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Appeals court candidate highlights importance of court

While many may think of the court system as a place where criminal punishment is meted out or civil wrongs are righted, there is another level of the court system that helps determine what the law means.

This court, the state court of appeals, is not just a place for lower court decisions to be reviewed. Washington State Court of Appeals candidate Harvey Dunham notes it is where policy is made.

“The reason this position is so important to the average person is that this is the place where policy is made,” Dunham said. “This is where the laws from the legislature get interpreted. So on issues like land usage, zoning, environmental issues and private property rights, for example, the judges at the court of appeals clarify what the state policies are on those issues.”

Three courts of appeal

Washington State has three courts of appeal, two in Western Washington and one in Spokane known as the Division 3, District 1 Court of Appeals. The Courts of Appeal are one level below the Washington State Supreme Court.

Dunham, a lawyer with 27 years experience and seven years experience as pro-tem criminal case judge, said he is running for the court of appeals position because he feels well suited to the job.

“I have the judicial temperament for this in that I am willing to examine all angles of a case to make sure everyone, rich or poor, gets a fair trial,” he said.

At the Court of Appeals, only the written testament of a court decision is reviewed. Witnesses and juries are not involved and the panel of appeals court judges’ alone make the decision. Along with hearing traditional topics pertaining to the law, Dunham said the court of appeals is also seeing new kinds of cases related to technology and the internet.

“It is important to consider who is in this judicial position and what experience they have since the issues being heard are both familiar and new,” he said.

Dunham, an Army veteran who passed the Bar exam in Washington, Texas and Arizona, has been endorsed by state Senator Bob Morton, state Representative Joel Kretz and state Representative Shelly Short.

For more information about Dunham, visit www.votedunham.com.

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Special to the S-E