

**WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION ON SALARIES
FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

AGENDA

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[Virtual Meeting](#)

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Approval of Minutes from February 26, 2025 Meeting**
- 4. Public Comment – cap of 18 minutes total**
 - 4.1. Any interested attendee will be given 3 minutes for public comment
- 5. Presentation by Elected Officials**
 - 5.1. Eric Richey, Prosecuting Attorney
 - 5.2. Jon Scanlon, County Council
 - 5.3. Donnell “Tank” Tanksley, Sherriff
- 6. Old Business**
- 7. New Business**
- 8. Information Review**
 - 8.1. Summary market data
 - Pending Commissioner discussion and direction
 - 8.2. Commissioner Data Requests Status
 - No new data requests from last meeting
 - Commissioner Darwin review this 10-year lookback spreadsheet and formulas
 - 8.3. Discussion
- 9. Next Steps**
 - 9.1. Additional information requests (if any)
 - 9.2. Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 26th 4 – 6 p.m. PDT
- 10. Adjourn**

Attachments

Attachment A (5.1): Written Statement from Eric Richey, Prosecuting Attorney

Whatcom County Executive's Office is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: 2025 WC Salary Commission

Time: Jan 29, 2025 16:00 Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Every 2 weeks on Wed, until Apr 23, 2025, 7 occurrence(s)

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/tZlude6grDgjG9Z3FoYDz_63x1cKbFNWiRRA/ics?icsToken=DNTB4qxTs7THNlaUUgAALAAAAMoU6WjacQz54jQSgqGmclJzTIgIeQWYgvBodBpGNG4w2iRBf3_hC5cv2VI7cQLb4wLaOfci2sEuVLeLRDAwMDAwMQ&meetingMasterEventId=BwaWVz-fSwK9Ue7908Qneg

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86327823912>

Meeting ID: 863 2782 3912

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+12532158782,,86327823912# US (Tacoma)

Dial by your location

- +1 253 205 0468 US
- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 669 444 9171 US

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- +1 719 359 4580 US
- +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
- +1 305 224 1968 US
- +1 309 205 3325 US
- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
- +1 360 209 5623 US
- +1 386 347 5053 US
- +1 507 473 4847 US
- +1 564 217 2000 US
- +1 646 931 3860 US
- +1 689 278 1000 US
- +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
- 833 548 0276 US Toll-free
- 833 548 0282 US Toll-free
- 877 853 5247 US Toll-free
- 888 788 0099 US Toll-free

Meeting ID: 863 2782 3912

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86327823912>

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- 86327823912@zoomcrc.com

Join by H.323

- 144.195.19.161 (US West)
- 206.247.11.121 (US East)
- 115.114.131.7 (India Mumbai)
- 115.114.115.7 (India Hyderabad)
- 159.124.15.191 (Amsterdam Netherlands)
- 159.124.47.249 (Germany)
- 159.124.104.213 (Australia Sydney)
- 159.124.74.212 (Australia Melbourne)
- 170.114.180.219 (Singapore)
- 64.211.144.160 (Brazil)
- 159.124.132.243 (Mexico)
- 159.124.168.213 (Canada Toronto)
- 159.124.196.25 (Canada Vancouver)
- 170.114.194.163 (Japan Tokyo)
- 147.124.100.25 (Japan Osaka)

Meeting ID: 863 2782 3912



Stacey Carroll <stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com>

Salary Commission Submission

2 messages

Eric Richey <ERichey@co.whatcom.wa.us>
To: Stacey Carroll <Stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com>

Wed, Mar 5, 2025 at 4:23 PM

Dear Stacey,

Attached are my resume, letter, and responses to the questions posed by the Commission. In addition, I've included the 2024 salary documents for Pierce County and Snohomish County, as I believe these may offer valuable salary comparisons for the Commission's consideration. For further reference, I've also included the link to the Washington Citizens Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials website.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

I appreciate your help with this project!

Eric

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/1545?html=true>

<https://snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/121501/Salary-Commission-2024-Presentationfinal-?bidId=>

<https://salaries.wa.gov/salary>

Eric J. Richey, Whatcom County Prosecutor

360.410.6365 | erichey@co.whatcom.wa.us | he/him/his pronouns

 **2025 WC Salary Commission Packet.pdf**
533K

Stacey Carroll <stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com>
To: Eric Richey <ERichey@co.whatcom.wa.us>

Wed, Mar 5, 2025 at 4:24 PM

Thank you. I will get this added to the agenda and sent to the Commissioners. I know they appreciate the care you took with this.

Stacey Carroll
President/Principal Consultant
HR Experts On-call
(360) 643-0503
[Quoted text hidden]



ERIC J. RICHEY

WHATCOM COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Erik K. Sigmar, Chief Criminal Deputy
Dona Bracke, Assistant Chief Criminal Deputy
Christopher Quinn, Chief Civil Deputy
Hilary Thomas, Chief of Staff

March 5, 2025

Whatcom County Salary Commission
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108
Bellingham, WA 98225

Re: Prosecutor's Salary

Whatcom County Salary Commission Members,

Thank you for taking the time to review my letter as part of your evaluation of salaries for elected officials in Whatcom County. This letter specifically addresses the salary for the Prosecutor's position, and I have made every effort to answer as many questions as possible in writing. However, as you continue to consider this matter and formulate any additional questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. I am committed to providing full transparency and will gladly offer any further information necessary to support your decision-making process.

I. Discussion

The salary for the elected prosecutor should be aligned with both Whatcom County's and the State of Washington's commitment to attracting highly qualified candidates for this crucial role.¹ The salary also reflects the employer's responsibility to provide compensation that is appropriate and commensurate with the significant statewide and local duties entrusted to an elected prosecutor.² Additionally, the prosecutor's salary serves as a symbol of respect for the office, recognizing its importance as being on par with that of a superior court judge.

¹ RCW 43.03.027 Salaries of public officials—State policy enunciated. It is hereby declared to be the public policy of this state to base the salaries of public officials on realistic standards in order that such officials may be paid according to the true value of their services and the best qualified citizens may be attracted to public service. It is the purpose of this section and RCW 43.03.040 to effectuate this policy by utilizing the expert knowledge of citizens having access to pertinent facts concerning proper salaries for public officials, thus removing and dispelling any thought of political consideration in fixing the appropriateness of the amount of such salaries.

² Prosecutors have discretion to file charges, decide which charges to file, or to not file any charges at all. A judge or party cannot interfere with a prosecutor's discretion, unless charges are not supported by evidence. The Prosecutor

As you evaluate salaries for elected officials in Whatcom County, I respectfully request that you continue to match the salary for the Whatcom County Prosecutor to that of a Washington Superior Court judge. Aligning the prosecutor's salary with the salary of a Superior Court judge ensures that Whatcom County is in accordance with state legislative intent, national standards, and comparable salaries across Washington State. Matching reflects the significant responsibilities of the prosecutor's office and reinforce the value placed on the role within the broader judicial system.

II. Matching salaries

In 2008, the State passed SB 6297, now codified in RCW 36.17.020(11). The Legislature declared that elected prosecutors, like superior court judges, function as "both a state officer in pursuing criminal cases on behalf of the State of Washington, and as a county officer who acts as civil counsel for the county." Laws 2008, Ch. 309, 1.

The Legislature went on to state:

The elected prosecuting attorney's dual role as a state officer and a county officer is reflected in various provisions of the state Constitution and within state statute.

The legislature finds that the responsibilities and decisions required of the elected prosecuting attorney are essentially the same in every county within Washington state, from a decision to seek the death penalty in an aggravated murder case, to the decision not to prosecute but refer an offender to drug court; from a decision to pursue child rape charges based solely upon the testimony of the child, to a decision to divert juvenile offenders out of the justice system. Therefore, the legislature finds that elected prosecuting attorneys need to exercise the same level of skill and expertise in the least populous county as in the most populous county.

The legislature finds that the salary of the elected county prosecuting attorney should be tied to that of a superior court judge. This furthers the state's interests and responsibilities under the state Constitution, and is consistent with the current practice of several counties in Washington state, the practices of several other states, and the national district attorneys' association national standards.

Based on these findings, the Legislature allocates funding for the county prosecutor's salary in the same manner as it does for superior court judges. The State contributes half of a superior court judge's salary to each county, while also covering a portion of the elected prosecutor's salary that is equivalent to half of a superior court judge's salary. To prevent creating an "unfunded mandate" for counties, the Legislature did not require counties to cover an equal share of the costs for the

represents the State of Washington in all felonies, misdemeanors within the County, and juvenile matters. Prosecutors may challenge judicial rulings. The Prosecutor represents each County department, including the elected officials and county department heads, in contracts and civil disputes. The Prosecutor represents the State of Washington in child support cases. Decisions are final with the elected prosecutor who is beholden only to the electorate.

prosecutor's salary.³ If a prosecutor's salary is not adjusted in line with the superior court judge's salary, any mid-year increases to judicial salaries would result in a reduction of the county's contribution to the prosecutor's salary and the county receiving unwarranted funds. Other than judges and the prosecutor, counties do not receive any State subsidy for the salaries of the other elected officials (county council, auditor, assessor, treasurer, coroner, clerk, and sheriff).

The National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) also speaks about matching an elected prosecutor salary with a superior court judge salary. The Fourth Edition of the NDAA National Prosecution Standards covers all aspects of the job, from constitutional considerations to office administration to policies for charging and sentencing. It is generally recognized as the most authoritative resource for prosecutors. It includes the following section on compensation:

Section 1-2.4 Compensation; Responsibilities of the Chief [Elected] Prosecutor says:

The salary of the full-time chief prosecutor should be at least that of the salary of the chief judge of general trial jurisdiction in the chief prosecutor's district and should not be lowered during a term of office. Factors that should be considered in determining compensation include, but are not limited to:

- a. The benefits to the jurisdiction of encouraging highly competent people to seek a position of prosecutor with a career orientation;⁴ and
- b. the level of compensation of people with analogous responsibilities in the private practice of law, in private industry, and in public service.

The general trial jurisdiction in Washington is the Superior Court. Our superior court judges all receive the same salary, which is set by a citizens' salary commission.⁵ There is no extra pay for a superior court's chief judge. Further, prosecutors, judges, and the Attorney General are the only elected officials that require education and special licensure. The prosecutor's power is broad-different, yet equal to that of a superior court judge⁶ and compensation should be similar.

³ Some small counties may not be able to afford to pay their prosecutor a salary that matches the superior court judge salary. Some very small counties have less work for their prosecutor, and while some small counties share a judge, these counties are not allowed to share a prosecutor under the Washington State Constitution. Whatcom County is not considered a small county.

⁴ See attached Resume for Eric Richey.

⁵ The Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (WCCSEO) meets every two years to set salaries for elected officials holding state office. Superior court judges and district court judges are elected in the counties where they work, yet their salaries are set by the State. Judicial salaries are funded in the same manner that the prosecutor salaries are funded. Half of the judge salary is paid by the State and the other half is paid by the county in which they work.

⁶ As Justice Brennan stated in Young v. U.S. ex. rel. Vuitton et Fils: Between the private life of the citizen and the public glare of criminal accusation stands the prosecutor. That state official has the power to employ the full machinery of the state in scrutinizing any given individual. Even if a defendant is ultimately acquitted, forced immersion in criminal investigation and adjudication is a wrenching disruption of everyday life. For this reason, we must have assurance that those who would wield this power will be guided solely by their sense of public responsibility for the attainment of justice. Young v. U.S. ex rel. Vuitton et Fils S.A., 481 U.S. 787, 814, 107 S. Ct. 2124 (1987).

III. Comparable Counties

In March of 2025, fourteen counties in Washington either match their prosecutor salary to the superior court judge or provide an additional salary. King and Snohomish County Prosecutor salaries are higher than the superior court judge. Whatcom, Pierce, Spokane, Clark, Thurston, Kitsap, Yakima, Benton, Grant, Mason, Kittitas, and Island Counties truly match the salaries of their prosecutors to the superior court judge salary. Whatcom County is the ninth largest county in the State. Every county larger than Whatcom, and five counties smaller than Whatcom match or better their prosecutor salary to the superior court judge salary.

Whatcom County has historically relied on a designated comparable county model to determine wages, focusing on counties with similar populations and economic characteristics. This model, derived from a 2001 arbitration⁷, is not legally mandated. The designated counties—Thurston, Yakima, Kitsap, Benton, Skagit, and Cowlitz—are considered benchmarks. As mentioned earlier, Thurston, Yakima, Kitsap, and Benton counties provide a true salary match. Kitsap is the most comparable to Whatcom in terms of size and cost of living, while Skagit and Cowlitz are smaller and have lower costs of living. If this body were to calculate the "mean"⁸ salary based on these counties, Cowlitz's lower salary would reduce the average. However, considering the "mode"⁹ would indicate that the Whatcom County Prosecutor's salary should indeed match that of the superior court judge.

Whatcom County's use of the "designated comparable county" model to determine wages appears to be diminishing. In both the 2022 Salary Survey for Unrepresented Employees and the 2023 Teamsters/County Collaborative Market Study, the county chose not to rely on this model. Additionally, the 2023 Salary Commission did not use designated comparable counties to set elected officials' salaries. Not using the model makes sense because it overlooks critical local data, such as compensation information from Bellingham's municipal government and other nearby local entities. Further, the model fails to consider cost of living where Whatcom is higher than all counties in Washington outside of King, Snohomish, Clark and Kitsap. Given its limitations, the designated comparable county model may no longer be the most effective or accurate method for determining wages.

An alternative way to assess comparable statistics for the prosecutor's salary is to look beyond county borders. In Washington State, 85 percent of residents live in areas where the prosecutor's salary is either at a true match or above the superior court judge's salary. Even if you exclude King County, whose large population might skew the data, 78 percent of Washington residents still live in jurisdictions where the prosecutor's salary matches or exceeds that of the superior court judge. These figures clearly show that, on a per capita basis, prosecutor salaries in Washington State overwhelmingly match the superior court judge's salary.

⁷ Whatcom County Correction Officer Union arbitration 2001.

⁸ The "mean" is the average where one adds all the numbers together and then divides by the number of numbers.

⁹ The "mode" is the value that occurs most often. In this case, the number that occurs most often is a "true match;" four of six counties.

IV. Prosecutor Salary History

Historically, the Whatcom County Prosecutor's salary matched¹⁰ the superior court judge salary. In 2017, the Whatcom County Salary Commission "untied"¹¹ the Prosecutor's salary from the superior court judge salary, but in 2019, the Commission "retied" the salaries.

In 2021, the Commission aimed to match the Prosecutor's salary with the superior court judge's salary by writing that the prosecutor salary shall match the superior court judge salary, but the prosecutor's salary adjustment was delayed by six months from the July 1 State salary changes¹², largely due to Whatcom County's budgeting practices. As a result, the Prosecutor's salary lagged behind the judge's, leading to a wage loss of \$1,740.00 for the first half of the year, and from July 1, 2023 to January 1, 2024, a wages loss of \$5,371.00 for a total loss of \$7,111.00.

The 2023 Salary Commission recognized the previously described inequity and worked to truly match the Prosecutor's salary to the superior court judge salary. I asked for a true match and to receive retro-pay in the amount of \$7,111.00 for Whatcom County failing to provide a true match despite the 2021 Commission intentions. The 2023 Commission denied this request, with at least one comment suggesting that doing so might be a gift of public funds. A prosecutor position is a fundamental government purpose, which means payment for prosecutor services is not a gift of public funds. In late discussions, the Salary Commission tied all positions to the superior court judge salary by setting the County Executive at 3 percent above the superior court judge salary, the County Prosecutor 3 percent below the County Executive, the County Sheriff 3 percent below the County Prosecutor and, so on. All elected salaries were set to change on July 1, 2023, along with the superior court judges and did so. A likely unintended consequence of setting the County Executive's salary at 3 percent above the superior court judge salary and the Prosecutor's salary at 3 percent below the Executive's salary causes the Prosecutor to be paid less than a superior court judge salary.

The current superior court judge salary is \$228,261.00 and is set to increase to \$237,460.00 on July 1, 2025 and to again increase by 3 percent to \$244,631.00 on July 1, 2026.

V. Request and Conclusion

To align the Whatcom County Prosecutor's salary in law and equity, I respectfully ask that the Whatcom County Salary Commission set the County's contribution to the Prosecutor's salary to be equal to one-half of the salary of a Washington superior court judge. This creates parity (true match) with the salary of a Washington superior court judge and peer county prosecutors. This Commission should indicate that the Whatcom County Prosecutor's salary will be effective January 1, 2026, to comply with our Charter, and know that the salary will be adjusted again on July 1, 2026 to follow increases in the judicial salary reflected in decisions made by the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials. I ask the Commission to set the Prosecutor's salary equal to that of a superior court judge salary, rather than setting at 3% less

¹⁰ "Match" means to equal or be on par with.

¹¹ "Tie" means to bind, fasten or attach. Most counties tie their prosecutor salaries to the Washington State superior court judge salaries by either matching or by formula.

¹² Washington State's biennial budget is set every odd year and becomes effective July 1 of that year.

March 5, 2025

6 | Page

than the Executive's salary. To make-up for a known salary inequity starting on July 1, 2023, I ask the Salary Commission to include additional compensation in the amount of \$7,111.00 to be paid in the first half of 2026. In total, this request will eliminate inequities in the future. I thank the members of the Salary Commission for taking your time to read my letter and for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eric J. Richey', with a large, stylized loop at the top.

Eric J. Richey
Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney



ERIC J. RICHEY

WHATCOM COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Erik K. Sigmar, Chief Criminal Deputy
Dona Bracke, Assistant Chief Criminal Deputy
Christopher Quinn, Chief Civil Deputy
Hilary Thomas, Chief of Staff

March 5, 2025

WHATCOM COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION Q&A'S

1. Job Title: Prosecuting Attorney - Whatcom County

Position Overview: The Prosecuting Attorney serves as the chief legal officer for Whatcom County, with a primary mission to enforce criminal laws, advocate for crime victims, and ensure justice within the community. This role also involves providing legal counsel to county officials and departments, handling civil matters, child support enforcement, and performing various statutory duties defined by RCW 36.27.020. The Prosecuting Attorney is supported by Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys and must be admitted to practice law in Washington State.

Key Responsibilities:

- **Criminal Prosecution:** Prosecutes criminal cases under state statutes or county ordinances, including advising law enforcement during investigations, determining whether to file charges, and representing the state in plea negotiations, pretrial hearings, trials, sentencing hearings, and appeals, following statutory guidelines under RCW 9A.36.031. Criminal prosecution areas include:
 - Adult felonies in Superior Court
 - Adult misdemeanors in District Court
 - Juvenile cases in Superior Court/Juvenile Division
 - Appeals in the Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court
- **Victim Advocacy and Support:** Advocates for crime victims by securing restitution orders, providing information about court dates, and representing victims during trials and sentencing. Oversees a victim assistance program funded by fees from convicted defendants, which supports communication with victims and witnesses, referrals to other agencies, and coordination with the Department of Corrections.
- **Civil Litigation:** Represents the state or county in civil actions, including drafting pleadings, responding to motions, conducting discovery, negotiating settlements, and representing the county in trials and appeals.

- **Child Support and Paternity Cases:** Manages paternity determinations and child support enforcement for both welfare and non-welfare parents. Works with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and uses the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) for cases involving absent parents in other jurisdictions. Handles modifications, private cases, and may file contempt charges for non-payment of child support.
- **Miscellaneous Legal Duties:** Performs various other statutory duties, such as examining official bonds, preparing ballot titles, handling recall petitions, and participating in the canvassing board. Makes impeachment disclosure determinations for allegations of bias or dishonesty by regular witnesses/officers. Participates in multiple boards, including:
 - Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
 - Justice Oversight and Planning Committee
 - Statewide Reentry Council
 - Statewide Children’s Justice Taskforce
 - Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
 - Northwest HIDTA Executive Board
 - Whatcom County Drug Taskforce (Chair)

Qualifications:

- Must be admitted to practice law in the State of Washington.
- Proven ability to handle criminal prosecutions, civil matters, and child support cases.
- Strong advocacy skills for crime victims and ability to collaborate with law enforcement, county officials, and various community agencies.

This role offers an opportunity to make a significant impact on the justice system and community well-being in Whatcom County, contributing to the fair and efficient enforcement of laws.

2. Scope of Responsibilities

The responsibilities of this position are primarily centered on the administration and daily operations of the office. The Prosecuting Attorney’s Office comprises fifty-nine (59) staff members, including twenty-nine (29) attorneys. I have a management team made up of three chiefs—Civil, Criminal, and Chief of Staff—and an Assistant Chief overseeing District Court. In total, I have eight direct reports. I am responsible for all major decisions within the department and hold the final authority on all matters.

a. Budget

Our budget is primarily personnel-driven and amounts to just under \$8 million.

b. Role in Decision-Making

The Prosecuting Attorney plays a key role in nearly every significant decision related to county government. This often involves advising department heads and elected officials. In criminal matters, our office handles all major criminal cases. The decision to charge someone with a crime is profound, as it can drastically impact a person's life.

c. Recent Changes and Challenges

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on diversion programs and a growing awareness of the intersection between criminal justice and behavioral health. Our office is managing the highest caseloads in the state of Washington. This challenge has been further complicated by difficulties in recruiting and retaining attorneys due to a noticeable shortage in the field. I anticipate that this issue will worsen with the implementation of new, lower caseload requirements for defense attorneys.

3. Salary Commission Process

The most recent Salary Commission process was unnecessarily contentious. Ultimately, the Commission found sufficient grounds to align the Prosecutor's salary with that of a Superior Court Judge, as is the practice in many other counties. However, the Commission extended this linkage to other elected officials' salaries without clear justification. The Prosecutor's Office provided solid reasoning for aligning the salary with the Superior Court Judge, citing statutes, legislative findings, national standards, and comparisons with other counties. I expect other elected officials to present arguments for their salary requests, though they may not be directly connected to the Superior Court Judge salary.

4. Other Salaries

As discussed in my previous letter, the salaries of other elected prosecutors also warrant consideration.

5. Delegation of Responsibilities

When I am out of the office, I have designated my Chief of Staff to assume oversight responsibilities. However, my Chief Criminal Deputy Prosecutor is my primary backup, particularly for court appearances and related duties. Should any significant issues arise in my absence, I am always reachable and typically receive calls at all hours of the day.

6. Educational Background

Please refer to my CV for details regarding my educational background.

7. Qualifications for the Position

The position requires a law degree, a valid license to practice law, and a strong understanding of government operations. Experience within this office is also invaluable in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the role.

Attachment: Eric Richey Curriculum Vitae
(C.V.)

ERIC RICHEY

Whatcom County Prosecutor

311 Grand Avenue, Suite 201
Bellingham, WA 98225

(360) 410-6365

ERichey@co.whatcom.wa.us

Professional Experience

WHATCOM COUNTY PROSECUTOR

2018-present

I prosecute major felony cases and oversee the largest law office in Whatcom County, managing both criminal and civil litigation, appellate law, and behavioral health matters. In this capacity, I make key policy decisions focused on safeguarding our community by implementing innovative strategies and taking a proactive approach to crime prosecution, with the goal of reducing recidivism and incarceration.

WHATCOM COUNTY CHIEF CRIMINAL DEPUTY PROSECUTOR

2014-2018

In this role, I prosecuted major felony cases, and led the criminal division of the Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office. I also chaired the weekly Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Response Team (SART), which brought together law enforcement and victim advocates to enhance investigations, foster collaboration, and deepen our collective understanding, all with the goal of better protecting our community.

WHATCOM COUNTY DEPUTY PROSECUTOR

1993-2014

I began my legal career prosecuting gross misdemeanors in District Court before advancing to Juvenile Court, where I managed a caseload that included sexual assault cases. I then moved to the Superior Court felony division, where I prosecuted and tried cases involving sexual assault, and domestic violence. Throughout my career as a prosecutor, I have taken hundreds of felony cases to trial and handled thousands of criminal cases.

Current Board Memberships

Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys board member (WAPA), WAPA Sexual Assault Committee, High Intensity Drug Trafficking executive board (HIDTA) Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force, Washington Statewide Reentry Council board member, Children's Justice Task Force, Whatcom County Sheriff and Chief's Association. ITA Listening Tour Committee, Whatcom County Drug Task Force (Chair) Justice Project Oversight and Planning Committee, Attorney General Transition Team.

Past Board Memberships

Chuckanut Health Foundation board member (2019-2024), Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Chair (2014-2018), Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault board member (DVSAS), Brigid Collins Steering Committee member. Council of Presidents for Title 9, Governor's Task Force for Independent Investigations, Vice President of External Affairs for Associated Students at Western Washington University.

ERIC RICHEY

Whatcom County Prosecutor

Significant Accomplishments

In 2019-2020, I successfully introduced the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program to Whatcom County through my office. By securing substantial state and federal grants, I was able to develop and implement the program at no cost to local taxpayers. These grants funded four positions focused on providing wrap-around services and fostering community connections, all aimed at reducing recidivism. The program has been highly successful and is now managed by the Health Department.

In the wake of George Floyd's death in 2020, I initiated a listening tour to engage with people of color and better understand their experiences within the criminal justice system. These conversations led to the creation of the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission (WREC). I contributed to the development of this initiative, which has now become an official Commission within Whatcom County government.

Admitted to Washington State Bar in 1993

Education

University of Oregon, Juris Doctorate 1993

Western Washington University, Bachelor of Arts 1988
