

In ‘full-circle’ moment, Rivera sworn in as Snohomish County’s newest Superior Court judge

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Whitney Rivera is sworn in by Chief Justice Steven C. González.

Former Edmonds Municipal Court Judge Whitney Rivera was sworn in Thursday as Snohomish County’s newest Superior Court judge. Rivera replaced Judge Anita L. Farris, who retired from the bench April 30 and who – in a full-circle moment – had hired Rivera to serve as her law clerk 18 years ago. Judge Paul Thompson led the ceremony.

Rivera had served at [Edmonds Municipal Court](#) for more than three years. In Edmonds, she heard criminal cases, traffic infractions and administrative appeals while supervising court operations.

“All of Snohomish County should be celebrating today because Judge Rivera is a homegrown product of Snohomish County,” said Washington Court of Appeals [Judge Linda W.Y. Coburn](#), who had served as Edmonds Municipal Court judge before Rivera. Coburn recalled the times when their “professional lives had crossed paths many, many times.”



Judge Whitney Rivera puts on her robe with the help of (IL-R) her best friend Jenni, her mother Carol and her brother D.J.



Judge Rivera thanks everyone for their support and recalls her early experiences in her legal career.

Rivera, **who was appointed to the county bench by Gov. Jay Inslee** last month, grew up in Edmonds and graduated from Edmonds-Woodway High School. During high school, she had attended mock trials at the South Division Courthouse in Lynnwood. “I remember being in a mock trial and sitting next to Judge Ryan and being like ‘This is amazing,’” Rivera said. “He has this job, he gets to talk to people all day and rule on objections. I thought that was amazing.”

Rivera earned her bachelor’s degree in political science and literature from the University of Washington, followed by a Juris Doctor from Boston College Law School. In 2006, she started her legal career as a Superior Court law clerk for Judge Farris before transitioning to a trial attorney role at the [Snohomish County Public Defender Association](#), (SCPDA) where she spent more than 12 years. In early 2014, Rivera served one year as an appellate public defender at the [Washington Appellate Project](#).

Rivera returned to work at SCPDA and assumed the role of supervisor for the misdemeanor unit, overseeing a team of 20 employees. She provided training and mentorship to trial attorneys practicing in courts of limited jurisdiction.



Judge Linda W.Y. Coburn recalls her experience working with Whitney Rivera.

“She had always demonstrated her passion for the law, making sure other people got it right,” Coburn said. “She was defending indigents or presiding over trials. In every role she has held, she is generous with her knowledge: kind in her interactions with others and fierce in her fight for justice.

“Judge Rivera is hardworking,” Coburn continued. “She is a dedicated public servant. She’s a great person on and off the bench. Snohomish County – and this bench – is very fortunate to have you. Congratulations.”



“No judge could’ve hoped for a better successor. Congratulations,” said retired Judge Anita L. Farris.

“We’ve come full circle today,” Farris said. “Judge Whitney Rivera, my former law clerk, is being sworn in (to) the same position that I took three decades ago. The truth is, I decided to hire Whitney as my law clerk before she even stepped into the office for the interview. She already nailed that job offer through her resume.”

Farris recalled that Rivera’s resume was presented on fine, linen paper inside a gold-inlaid folder. “That stellar resume was created through hard work and attention to detail was a harbinger, a foreshadow of a stellar career [that was] about to begin.

“And Whitney, no judge could’ve hoped for a better successor. Congratulations,” Farris said.

Following Farris' speech, Rivera took an oath of office before Chief Justice Steven C. González. "I am honored and humbled by all of your presence here today," Rivera said. "I am so grateful to have so many people here in support of me."



Judge Rivera with Edmonds Food Bank staff and board members (L-R): Casey Davis, Jeremy Peck, Kellie Lewis, Judge Rivera, Tracey Peterson, Kathy Hare, Pat Shields and Ted Taylor.

She thanked the board members of [Edmonds Food Bank](#) and the [Hazel Miller Foundation](#) and the judges for being part of the ceremony.

"When I was sworn in as the Edmonds Municipal Court judge [on] January 2021, and it was Judge Coburn and I and (Edmonds Court Administrator) Uneek (Maylor) at Judge Coburn's office wearing masks [and] standing 6 feet apart while Uneek took the picture," Rivera said. "We did an awkward elbow bump afterwards, so this is very different and exciting."

Prior to her departure from Edmonds Municipal Court, Rivera appointed retired Judge Douglas Fair to serve as Edmonds' presiding pro tem judge. The municipal court judge position will appear on the 2024 primary and general election ballot. Rivera will also have to stand for election this year.

Edmonds Mayor Mike Rosen said that in light of the city's ongoing budget challenges, he is exploring the possibility of holding Edmonds Municipal Court at another courthouse and sharing resources.

"I understand the importance of our municipal court to the people of Edmonds," Rosen said. "My decision and recommendation to the council will be thoughtful, informed and in the best interest of the city," Rosen said.

— *Story and photos by Nick Ng*