

# Judge G. Helen Whitener appointed to state Supreme Court

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*Pierce County Superior Court Judge G. Helen Whitener was appointed Monday by Gov. Jay Inslee to the Washington Supreme Court. (Courtesy of the office of Gov. Jay Inslee)*

By

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*The Associated Press*

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Pierce County Superior Court Judge G. Helen Whitener was appointed Monday by Gov. Jay Inslee to the Washington Supreme Court.

Whitener has served on the superior court since being appointed by Inslee in 2015, and previously served as a judge on the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals. Before becoming a judge, she worked as both a prosecutor and defense attorney.

She replaces Justice Charles Wiggins, who retired from the court at the end of last month. She will have to run in the November general election to maintain the seat, and then again in 2022, when Wiggins' term would have ended.

Whitener, 55, was born in Trinidad and moved to the U.S. to attend college, earning her bachelor's degree from Baruch College in New York and her law degree from Seattle University School of Law.

She's the second recent appointment by Inslee. Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis, who was sworn in Jan. 6, is the first Native American justice to serve on the state's highest court.

The other members of the court are: Chief Justice Debra Stephens, Justices Barbara Madsen, Charles Johnson, Susan Owens, Steven Gonzalez, Sheryl Gordon McCloud, and Mary Yu.

“Judge Whitener inspires lawyers and non-lawyers alike with her relentless work to raise awareness for matters of race, justice and equity,” Inslee said in a written statement. “She is tireless in her commitment to building a justice system that works for all, and as a Supreme Court justice, she will have an even greater platform to promote justice for everyone in Washington state

Whitener, who was awarded the Washington State Bar Association’s C.Z. Smith Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award last year, serves as co-chair of the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission and as a member of the Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee.

“While many know her for her work in Pierce County, I can personally attest to her traveling statewide to inspire and mentor youth from underrepresented backgrounds into the legal profession,” Washington State Bar President Rajeev Majumdar said in a written statement. “Now the entire state will benefit from her human-centered and dignified pursuit of justice.”