

25th Legislative District Democrats

Candidate Endorsement Request (*State Supreme Court*)

Full Name (as shown on ballot) Steve Gonzalez

Office Sought: WA Supreme Court, Position 8 Today's Date: 6/25/2018

Years in the district that you want to represent: 27 years

Campaign Information

Name of Campaign: Friends of Justice Gonzalez Campaign Manager: Kenneth Fockele

Campaign Address: 603 Stewart Street, #819 Seattle, WA 98101

Campaign Phone: 206-707-9239 Email: info@justicegonzalez.com

Website: www.justicegonzalez.com

Social media:

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/JusticeSGonzalez/ (public figure page)

Twitter: N/A Other: _____

How much money do you intend to spend on this campaign? \$350,000 - \$500,000

How much in personal funds do you intend to spend? I have spent \$100 in personal funding

How much have you raised so far? More than \$200,000

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 won election to the Washington Supreme Court in 2012. Before joining the Court, I served for ten years as a trial judge on the King County Superior Court, and served as a Federal and municipal criminal prosecutor. Prior to joining the court in King County, I practiced both criminal and civil law. I was an Assistant United States Attorney in the Western District of Washington where I was part of the team that successfully prosecuted the international terrorism case U.S. v. Ressaam. I also prosecuted organized crime cases and served as the Hate Crimes Prosecution Coordinator. After September 11, I

lectured on international terrorism prosecution to U.S. Attorneys in Washington D.C. I have also served as a Domestic Violence Prosecutor for the City of Seattle.

What special skills do you bring to the bench?

I bring valuable superior court trial experience to the Court. I also bring administration experience as former Chair of the Access to Justice Board.

Please list your reasons for seeking office:

I love the job and it is an honor to serve and to advocate for equal access to justice for all. I want to continue to serve as a Supreme Court Justice because I bring valuable superior court trial experience to the Court. I also bring administration experience as former Chair of the Access to Justice Board. I am rated Exceptionally Well Qualified for the job. Finally, I enjoy mentoring my law clerks and speaking to students and the public about the importance of civics and service.

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

As a Judge, I am nonpartisan and do not belong to a political party, but I have spent my career as an advocate for equal access to justice for all, including underrepresented and marginalized communities.

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

Yes, after I was appointed to the King County Superior Court in 2002 I was elected to the bench the same year. I subsequently won reelection in both 2004 and 2008. In 2012, I won election for a full term on the WA Supreme Court.

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

Yes, I was a judge on the King County Superior Court for 10 years. I am currently a Justice on the WA Supreme Court. In both instances I was initially appointed to the position, but was subsequently elected to the bench.

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

The three most important issues are: 1. Maintaining the independence of the judicial branch; 2. Eliminating disproportionality; and 3. Issuing our opinions sooner.

Have you previously served on the bench?

See previous answers. I have served on the King County Superior Court and the WA Supreme Court.

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

I practiced both criminal and civil law. I began my legal career practicing international business law at Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson in Seattle in 1991. After 5 years and my student loans paid off, I moved to the Seattle City Attorney's Office, where I worked in the Domestic Violence Unit from 1996 to 1997. Next, I was an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Western District of Washington from 1997 to 2002.

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

Over the course of the recent recession, the judicial branch has experienced significant cuts year after year. Many of the cuts will affect those least able to afford representation. We must find ways to serve indigent litigants without resorting to regressive user fees. We can improve service by adopting plain language forms and by the appropriate use of technology.

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?

Women and minorities face particular barriers. We would do well to implement the recommendations that are being made by the Gender and Justice Commission and the Minority and Justice Commission. There is much work still to do. I have hired, mentored and promoted women law students and clerks throughout my career. I am honored to serve on a court that is currently super-majority female.

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, all citizens do not always have adequate access to the legal system.. I have spent my career as an advocate for equal access to justice for all, including underrepresented and marginalized communities, which often intersect. We would do well to implement the recommendations that are being made by the Gender and Justice Commission and the Minority and Justice Commission. I was the former Chair of the Access to Justice Board, which is working to reduce inequities in the justice system in Washington. Currently, I am the Chair of the Interpreter Commission for the State of Washington, making the argument for increasing state funding for interpreters so that people whose first language is not English have adequate access to justice. I worked on producing the Preliminary Report of the Task Force on Race and the Criminal Justice System in 2011. All of us have an obligation to eliminate bias and we have a long way to go to keep the promise of this nation that we are all equal before the law.

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

Strengths: Broad experience presiding over a variety of cases as a superior court judge for a decade and a long track record of community involvement.

Weaknesses: After ten years of being in charge of my own trials, I had to adjust to having just over 11% of a say in each case as a member of a deliberative court of nine justices.

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

Outside the Court, I am passionate about community engagement and service to others. I participate in the Northwest Minority Jobs Fair, and serve as Board member for the Washington Leadership Institute, an organization that aims to develop legal professionals and community leaders who reflect the diversity of Washington State.

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?

Yes, as one of the three co-equal branches of the government, it is our job to address the most important issues facing the people of our state when they come before us in cases. We hold the legislative and executive branches responsible to their constitutional duties. As a justice, I also have a responsibility to educate the public about the judicial system and the issues that the Court decides. I often teach classes on civics and speak to groups around the state about the actions of the court.

What is your general judicial philosophy?

My judicial philosophy is to do my job on time with care and compassion and without fear or favor for anyone.

What is the role of the Supreme Court Justice?

A Justice, in his or her role as Judge, must interpret the Washington State Constitution and the laws of the state. As a leader in the legal profession, a Justice must establish the rules and regulations governing the profession. And a Justice is a leader in the community and must work to educate the public about civics and the importance of a fair and independent judiciary.

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

We need to ensure that user fees do not keep our least disadvantaged from accessing the courts. We need to issue our opinions faster. Finally, we could better utilize technology and allow electronic filing of forms. I am pleased with the strides we made already, but there is much work still to do.

Why should the 25th Legislative District Democrats support you over any other candidates running for this position?

I am the most qualified candidate for this position. I am rated Exceptionally Well Qualified for the Supreme Court by 10 bar associations in Washington. I was honored to receive Outstanding Judge of the Year Awards from multiple organizations including the Washington State Bar Association.

Are there any additional comments you would like to share with the 25th Legislative District Democrats?

I would be honored to have the support of the 25th Legislative District Democrats.

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

Candidate Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____

Please return your completed questionnaire to edwherde@gmail.com