

Judge Karen Matson Donohue King County Superior Court

Judge Karen Donohue was appointed to the King County Superior Court by Washington State Governor Jay Governor Inslee, effective March 2018. She is currently the Assistant Criminal Chief and will assume the role of Criminal Chief in January 2020. Judge Donohue is a member of the court's Executive Committee and the Personnel Committee.

Judge Donohue served for seven years on the Seattle Municipal Court (SMC). She served on SMC's Executive Committee as Assistant Presiding Judge, followed by a term and a half as Presiding Judge. As the judge assigned to oversee technology, Judge Donohue led the court in becoming paperless and in updating the 30 year old case information system. Prior to being elected to the bench in 2010, Judge Donohue worked as a Judge Pro Tem in several district and municipal courts, in a general practice firm, as a law clerk/bailiff, prosecutor and defense attorney, consultant and solo practitioner and as General Counsel at a global telecommunications consulting and network development firm. She also worked for a game board company, where she was the co-creator of a pirate-themed game and oversaw logistics and regulatory work. In 1998, Judge Donohue relocated to Dublin with her family for a year, where she acted as General Counsel to an Irish mobile phone company.

Judge Donohue earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Washington and her law degree from Seattle University School of Law. She is a Trustee on the Washington State Superior Court Judges Association (SCJA) and serves on several committees with that organization, including the Ethics Committee, the Racial Justice Workgroup and the Equity & Fairness Committee. Judge Donohue is a former member of the Washington State District and Municipal Judges Association (DMCJA), where she served as on the board, as co-chair of the DMCJA education committee and on the DMCJA Department of Licensing Liaison Committee and the Uniform Citation Committee. Judge Donohue is the former Chair of the Trial Court Coordinating Council, a group she formed for other government officials, attorneys and police to discuss matters pertaining to criminal justice reform in the city of Seattle. She has served as a member of the King County Bar Association Award Committee and the Regional Law, Safety & Justice Committee and regularly volunteers to judge law school and youth mock trials. Judge Donohue also serves of the Washington State Gender & Justice Commission's Incarcerated Women and Girls Committee. In 2012, Judge Donohue co-founded Seattle Youth Traffic Court. In 2016, she was awarded the Nevins Award from the Washington Judges' Foundation.

Judge Donohue has served as NAWJ's President-Elect, Vice President of Publications, District 13 Director, Washington State Chair, co-chair of the Education Committee for NAWJ's 2016 Annual Conference, and chair of NAWJ's Website Committee (later the Technology Committee). She was co-chair of the Executive Director Search Committee. In 2016, Judge Donohue was honored to receive NAWJ's Justice Vaino Spencer Leadership Award.