

## High Court Hears Three Cases at Centralia College

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### Supreme Court in Centralia

The nine members of the Washington state Supreme Court take oral arguments in Centralia College's Corbet Theater Thursday. They heard cases relating to juror selection, mental competency and farm labor contracts.  
*Chris Geier*

All nine justices from the Washington state Supreme Court visited Centralia College this week to lead classes, discuss judicial issues and hold official court sessions.

The high court heard three cases on campus Thursday. The court first heard arguments related to the striking of the only African-American juror in the jury pool for the murder trial of a black man.

The second case considered the legality of the competency evaluation of a woman accused of cutting a baby from another woman's womb, killing the mother in the process. The baby survived.

The final case examined language in Farm Labor Contractors Act and how it affects the court's ability to award damages.

The justices tour different cities around the state three times annually.

"They do it to engage with the public and give locals the opportunity to see them in action," said Wendy Ferrell, the judicial communications manager.

Peggy Goldberg, a counselor at Centralia College, said she wished she had attended the earlier court sessions.

Counselors argued clauses, commas and modifying phrases contained in the act before the court.

"I kept thinking I should be an English professor, Goldberg said. "It didn't grasp my interest but I was impressed with their ability to hang in there."

Before the justices went into deliberation, they took audience questions, something they only do on road trips.

One audience member asked the justices about stereotypes of the legal profession and how they feel about being called "sharks."

"I'm one of those lawyers that likes lawyer jokes," said Justice Debra Stephens. "So here's my sense of it. Lawyers are trained to think in a particular analytical way that includes picking things apart. So I think lawyers annoy people."

Justice Charles Wiggins said he thought lawyers get a bad rap when they defend the establishment and the powerful elite.

"People don't like lawyers," added Justice Mary Fairhurst, "except their own lawyer."

Fairhurst described the important role lawyers play in developing, interpreting and enforcing the law.

"They're really the defenders and champions of the constitution," she said "You wouldn't want to not have good advocates on both sides."

The justices generally take three to six months to issue an opinion on a case. The public can access the court's decision at [courts.wa.gov](http://courts.wa.gov).

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