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## Chief Justice Madsen is challenged by Kittitas County prosecutor

By JOEL CONNELLY, SEATTLEPI.COM STAFF Updated 7:44 pm, Wednesday, May 18, 2016



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Washington State Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen. She is being challenged for reelection by Kittitas County Prosecutor Greg Zempel.

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Longtime Kittitas County Prosecutor Greg Zempel on Wednesday filed to challenge the re-election of Washington State Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen.

The high court is nonpartisan but Zempel is a Republican and certain to pick up GOP support in his race against Madsen. The chief justice has served on the Supreme Court since 1992 and was the first woman popularly elected to the court. She is serving her second term as chief justice.

The state Supreme Court recently came in for scathing criticism during state Republicans' annual Roanoke Conference. The conference featured a panel entitled: "What must occur to restore the State Supreme Court to a legitimate role."

The panel featured denunciations of the court's rulings on charter schools, its overturning of Tim Eyman's tax initiatives and its order that the Legislature move briskly to fully fund K-12 education.

"Best picture of the day!" tweeted conservative Rep. Matt Manweller, R-Ellensburg, at news of Zempel's filing.

An acid-tongued participant in the Roanoke panel, Manweller has put up numerous anti-Supreme Court tweets, such as: "Lib activist wants Wa Sp Ct to legalize state income tax. Another reason to vote against all incumbent judges."

Zempel is serving his sixth term as Kittitas County prosecutor. "Every prosecutor and trial judge in the state knows that today's Supreme Court is too quick to overturn longstanding precedents and change the law," Zempel said in a news release announcing his candidacy.

A second incumbent, Supreme Court Justice Charlie Wiggins, has also drawn a challenger. Federal Way Municipal Court Judge Dave Larson filed against Wiggins earlier this week.

The Washington State Republican Party tweeted the good news of Larson's filing earlier this week.

Justice Mary Yu has yet to draw a challenge, although two filing days remain.

After being appointed by Gov. Jay Inslee, Yu ran unopposed to fill out the term of Justice Jim Johnson. She launched her campaign for a full term earlier this year with a big-turnout breakfast at the Westin.

Madsen has also chaired the Washington State Courts' Gender and Justice Commission, which has specialized in designing programs to assist victims of domestic violence, and providing assistance to incarcerated women and girls.

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