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## 'Centrist' lawyer challenges conservative incumbent

By Kristin M. Kraemer, Herald staff writer

A Tacoma lawyer who has declared himself "a more centrist choice" for the Washington Supreme Court is trying to unseat a first-term conservative justice.

The race for Position 1 on the state's highest court pits Justice Jim Johnson against challenger Stan Rumbaugh.

Both candidates say they support maintaining individual rights. But Rumbaugh claims his opponent has spent six years legislating from the bench and putting his own spin on the law, while Johnson asserts his decisions have been based on the state constitution and his judicial beliefs.

Johnson is asking voters for a second term. He says he wants to continue a promise made in 2004 to "protect your legislative rights and not dictate from the bench."

Rumbaugh has represented thousands of people from "all walks of life" in his 31 years as a lawyer -- experience he says will help him serve the people and bring a fresh perspective to the bench.

The two will face off in Tuesday's primary election. In nonpartisan races in Washington, if a candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote in the primary, that candidate is elected and does not run in the general election.

Johnson graduated from Harvard University in Massachusetts and the University of Washington in Seattle. He and his wife live in Olympia.

Johnson was a Washington state assistant attorney general for 20 years before going into private practice for another decade. He litigated in 33 of Washington's 39 counties during his legal career and says he remains the only justice who has won cases for the people of the state of Washington before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Since he was elected justice, Johnson said he has sat on 700 cases and has written 140 opinions, many of them for the majority. The topics have included free speech rights, religious rights, private property rights and gun rights.

He says he is particularly proud of the opinions he has written involving victims' rights.

"Many of the courts have forgotten victims. I have rejuvenated that, brought that to the forefront," Johnson said,

Rumbaugh graduated from Wittenberg University in Ohio and the University of Puget Sound Law School in Tacoma. He and his wife live in the Browns Point neighborhood of Tacoma.

Rumbaugh says he has "never run for anything in my life" before this Supreme Court campaign. He picked the race for Johnson's seat because his friend and colleague, Charlie Wiggins, is running against Justice Richard Sanders for Position 6.

Rumbaugh thought he would give voters "a clear choice" in his race because he says he has never worked for government, never cashed a government paycheck and has developed his own business.

The judicial branch usually is invisible, and people don't care what happens in the courts until they need it, Rumbaugh said.

"It matters because, even though you may not see it, the interpretation and enforcement of laws is important," he said, noting that is why a justice must be fair and know the law.

When not in court, Rumbaugh has been active with civic organizations, serving on the board at Bates Technical College and Planned Parenthood and as a director of the Tacoma Housing Authority.

Johnson says judicial experience is important for those going on the bench because most of the work involves analyzing constitutional matters and writing decisions. For him, it is a full-time job.

Rumbaugh argues that he has the same amount of judicial experience his opponent had when he was elected to the court six years ago.

For more information on Johnson, go to [jimjohnsonforjustice.org](http://jimjohnsonforjustice.org). Rumbaugh's campaign website is [rumbaughforjustice.com](http://rumbaughforjustice.com).

-- For more election news, go to [tricityherald.com/election](http://tricityherald.com/election).

Read more: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/08/13/1129378/centrist-lawyer-challenges-conservative.html#ixzz0wn7Lls7g>