

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Whitman County District Court Judge John Hart announces his candidacy for re-election in November of 2022.**

Judge John Hart has announced his candidacy to continue to serve as Whitman County's District Court Judge. He is currently serving in his third year of his first term as Whitman County's District Court Judge. During his tenure, the court has dramatically enhanced its efficiency by digitizing court forms and procedures. In fact, Whitman County District Court was the third court in the entire State of Washington to return to business shortly after the Governor's COVID-19 shelter-in-place order in 2020 by implementing the use of Zoom hearings streamed live on YouTube.

Judge Hart has also focused on areas of concern during his first term. The court was recently awarded a grant from the state for close to \$200,000 to establish and operate the District Court's first therapeutic court, designed to address substance use disorders and other mental health issues for low level offenders in the effort to lower rates of recidivism and increase safety for the community as the participant receives treatment for the underlying condition. Judge Hart has also collaborated with Superior Court Judge Gary Libey and other members of the courthouse security committee to successfully obtain state funding for courthouse security.

In his efforts to further advance the technologies used by our courts and to enhance the public's access to our courts, Judge Hart continues to advocate for Whitman County by serving as Vice Chair of the Judicial Information Systems Committee, Chair of the Data and Dissemination Committee and member of the Court Users Work Group.

Judge Hart is currently serving in his second year of a three year term as faculty and Dean for the Washington Judicial College. All judges at all levels of court statewide are required to attend the college within one year from taking the bench.