

Oregon State Bar Judicial Voters Guide 2024

1) Full name:

Matthew Lawson Tracey

2) Campaign web site (if applicable):

www.MatthewTraceyForJudge.com

3) List college and law school attended, including dates of attendance, degrees.

**University of Notre Dame – 2002-2006 – BA *Cum Laude*, English/Film
Double Major**

University of Oregon School of Law – 2006-2009 - JD

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

**Intermountain Public Defender – 2010-2012 – Attorney (Criminal
Defense)**

**Eugene Legal LLC – 2013-2014 – Attorney (Family Law, Probate,
Criminal Defense)**

**Southwestern Oregon Public Defender – 2014-2017 – Attorney
(Criminal Defense)**

**Public Defender of Marion County – 2017-2021 – Assistant Executive
Director (Criminal Defense)**

**Oregon Judicial Department – 2021-Present - Judge *Pro Tem*/
Hearings Referee (Juvenile, Miscellaneous Civil, Criminal)**

5) List state and federal bars, courts and administrative bodies to which you are presently admitted and the date of admission. If desired, list previous admissions.

Oregon State Bar – Admitted in 2009

6) If desired, list publications and/or articles you have authored.

N/A

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

Willamette Valley Inns of Court – Executive Committee/President Elect (2025-26)

Oregon Women Lawyers – Member

Marion County Bar Association – Member

8) Prior to your becoming a judge, what was the general character of your legal practice? Where appropriate indicate any legal areas in which you concentrated.

My career has focused on representation of indigent individuals for criminal and family matters. As the Assistant Executive Director of the Public Defender of Marion County, I managed and trained felony attorneys while maintaining a full caseload – from Murders to Misdemeanors. As a private attorney, I accepted referrals from the Modest Means Program and provided representation to families who could not otherwise afford counsel. I believe everyone deserves a chance to be heard, notwithstanding economic, mental health, or cultural barriers. I have more than a decade of experience in litigation, including protective orders, probate disputes, criminal jury trials, child custody and divorce cases, and civil commitments for the mentally ill.

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

I have been a Judge *Pro Tem* for the Marion County Circuit Court from March 2021 to present.

10) 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.

As a full-time Judge *Pro Tem* for more than three years in Marion County, I have heard nearly 10,000 hearings on criminal, juvenile, and civil matters. On the miscellaneous civil docket, I have resolved bench trials for protective orders, small claims, landlord tenant cases, civil commitments, child support enforcement, divorces, and traffic violations. In the criminal annex court, I have heard arraignments, routine sentencings, probation violations, release motions, and contempt trials. In the juvenile court, I have heard dependencies and juvenile delinquencies in all stages, including shelter hearings, jurisdictional hearings, permanency hearings, preliminary hearings, and delinquency trials. I have performed a wedding, adopted families together, approved name changes, and resolved thousands of miscellaneous default motions on the court's queue for routine filings. I love my job as a Judge *Pro Tem* and look forward to learning new legal analysis and meeting new folks in court everyday.

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

N/A

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

N/A

13) List any bar association memberships. Where appropriate, list officer positions, committee assignments or other notable work.

Marion County Bar Association - Member

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

N/A

15) 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

16) 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

17) What attracted you to a judicial career?

I've wanted to serve the legal system since I was in high school. I initially found a passion for debate, and wanted to merge that with an interest in public service. I found my way into criminal defense in law school when volunteering for organizations during the summer – the local public defender's office had plenty of opportunities. I soon found myself in trial as a certified law student and loved it. Upon graduating, I applied for positions with public defense and district attorney offices, and received my first job offer at Intermountain Public Defender in Pendleton.

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

The most important qualities for judicial officers are patience, decisiveness, and the ability to clearly communicate. Judges hear many hundreds of matters every month from folks that are both passionate and struggling with their own challenges. It is important for the Court to create space for every litigant in every hearing so they can feel heard – and in order for real due process to occur. After creating that space, judges must make hard decisions efficiently, correctly, and cleanly. A judge must find a comfort level with disappointing folks in the room – ultimately, it is in everyone’s best interests that they can receive a clear decision and move forward with their lives. A judge must also be able to clearly communicate why they’ve reached their decision, in order to facilitate that process of moving forward and to foster the sense that real justice occurred in the courtroom. I have worked hard to make sure my performance on the bench demonstrates these ideals.

19) 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 recently received a letter that had significant value to me based on my prior work. The writer was the mother of an alleged victim in a serious case I took to trial a number of years ago, in which I represented the Defendant. I carefully investigated the case, identified issues for trial, and litigated the case before a jury for a full week. The writer of the letter thanked me for performing my role within the judicial system with integrity and tact. They noted that the nature of my representation provided them, in part, with an opportunity to move forward after the trial was complete – not withstanding that I opposed them in court. Subsequently, they had observed me as a Judge *Pro Tem* while I made a ruling on an unrelated case that again affected their family. The writer indicated that my ability to listen, communicate, and rule with respect, focus, and decisiveness had helped their family move forward past another challenge. Ultimately, our community in Marion County is small and interconnected, and some of the community’s most difficult issues come before our court. I want to continue to address the parties before me with humanity, respect, and open ears – the way you would address any neighbor.

20) 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.

Oregon’s mental health system represents a significant future challenge for the courts and Oregon as a whole. Criminal cases and civil commitments both represent a steady flow of work for the Oregon State Hospital, who reached capacity long ago. There is a lingering issue with how to proceed with criminal defendants who are not able to make constitutional decisions on their cases. Separately, many folks who are either unsafe for themselves or to others are not receiving civil restorative services because they are viewed as a lower priority than individuals with criminal charges. There are many brave judges already on the bench

tackling the issue, and I want to join them in developing solutions or identifying problems that need to be fixed at the legislative or executive levels.

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

I greatly enjoyed the written opinions of Judge Learned Hand in law school.

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

N/A