

Oregon State Bar Judicial Voters Guide 2020

1) Your full name:

Jenefer Stenzel Grant

2) Office Address and Phone Number:

Columbia County Courthouse, Room 351

230 Strand

St. Helens, Oregon 97051

503 397 2327

3) Web site (if applicable):

www.retainjudgegrant.com

Facebook: Retain Judge Jenefer Grant

4) List high school, college and law school attended, including dates of attendance, degrees awarded and your reasons for leaving each school if no degree from that institution was awarded.

**U.S. Grant High School, Portland, Oregon
1975-1979, diploma**

**University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon
1979-1980 (chemistry major)
Relocated in summer, 1980, for employment**

**Portland State University, Portland, Oregon
1981-1988, bachelor of arts (business major, French & economics minors)**

**George Washington University National Law Center, Washington, D.C.
1989-1991, juris doctor w/honors (emphasis in int'l and environmental law)**

5) List employment since graduation from law school, including dates employed, your position and the nature of the practice or activity.

1992-1995: part-time legal work under contract for several Portland firms; also founded and operated La Catalana, a well-reviewed Mediterranean Spanish restaurant in Portland, Oregon (which we eventually sold to one of our employees)

1996 (February through November): worked as associate attorney for Law Office of Roberto Castro, in St. Helens, Oregon

1996-1998: part-time adjunct professor, teaching Business Environment, a required business ethics class at Portland State University's School of Business

1997-2007: solo law practice in St. Helens, Oregon (see below for details)

June, 2007, to present: Circuit Court Judge, Columbia County, Oregon (served as Presiding Judge for Columbia County from January, 2012, until May, 2019)

6a) List state and federal bars, courts and administrative bodies to which you are presently admitted and the date of admission.

Oregon State Bar, admitted September, 1992

6b) List any previous admissions, including dates, and the reason why you are no longer admitted.

N/A

7) List publications and/or articles you have authored.

(I served on the George Washington Journal of International Law and Economics while I was in law school, but did not individually author any published articles.)

8) List community, teaching (Continuing Legal Education or otherwise) or civic activities.

Columbia County Legal Aid, Inc. – President of Board of Directors of not-for-profit organization providing legal advice and representation in civil matters (primarily domestic relations), to low-income residents of Columbia County (1996-2007)

Pro bono representation – provided direct advice and representation to low-income residents of Columbia County, in domestic relations matters, on unpaid, volunteer basis (1996-2007)

Columbia Humane Society – provided advice to CHS Board of Directors (1996-1998)

St. Helens Teen Court judge – presided over teen accountability court, handling low-level offenses such as minor in possession of alcohol or tobacco (2005-2006)

Columbia County Commission on Children and Families (1997-2007; Co-Chair, 2003-2007)

Columbia County Sheriff Supervisory Authority (2001-2007)

Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, Columbia County (1999-2019)

Columbia County Bar – active member and host of annual Bar holiday party (1996-present)

Columbia County Rotary – community service club, working with Columbia Pacific Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, and other local charitable organizations (2007-2017)

Planning and execution of fundraiser in September, 2013, to benefit the Columbia Pacific Food Bank and Community Meals program

Annual donation of a five-course paella for ten people (at my home), to benefit the Oregon Judges' Charitable Foundation for needy Oregon Judicial Department employees (continues through present)

CrossFit St. Helens - gym whose members support one another and the local recovery community in particular (February 2017-present)

River City Singers - community choir practicing and performing traditional and contemporary pieces, including masterworks (January 2018-present)

Continuing Legal Education - I presented at the Through the Eyes of a Child Conference held in Salem, Oregon, in August, 2019, regarding strategies for timely and efficient settlement of juvenile dependency cases

9) Prior to your becoming a judge, what was the general character of your legal practice? Indicate the nature of your typical clients and mention any legal areas in which you concentrated.

I was a founding member of the Columbia County Consortium, an association of private attorneys contracting with the State of Oregon to provide representation to indigent litigants, including parents and children in dependency cases and youth in delinquency cases in juvenile Court, and adults in criminal cases in District and Circuit Courts, and in mental commitment hearings in Circuit Court. I was also individually appointed to

represent indigent adults in St. Helens and Rainier Municipal Courts. Additionally, during this period of time I did retained work representing numerous adults and some children, in domestic relations proceedings including contested child custody cases, and in criminal and juvenile court. My clients were all individuals with individual problems, most of whom were Columbia County residents, and very few of whom were financially well-to-do.

10) List your judicial experience, including as a pro tem, and/or service on an administrative tribunal, or justice, municipal, tax, circuit, or appellate court.

Since June, 2007, I have served as a Circuit Judge in Columbia County. Because we are a small court with only three judges, the various types of caseloads are shared. Therefore, I handle all types of criminal cases, from misdemeanors to murder, as well as traffic trials; I preside over juvenile court, including delinquency and dependency matters; and I hear a variety of civil cases, including many domestic relations, abuse prevention and stalking matters, as well as probate, civil litigation (sometimes complex), and other types of cases.

11) Describe the general character of your judicial work over the past five years. Indicate the nature of the cases over which you preside, any specialty courts or court programs, and any legal areas in which you concentrate.

Please see above. In addition, I presided over the Juvenile Drug Court (for delinquent youth) for six years, and over the Adult Drug Treatment Court for six years (until September 2019).

12) Describe any judicial experience in appellate courts not included above.

N/A

13) State the approximate number of trials or contested hearings over which you have presided as the judicial officer during each of the past five years. Indicate roughly how many were jury trials and how many were trials to the court.

This is difficult to estimate. Generally speaking, most of our jury trials tend to settle without trial, so I don't end up presiding over jury trials more than a few times per year. However, I have presided over one murder jury trial, several sex abuse jury trials, and multiple DUII jury trials since my appointment in 2007. (There are many more contested hearings than there are jury trials in our county.)

14) Describe any experience serving as an arbitrator or mediator.

While I have no formal experience as a mediator, a large fraction of my time as a judge has been spent helping litigants and their attorneys to resolve disputes in chambers as opposed to in the courtroom. I believe that trials are typically very stressful for the parties and witnesses involved in a case. Guided problem solving with a judge's assistance is often a better way for people to arrive at a resolution of their legal problems, than is a contested hearing – which can damage relationships, especially between family members – followed by a judge's ruling. Attorneys often request that their cases be set with me for pretrial settlement conferences.

15) List all bar association memberships, offices held and committee assignments.

Oregon State Bar

Advisory member of Committee for Legal Programs and Services (prior to my appointment to the bench)

16) Describe any bar association or judicial department committees, task forces, or special projects in which you have been involved.

Judicial Engagement and Leadership Institute (through JCIP, the Juvenile Court Improvement Project) - I serve on the Forms Subcommittee, and recently founded a new subcommittee to explore innovative ways to maintain children safely with parents rather than removing them to foster care

Oregon Judges' Charitable Foundation - committee member; have primary responsibility for silent auction at annual fundraising event

As Presiding Judge, 2012-2019, developed trauma-competent court practices, implemented the State court debt reduction/driver license reinstatement program, started the pretrial release program (evidence-based release decisions for defendants in custody), and initiated an expungement clinic in 2019, among other programs

Chair, local Dependency Court Improvement committee - working to develop and implement best practices in dependency court, including efforts to reduce removal of children to non-relative foster care and to return children to parents promptly whenever it is safe and feasible

Member, Oregon Judicial Department Strategic Planning Steering Committee - appointed by Chief Justice, Oregon Supreme Court, June 2019 - present; engaged in development and implementation of Statewide strategic plan, with emphasis on access to justice for self-represented litigants, particularly in family law cases

17) Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a violation of any federal, state, county or municipal law, regulation or ordinance? If so, please give details. Do not include parking offenses or traffic violations for which a fine of less than \$500 was imposed.

No.

18) Have you ever been the subject of a formal disciplinary proceeding as an attorney or judge? If so, please give the particulars and the result. *Include formal proceedings only.*

No.

19) What attracted you to a judicial career?

I like to solve problems, particularly those which involve disputes between individuals where better communication and analysis of the issues dividing them can assist them to arrive at a settlement and/or achieve a better relationship (e.g., parents struggling to raise children together during and after divorce).

I believe passionately in the right to a fair hearing, and that everyone should have access to justice even though this can be very difficult where litigants are unfamiliar with legal procedures and cannot afford counsel.

I think our adversarial legal system is not very well suited to resolving many of the issues which are brought to court, and that judges have a lead role to play in bringing compassion to the legal system. This means helping lawyers and their clients see that everyone gets a better outcome in court when litigants are respectful and try to understand the other party's point of view, even though they will certainly disagree and sometimes need a judge or jury to resolve issues which cannot be settled.

I like legal research and writing, and I enjoy the balance inherent in this job, of working with people and intellectual pursuits.

20) Briefly describe your philosophy of the judicial role, the qualities that are most important for the role, and the greatest challenges to the role.

In a nutshell, the judicial role is one of leadership: framing the issues in a case to illustrate the "big picture" into which all of the stakeholders fit, showing litigants how to look at the picture from a wider perspective, suggesting how to meet the most urgent needs of each party without undermining the rights of the other, and ruling carefully. This means listening well and understanding the applicable law before making a decision which may have profound effects on the litigants.

21) Briefly describe a case, or a legal issue on which you worked, of which you are particularly proud, or which is reflective of your legal ability, work ethic, judicial philosophy, or temperament.

I issued a FAPA restraining order in a case where the father requested it due to some frightening behavior on the part of the mother as a result of her mental health issues. There were several children, and the parenting time supervisor originally provided for in the restraining order did not follow through with his offer to facilitate mother's parenting time. It was a very difficult situation for this family, and the mother was heartbroken at not being able to see her children. We had a number of Juvenile Court-style "review hearings" to address the evolving situation, and finally the father requested that the restraining order be modified to allow the mother to have unsupervised contact with the children, and much less restricted contact with him, while they lived separately but obtained counseling to try and save their marriage. This type of case, where a family is in crisis but neither party has an attorney to assist him or her, is becoming increasingly common, and I believe it is the judge's role to actively guide them through the legal process, taking whatever time is necessary to arrive at a compassionate solution for everyone concerned. The skills needed to succeed in this role are an ability to listen attentively; an understanding of what support resources are available in the community; a good idea, based on experience, of what interventions are likely to assist people in crisis; and a patient and kind -- but decisive -- demeanor.

22) Briefly describe an issue, related to Oregon's justice system, that is of particular interest or concern to you, or that you have interest in working toward improving.

I am very concerned with our corrections system, and in using our scarce tax dollars to deliver the lowest recidivism possible. This means using evidence-based practices to reform behavior, both for probation in the community and in our correctional facilities, as well as during the post-prison phase of re-entry into the community. It does not make sense to lock people up without giving them tools to use when they get out, to become productive members of society. Some people may never become wage-earning, pro-social individuals, and will require ongoing support or long-term incarceration. But many others may benefit from earlier intervention into their criminal behavior, and will never need to be sent to prison -- at great taxpayer expense -- if they can succeed in overcoming addiction through a combined approach of treatment and short periods of time in jail. As a judge, I am willing to be part of that community-based approach, requiring offenders to appear in my court as often as necessary to monitor their conduct, including with respect to substance abuse treatment, parenting issues, and education or vocational achievement, and to reinforce their accountability for their failures and celebrate their successes with sanctions or congratulations, as individually merited.

Related to this is the increasing prevalence of mentally ill individuals held in our jails, and the need to develop alternative means of intervening in their criminal behavior. This problem can only be addressed through

collaboration among the courts, jail, mental health, and community corrections agencies, all of which require sustainable funding.

Underlying the problems with our criminal justice system are the difficulties experienced by children in their formative years. Studies show that adults who have survived four or more “adverse childhood experiences” (“ACES”) are at much higher risk of mental illness and incarceration. We now know that childhood abuse, neglect and trauma often produce adults who have severe social problems and commit crimes. So I have worked hard with our local child welfare workers to intervene appropriately in children’s lives, removing them from neglectful or abusive parents when necessary but keeping them with parents or familiar caretakers whenever it is safely possible to do so (this avoids the trauma of removing children into foster care with families they don’t know). Finding this balance is challenging but essential, and helping parents become safe caregivers is the best way to prevent further trauma to children.

23) Briefly describe a legal figure, personal, fictional or historical, whom you admire and why.

I practiced for twelve years before the Honorable Ted E. Grove prior to being appointed to the bench. He was then – and has continued to be, since my appointment nearly thirteen years ago -- an inspiring role model to me because of his very successful approach to judging. He works hard to facilitate settlements, is practical in his efforts to solve problems, has excellent relationships with service providers in our community, and is patient and courteous with litigants but also expects his rulings to be followed and holds parties accountable for their unlawful conduct. I am very grateful to have him as my mentor.

24) State any other information that you regard as pertinent to your candidacy.

My husband and I relocated to St. Helens from Portland in 1995, after living in various other places including England, Spain, and Washington, D.C., and we intentionally made our home here. We are raising our daughter in this community and she attends public school here. I love Columbia County and feel fortunate to have been chosen to serve here.