

2 choices are obvious for WA Supreme Court. See who the Tri-City Herald recommends

BY THE TRI-CITY HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD
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In 12 months the Washington Supreme Court lost two brilliant members. Chief Justice Mary E. Fairhurst left for health reasons at the end of last year, and Justice Charles Wiggins retired in April.

With only one of nine justices from Eastern Washington, we suggested that Gov. Jay Inslee appoint a Tri-Cities candidate, or at the very least, someone from our side of the state. We thought the court could use some regional balance.

We were rooting for Judges Alex Ekstrom and George B. Fearing, who both made the finalist list. Ekstrom of Kennewick is on the Benton-Franklin Superior Court bench, and Fearing of Richland is a judge for the Washington state Court of Appeals based in Spokane.

He made history when he appointed the first Native American, and then the first Black woman, to the state's highest court.

Now that these incredible justices are there, we recommend they stay. That's why Raquel Montoya-Lewis and Helen Whitener are our choices for the state Supreme Court.

MONTOYA-LEWIS V LARSON

Raquel Montoya-Lewis was working as a Whatcom County Superior Court judge when she was picked for the state Supreme Court. Before that, she served as Chief Judge for the Lummi, Nooksack, and Upper Skagit tribes, giving her a unique perspective into issues affecting Native Americans in our state.

Washington State Supreme Court Justice - Pos. 3



Dave Larson

Raquel Montoya-Lewis

[Montoya-Lewis](#) is an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Islet tribe in New Mexico, and a descendant of the Pueblo of Laguna tribe.

She told us that one of the legal disputes that kept her up at night involved a tribal disenrollment case that she worked on while she, herself, was disenrolled from her own tribe.

That meant she lost her membership, her house and other benefits. The pain in her voice was apparent as she told her story. Fortunately, she since has been established back into her tribe.

But the memory speaks to the need to have justices on the Supreme Court who have a variety of life experiences, and who have proven their integrity.

Montoya-Lewis has 20 years of judicial experience, as well as a master's degree in social work from the University of Washington. She also has served on state and national boards focusing on juvenile justice, and has taught as an Associate Professor at Western Washington University's Fairhaven College.

Her opponent is [Dave Larson](#), whom we recommended for the state Supreme Court in 2016 when he ran against Justice Charles Wiggins. At the time we said Larson's list of achievements was too exceptional to dismiss.

He is a highly accomplished judge for the Federal Way Municipal Court, and is a champion for court reform. He once told us he used his vacation time to keep the court in Granger from dissolving.

Four years ago, state lawmakers were in the middle of the McLeary controversy, and we thought Larson's experience on the Federal Way School Board would be helpful to the state Supreme Court, so he got our nod.

This time around, we think Montoya-Lewis will fill a void on the court that Larson can't.

The Tri-City Herald Editorial Board recommends Raquel Montoya-Lewis for Supreme Court Justice, Position 3.

WHITENER V SERNS

The choice between [Supreme Court Justice G. Helen Whitener](#) and challenger [Richard S. Serns](#) is obvious.



Whitener has over 21 years of legal experience. Serns passed his state bar exam in February.

Serns, 69, has had a commendable career in school administration, and is the retired superintendent of the Winlock School District.

He believes his unique experience in navigating through state and federal school statutes, funding laws and collective bargaining agreements will be useful to the state's highest court.

Whitener is a former Pierce County Superior Court judge, with experience working as both a prosecutor and as a defense attorney.

She is known for her fairness, intellect and calm demeanor.

Co-chair of the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission, she made headlines when she became the first Black, openly LGBTQ justice on the state Supreme Court.

She's a tremendous justice, while Serns has no judicial experience.

The Tri-City Herald recommends G. Helen Whitener for Supreme Court Justice, Position 6.