

Judge Marilyn Paja wins Statewide Award For Diversity Efforts

On Friday October 11, 2019, Judge Marilyn Paja of the Kitsap County District Court received the Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst Passing the Torch Award from the Washington Women Lawyers at their Annual Banquet & Awards Ceremony at the Cedarbrook Lodge in Seattle, WA. She received the award for her efforts to increase diversity in the judiciary. Judge Paja realized the need for judges who look like the communities they serve and set about increasing the number of women p eople of color on the bench. In 2010, Judge Paja spearheaded an effort with the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) to provide training to attorneys to become pro tem judges. (A pro tem judge sits as a temporary judge when the full time judge is absent. It is invaluable experience for attorneys aspiring to become full time judges.) This popular WSBA training now occurs every two years with a particular outreach to minority bar associations to recruit diverse attorneys. Judge Paja continues to be an instructor. Many attendees of the WSBA pro tem training have been elected or appointed to judicial positions. Judge Paja has also mentored women attorneys who aspire to become judges.

Judge Marilyn Paja has served on the Kitsap County District Court since 1998. She currently serves on the Washington Supreme Court's Gender & Justice Commission. She has been a member of Washington Women Lawyers since 1979.

The Passing the Torch award was renamed this year in honor of Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst who is a former President of Washington Women Lawyers. The Chief Justice just announced her retirement from the Washington Supreme Court at the end of this term to focus on her health. She was present at the WWL Annual Banquet & Awards Ceremony and handed the award now named for her to Judge Paja.

Washington Women Lawyers is Washington State's largest organization dedicated to furthering the full integration of women in the legal profession and promoting equal rights and opportunities for women. Through the combined resources of a statewide organization and a network of local chapters, Washington Women Lawyers offers programming and support for women lawyers through out the state. The principal purposes of Washington Women Lawyers are to further the full integration of women in the legal profession, and to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and to prevent discrimination against them.

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Legacy Award

JUDGE KRISTIN RICHARDSON
King County Superior Court



Judge Richardson was elected to the King County Superior Court bench in 2014. Before taking the bench, Judge Richardson spent 27 years at the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, where she represented countless women attorneys over her 24-year career handling the toughest cases, including trying more than 100 jury trials, 28 murder trials, and heading the office's Cold Case Homicide Unit. Judge Richardson served 10 years on the Board of the Washington Women Lawyers (WWL) Foundation, including two terms as president, and 12 years on the 19th King County Judicial Evaluation Committee. She also served many years on the board of the state-wide In re: Judge Richardson is co-chair of the Washington Judicial Institute Committee for the state Superior Court Judges Association (SCJA), she is in the forefront implementing new case domestic violence treatment guidelines. She also serves on the SCJA Judicial Ethics Committee and Criminal Law and Purity Committee for King County Superior Court, she serves on the Junior, Intermediate, Family Law and Courtroom Security committees. She is currently on the Criminal rotation for King County Superior Court.

Justice Mary Fairhurst Passing the Torch Award

JUDGE MARILYN G. PAJA
King County District Court



Judge Paja serves as a King County District Court Judge. First elected in 1988 after having served for fourteen years as a Municipal Court Judge in Gig Harbor. As a judge, she has served the District and Municipal Courts Judges Association (DMCA) as President, officer, member of the Board and on many committees. Judge Paja is past chair of the DMCA Diversity and Legislative Committees. In 2008, Judge Paja helped establish the DMCA judicial training in partnership with the WJBA to increase the diversity of judicial officers statewide. She is currently Vice Chair of the Gender & Justice Commission. Judge Paja served as the regional director and held several positions on the board of the National Association of Women Judges, the leading voice of women in the judiciary. She has been a member of Washington Women Lawyers since 1978, first in Pierce County and then in King County Chapter. She was named King County Woman of Achievement in 2011. Judge Paja graduated from the University of Puget Sound School of Law (now Seattle University School of Law) and received her undergraduate degree from Willamette University.



Judge Marilyn & Alan Paja at the WWL Annual Banquet & Awards Ceremony 10/11/2019
Photo by Kerri McClelland