

Supreme Court Justice Mary Fairhurst, seeking 3rd term, says she is cancer free

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Justice Mary Fairhurst

WASHINGTON SUPREME COURT

Justices on the Supreme Court can live a bit of a private, if not sheltered, life. But a fundraising letter from Supreme Court Justice **Mary Fairhurst**'s re-election campaign minces no words about her health journey of the past six years.

"Mary has won her battle with cancer and now she is ready to win re-election to her seat on the Supreme Court," the letter sent to would-be donors last week declares.

Fairhurst, 56, says doctors say there is "no evidence of disease" and she's ready to go out and campaign this summer to win a third term on the court. Her campaign kickoff is Monday at 7 a.m. at Olympia's Red Lion Hotel followed by a Seattle kickoff on at the Sheraton. Former justices **Bobbe Bridge** and **Gerry Alexander** are serving as honorary campaign co-chairs.

Fairhurst is one of three justices facing re-election this year, and [Justice Jim Johnson's announcement last month that he is leaving the bench this month due to health issues](#) means four races will be on the ballot in 2014. Also up for re-election are Justice **Charles Johnson**, the longest serving member of the nine-judge court, and **Debra Stephens**. All three have formed political committees and have reported fundraising to the state Public Disclosure Commission, but none has drawn an announced foe so far.

Fairhurst said she has heard of no would-be opponent and all of the talk is around the pending Jim Johnson vacancy – which is drawing a lot of applicants to the office of Gov. **Jay Inslee**.

Fairhurst's health challenges began shortly after her last re-election campaign was won in 2008. But it wasn't until her cancer was treated and then returned, spreading to her lung, that she went public - [drawing some press attention in 2011](#).

The judge says she never believed she would die and now considers her recovery – which involved chemotherapy for her first and second cancers – a “miracle,” even if that term causes her doctor's face to scrunch up.

“I had every expectation I would be well and I was going to do everything I could do to be well. That's what I've done,” Fairhurst said in an interview, adding that she knew she could die. “I knew that was a real possibility but I wasn't afraid to die ... Because I was not afraid to die, it had no power over me.”

Fairhurst says there is too much work to be done in the court system not to want another term.

As chairwoman of the court's judicial information systems committee, she is overseeing an overhaul of the court system's computerized records system, which lawmakers provided money for. She also serves on the court's public trust and confidence committee and is state chair of [the iCivics education program founded by former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor](#).

She also said there is continued need to expand access to justice – “making sure we have effective representation.” This has long been a goal of the court, but little public money has been available in recent years for expanding public help to litigants on the civil law side.

Fairhurst said members of the Washington State Bar Association volunteer “thousands and thousands and thousands of hours” each year to help people through civil proceedings, but not all lawyers do it. “We could discuss mandatory or other measures to encourage people,” she said. “It's been before us and we haven't done it yet. But it remains an option.”

She said other options are to provide help to make the courts easier for pro se litigants, perhaps by having assisters in courthouses.

Fairhurst said her experience with cancer has deepened her appreciation for the time she has – knowing cancer could return.

“Once you have that experience ... it makes you just treasure every day, every relationship, every opportunity you have. It's just a renewed vigor and zest,” she said.

Read more here: <http://www.theolympian.com/2014/04/08/3076482/supreme-court-justice-mary-fairhurst.html#storylink=cpy>