



LOCAL NEWS

Candidates in only contested Kitsap judge race meet for forum

By *Andrew Binion* of the *Kitsap Sun*

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PORT ORCHARD — All of Kitsap's eight Superior Court judges are standing for election this year, and only the [most recent appointment](#), Jeffrey Bassett, is facing a challenger.

At a Kitsap Bar Association candidate forum Friday at McCormick Woods, Silverdale attorney Dale Magneson, who is challenging Bassett, touted his 28 years of experience as a lawyer and long-standing ties to the community.

Bassett, with 30 years of experience as a lawyer, took the oath of office in February after being appointed to the bench by Gov. Jay Inslee to replace Jay Roof, who retired.

Superior Court is often associated with felony cases, but as the highest court at the county level, it hears an array of different types of cases, including civil suits, divorces and child custody; it also serves as an appellate court for district and municipal courts.

Although Magneson has never tried a case in front of a jury — his areas of practice are family law, wills and landlord tenant law, according to his state Bar Association profile — he said he has paid attention to criminal law, and has tried numerous cases

in front of judges. He was born in Bremerton and graduated from East High School. He said it wasn't necessary to be born and raised in Kitsap, "but it helps one understand the community better."

Magneson also made a point of noting that Bassett was appointed.

"The problem with appointments is the people don't have a say in the matter," Magneson said, noting that Inslee's general counsel, Nick Brown, advises Inslee on judicial appointments and is not an elected official. "We don't know what (Brown's) biases and agendas are when he makes recommendations."

Magneson said he chose to run, and was asked to run against Bassett, but refused to say who asked him to do so. He also declined to give his age, saying it was irrelevant. He has not yet filed campaign contributions and spending information with the state, according to the Public Disclosure Commission website.

Judges Bill Houser, [appointed in 2014](#), and Melissa Hemstreet, [appointed in 2015](#), are also standing for their first general election.

Bassett, 54, was selected from a field of 10 applicants. In picking Bassett, Brown said that Inslee heard "tremendous feedback" from the current judges and Inslee was impressed with his breadth of experience.

So far Bassett has raised about \$8,700, with the top contribution, \$500, coming from fellow Judge Kevin Hull.

Although Bassett has experience in criminal and civil law, and has tried cases in front of juries and has already conducted a jury trial since taking the bench, his last area of practice was in

dependency law, representing parents who had lost custody of their children. Bassett said he has been asked for assistance by other judges when considering dependency cases.

He called the job of being a judge "emotionally exhausting and emotionally exhilarating."

"I took this job because I wanted to do something really good," Bassett said. "It requires someone who rolls with the punches."

Bassett described himself as a Floridian by birth, but a "Washingtonian and Bremertonian by choice." He has lived in Washington for 18 of the last 26 years.



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