

Triplet named new Superior Court judge

Posted by **Thomas**

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Spokane County Court Commissioner James Triplet had to keep the secret all of Sunday night: He'd been chosen by Gov. Chris Gregoire to replace Neal Rielly as Superior Court Judge.

"She swore me to secrecy until she could make the announcement today," Triplet said of the governor. "It's both an honor and a privilege to get this appointment."

Gregoire picked Triplet over fellow finalists Mark Vovos, a prominent defense attorney, and former Spokane Mayor Dennis Hession.

"There was some stiff competition out there," Triplet said. "I've been a fulltime court commissioner since 2004 so I feel I'm prepared for the next step in my career."

Gregoire said in a news release that Triplet will continue to bring innovation to the court.

"As commissioner, he continually worked to provide understanding and accessibility to the general public regarding our court system," Gregoire said in the release. "His passion and background will make him a strong addition to the Superior Court."

Triplet — who earned his law degree in 1988 from Gonzaga University School of Law — said he's currently working to transfer to another commissioner the cases involving 150 children in dependency and 300 family-law cases.

Earlier this year, the Washington State Bar Association named him Family Law Section Professional of the Year in recognition of his contributions to establishing a unified family court model.

Triplet said he worked for years under Rielly, who retired on Aug. 29.

"I have big shoes to try to fill," Triplet said of Rielly. "But I think he got the better end of the deal. He's retiring and gardening and playing golf. I have a lot of things I have to transition out of and into. That's what I'm stressing about today."

Vovos could not be reached late Monday for comment. Hession said he was disappointed but honored to have been considered a finalist.

"Jim Triplet is just a very good judicial officer," Hession said. "He's well respected and he will be an excellent Superior Court Judge."