

**KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE**

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**King County**

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# CLERK'S ALERT

## **New Year Brings New Judges and Leaders to King County Superior Court**

Four new judges will be joining the King County Superior Court in 2025, while judges already on the bench will take on new leadership positions.

King County Superior Court Commissioner Nikole Hecklinger, Ms. Susan E. Llorens, Ms. Jennifer R. Petersen, and Mr. Todd D. Tinker will be sworn in as King County Superior Court Judges.

Judge Nikole Hecklinger, a former public defender who became a King County Superior Court Commissioner, was elected in November to fill an open seat created by the retirement of Judge Andrea Darvas. Judge Hecklinger was sworn in on January 13, 2025. She is assigned to trials at the Maleng Regional Justice Center.

Ms. Llorens spent most of her nearly 20 years as an attorney, working as an assistant attorney general in multiple divisions of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General. Governor Inslee appointed her this month to one of the two new seats approved by the King County Council. Ms. Llorens will attend the Washington State Judicial College at the end of January and be sworn in afterward. She is assigned to dependency and juvenile offender cases.

Ms. Petersen, who spent the bulk of her 20-year career as an attorney in the criminal and civil divisions of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, was appointed by Governor Inslee in December to fill a vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Kristin Richardson, which will occur on February 1, 2025. Ms. Petersen will attend the Washington State Judicial College at the end of January and be sworn in afterward. She is assigned to civil cases, focusing on unlawful detainers (eviction matters).

Mr. Tinker has worked in private practice for more than 28 years, with a focus on medical negligence cases for the last 20 years. Governor Inslee appointed him this month to one of the two new seats approved by the King County Council. He will attend the Washington State Judicial College and will be sworn in afterward. He is assigned to civil cases, focusing on unlawful detainers (eviction matters).

As new judges take their seats, others start and continue leadership roles. Each year, the Presiding Judge of the King County Superior Court appoints a chief judge for the following departments: Civil, Criminal, Clark Children and Family Justice Center, Unified Family Court, and the Maleng Regional Justice Center (MRJC). This is done in consultation with the Executive Committee.

Presiding Judge Ketu Shah appointed the following chief judges for 2025:

- Judge Michael R. Scott, Chief Judge of the Civil Department
- Judge Melinda J. Young, Chief Judge of the Criminal Department
- Judge Veronica Galván, Chief Judge of the Clark Children and Family Justice Center
- Judge Aimée Sutton, Chief Judge of Unified Family Court
- Judge David Keenan, Chief Judge of the Maleng Regional Justice Center

All chief judges will be continuing their leadership roles for a second year in 2025, except for Judge Keenan, who replaces Judge Johanna Bender as Chief Judge of the MRJC. Each chief judge serves a term of twelve months, beginning January 1. The judge may be reappointed for successive one-year terms, in accordance with LCMR 5(a).

Presiding Judges serve two-year terms. Judge Shah is in the second year of his initial term as Presiding Judge.

Assistant Presiding Judges serve one-year terms. Judge Averil Rothrock will serve as Assistant Presiding Judge in 2025. She served as Assistant Presiding Judge in 2024 and was re-elected. Elections occur in accordance with [local general rules of the Superior Court](#).



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