

# 25<sup>th</sup> Legislative District Democrats

Please attach a resume which includes political activities.

## Candidate Endorsement Request *(State Supreme Court)*

**Full Name (as shown on ballot):** Charlie (Charles K.) Wiggins

**Office Sought:** State Supreme Court, position 6. **Today's Date:** 6/22/2016

**Years in the district that you want to represent:** I am running in a statewide race. I have lived in Washington for 40 years.

## Campaign Information

**Name of Campaign:** Re-elect Justice Charlie Wiggins

**Campaign Manager:** Alice MacLean

**Campaign Address:** PO Box 10028, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

**Campaign Phone:** 206-384-1037 **Email:** [info@justicecharliewiggins.com](mailto:info@justicecharliewiggins.com) **Fax:** N/A

**Website:** [www.JusticeCharlieWiggins.com](http://www.JusticeCharlieWiggins.com)

**How much money do you intend to spend on this campaign?** We plan on having a robust voter outreach campaign, with targeted mail and advertising. We anticipate raising about \$300,000.

**How much in personal funds do you intend to spend?** \$25,000

**How much have you raised so far?** We have raised approximately \$115,000 as of June 22.

Are you using union printers and/or sign shops to do your campaign printing? Yes.

## Questionnaire

*Please keep your answers brief.*

### Please list your qualifications for seeking office:

I have been a Justice on the Washington Supreme Court since 2011. Prior to serving on the Court, I was an attorney specializing in appellate practice, a pro tempore judge, and a judge on the Washington Court of Appeals, Division II. I have forty years of legal experience, most of it focused on appellate issues. As an attorney, I have taught at over 100 seminars on various legal issues, primarily having to do with appellate practice. I served on the State Bar Court Rules and Procedures Committee, several years as chair, and have extensive experience with the process of writing and amending court rules. I also have considerable experience with lawyer discipline, having served on the Disciplinary Board and as a hearing officer. I received a B.A. from Princeton University, an MBA from the University of Hawaii, and a law degree from Duke University.

### What special skills do you bring to the bench?

Personal integrity: Judges must be committed to following the law in their personal lives and behavior just as they are committed to following the law in the cases they decide. I have tried to live up to the legal and ethical demands placed on all of us by society and by my personal faith. I have never been charged with any violation of the ethical rules governing lawyers.

**Impartiality:** Judges must be able to set aside their personal biases and opinions and decide cases under the law, hearing all sides of the case without preconceived notions of the right outcome. As an attorney, I represented litigants on both sides of just about every type of issue that comes before our courts. I have no agenda to accomplish a particular outcome or to move the law in a particular direction, but can remain impartial.

**Independence:** Judges must remain free of extraneous influences that might bias their decisions in a particular direction. I am not beholden to any special interest group for election, but am supported by a broad variety of citizens from all walks of life.

**Experience:** I brought to the Supreme Court a wealth of experience representing clients on appeal in hundreds of different cases in all areas of the law.

**Conscientiousness:** A Supreme Court justice must be motivated to carry out the responsibilities of the court diligently and promptly. No supervisor monitors the judge's performance. I have always been a self-starter, applying myself diligently to fulfill the obligations I have undertaken.

**Collegiality:** The Supreme Court is a collegial court, requiring judges to work together to reach the right decision and craft opinions joined by a majority of the court. I have a track record of working with my colleagues on the Court and in a variety of settings, including bar committees, church groups, Habitat for Humanity projects, and other groups.

**A heart for justice:** I was willing to give up a successful and lucrative private practice because I have a deep desire to see justice done in every case, to protect the rights of those who have been wronged, to support reasonable and just punishment on those who have broken the law, and to provide fair recompense for those who have been injured.

**Please list your reasons for seeking office:**

1. Public service has always been an important part of my life and I enjoy serving the public full time as a Justice of the Supreme Court. The importance of public service was impressed on me at an early age because I grew up in the military service as the son of a career Army warrant officer. I've always tried to use my legal career and talents to serve others by teaching seminars for lawyers, providing pro bono legal services to those who cannot afford a lawyer, and serving on a wide variety of bar committees and community leadership boards. At this point in my career, instead of serving clients one at a time, I appreciate the opportunity to serve all the people of Washington as a Justice of the Supreme Court.
2. I believe that everyone should put their talents to their highest and best use, which for me is serving on the Supreme Court. As a Justice for the past six years, I have first-hand experience in the tasks that are the responsibilities of the Supreme Court. I also have the ability to draw on 40 years of professional experience to address new challenges facing our justice system.
3. I wish to leave to my children a better society, guided by the best principles and policies I can find in the law. I know that I have the experience and wisdom to assist the Court in interpreting laws and the federal and state constitutions to improve society.

**Have you been involved in partisan politics in Washington State before? Please give details:**

No.

**Have you run for an office before? Please give details:**

I stood for election in 1995 for the Washington Court of Appeals, but lost. I ran for election to the Supreme Court in 2010 and won. I have been a Justice on the Washington Supreme Court for the last six year.

**Have you held office, either elected or appointed? Please give details:**

I have served as a Justice on the Washington Supreme Court for the last six years. I was appointed to the Washington Court of Appeals by Governor Lowry in December 1994. I stood for election in November 1995 but lost the election. I also served as the Commissioner for the City of Bainbridge Island Civil Service Commission for a six year term beginning in 2005.

**What do you believe will be the three most important issues in your campaign?**

The McCleary school funding case: I am proud to have been on the Court when we issued this decision and as we have worked to encourage the legislature to live up to its constitutional duty to amply fund education. I believe the Court should persevere and continue its efforts to obtain compliance with the decision.

The role of the Supreme Court: My opponent has taken the position that the Court should show leadership by proposing solutions to some of the major social problems of our day. That is the role of the legislature, not of the Court. We have plenty to do just deciding the cases that come before us and have neither the time nor the budget to try to undertake the legislative role of solving social problems.

Experience: I have extensive experience in the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, while my opponent has little or none.

**Have you previously served on the bench?**

Yes, I have been a Justice on the Washington State Supreme Court for the last six years.

**Please summarize your legal practice (prior to taking the bench if applicable).**

Prior to serving on the Court, I was an attorney specializing in appellate practice, a pro tempore judge, and a judge on the Washington Court of Appeals, Division II. I have forty years of legal experience, most of it focused on appellate issues. As an attorney, I have taught at over 100 seminars on various legal issues, primarily having to do with appellate practice. I served on the State Bar Court Rules and Procedures Committee, several years as chair, and have extensive experience with the process of writing and amending court rules. I also have considerable experience with lawyer discipline, having served on the Disciplinary Board and as a hearing officer. I received a B.A. from Princeton University, an MBA from the University of Hawaii, and a law degree from Duke University.

**What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice, if any?**

First, the corrosive influence of big money in judicial elections, resulting in the election of judicial candidates who will be more sympathetic to wealth. This result is magnified by the effect of U.S. Supreme Court decisions such as Citizens United, which have undermined campaign finance limits. Before election to the Supreme Court, I supported public finance of judicial elections, which would have some limited effect in levelling the playing field.

Second, the inability of citizens of limited means to afford the assistance of lawyers in coping with their legal problems. See further discussion to the question proceeding the immediately following one.

**Do you believe there is under-representation of women or people of color in the court system? If so, how would you work to correct the problem?**

Yes, the court system would benefit greatly from a more diverse group of people. I will continue to support the efforts to two commissions established by the Court, the Gender and Justice Commission and the Minority and Justice Commission.

**Do you believe that all citizens have adequate access to legal help and the legal system? If not, what can be done to provide wider and better access?**

No. However, minorities and immigrant communities can have better access to justice and improved customs when they have the opportunity to consult with a lawyer. I think we need to increase funding for legal services to the poor and to provide legal assistance to the middle class as well. I am proud to have voted with the majority of our court to establish a new form of licensing, the Limited License Legal Technician (LLLT). The LLLT license permits a person to provide a limited form of legal assistance without the supervision of a lawyer. A good model for the LLLT is the nurse-practitioner in the medical field: a skilled person who can provide a range of medical services independent of a doctor's supervision. Our hope is that the LLLT will be a more affordable form of legal help than a lawyer. Washington was the first state to establish such a program and other states are now following our example.

**Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night, thinking about a case, wishing you had handled something differently? If so, please describe one such case.**

Early in my term on the Supreme Court, I had to decide how to vote on a closely divided and highly controversial case. I took the position that we did not need to decide the issue, in other words, taking no position on the issue. Fortunately, my vote did not matter to the final outcome. But looking back, I wish I had been more definitive and had taken a clear stand on the case.

**As a prospective judge, what do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?**

Rigorous application of the law, pragmatic decision-making, willingness to go against the majority, even if I must stand alone.

I have worked to become more effective by more often discussing cases informally with other justices.

**What forms of voluntary professional and community service have you been involved with in the past? Currently?**

My community and civic activities span several areas. I have served in a variety of leadership roles in my church, Rolling Bay Presbyterian Church on Bainbridge Island. I led five youth mission trips with the Church to build houses in Tijuana, Mexico, and I was the leader of two trips to help with recovery from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. I was involved with the Kitsap Habitat for Humanity to organize the lawyers of Bainbridge Island to fund and build a Habitat house for a single mother and her family on Bainbridge and another home for a single mother and her family in Suquamish. I spent a year as a citizen member of the Editorial Board of the Kitsap Sun, which helped me understand the wide range of community issues and concerns in my home county and taught me about the way newspapers approach public issues. I also served on the Bainbridge Island Civil Service Commission, which has given me insight into the functioning of an administrative body and the functioning of the police department, which is the primary concern of the Commission.

**While serving on the bench, do you believe you have a role in bringing important legal or judicial issues before the public or the legislature? Why or why not? What should your role be?**

Our role is somewhat circumscribed by the need to avoid comment on issues that might come before the court. I feel a tension between commenting on important issues with which we are wrestling and the need to maintain impartiality. I have not yet managed to reconcile these two goals.

**What is your general judicial philosophy?**

Three guiding values: In interpreting the constitutions of the nation and our state, to protect the basic rights of citizens in meaningful and practical ways. In interpreting statutes, to grapple seriously with the words selected by the legislature, to discern and implement the legislative intent, and to refrain from trying to rewrite the law in the way I think would be better (but which is contrary to legislative intent). In applying common law doctrines, to discern the heart of the reasons behind the rule and doctrine and to apply and develop the common law consistently with those reasons.

**What is the role of the Supreme Court Justice?**

To administer justice by resolving cases brought before the Court with justice and insight, to render opinions that explain the reasoning of the court in clear and accessible language and to protect the rights of those who cannot protect themselves or their legal rights.

**What role, if any, do you believe the County Prosecutor and/or their office should have in regards to activities involving judicial candidates, judicial candidate endorsements, and judicial elections?**

Prosecutors should engage in judicial elections in the same way as all lawyers should, educating and informing themselves on the issues and the candidates, supporting the best candidates, and sharing information and their opinions with others in order to help them vote more intelligently and responsibly in judicial elections.

**What is your vision for the future of our judicial system: What changes would you advocate and why?**

I would like to see the judicial system become more transparent and open. Our Court has worked at great length to develop a court rule that permits access to judicial administrative records and court filings without permitting access to any of the internal discussions that determine how cases are decided. See General Rule 31.1 at [http://www.courts.wa.gov/court\\_rules/?fa=court\\_rules.list&group=ga&set=GR](http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules/?fa=court_rules.list&group=ga&set=GR). As we gain experience with that rule, the courts will become more open, transparent and responsive. We also rely too much on court fees. Ideally, the courts should be funded by the state, instead of relying on the counties to fund the courts.

**Why should the 25<sup>th</sup> Legislative District Democrats support you over any other candidates running for this position?**

My campaign is making great progress at this early stage. The reception has been very positive, as exemplified by my strong list of early endorsers. My campaign will appeal to voters because of the main message of my candidacy: I have shown that I have the integrity, impartiality and independence for the position of Supreme Court Justice. I have been endorsed by the Washington State Labor Council, the King County Democrats and Young Democrats, the Skagit County Democrats, and the Democrats of the 11<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, 41<sup>st</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, and 48<sup>th</sup> Legislative Districts, among many other individuals and organizations. See my website for a full list of my endorsements: <http://www.justicecharliewiggins.com/endorsements>. To my knowledge, the only endorsement my opponent has secured is that of the Washington State Mainstream Republicans.

I am the better candidate for this position. For 40 years I have worked on appeals to our court of appeals and our supreme court, as well as the federal courts. My extensive experience informs and shapes my decisions. In addition, learning the job of a supreme court justice is a steep learning curve. I had a running start for the job based on my prior experience. My opponent lacks this experience and it would take him an entire term to master the responsibilities of this position.

**Are there any additional comments you would like to share with the 25<sup>th</sup> Legislative District Democrats?**

Each of the three Supreme Court justices up for election this year has an opponent and the opposition is a coordinated attack on the Court. The opponents have labelled us as “too liberal” and too political. I vehemently reject these accusations. Some of their supporters want to intimidate the justices into judicial torpor, taking no action to enforce our decisions. I ran for election because I wanted to be active in doing justice, not inactive in tolerating injustice. I hope all three of us will prevail and discourage this type of attack on the court in the future.

My signature below signifies that I am seeking the endorsement of the 25<sup>th</sup> District Democrats. I understand that this endorsement may or may not come with monetary support. I also understand that the 25<sup>th</sup> District Democrats may withdraw its endorsement.

Candidate Signature: Charlie Wiggins Today's Date: June 29, 2016

Please return your completed questionnaire to [ericherde@gmail.com](mailto:ericherde@gmail.com)