. I would ensure that every person is treated with dignity, apply trauma informed practices where appropriate, and remain vigilant for biased patterns in courtroom treatment, credibility assessments, sentencing, and access to court resources. I would also support efforts to make courts more accessible—such as flexible scheduling, childcare access, and reducing financial barriers—issues the study identifies as disproportionately burdening women. Ultimately, a judge must commit to fairness that is not theoretical but lived in every interaction, helping ensure the courtroom is a place where historical disadvantages are not repeated.

Attestation

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