COURT COMMISSIONERS

OF

BENTON & FRANKLIN COUNTIES

Daniel J. Hurson was born on February 18, 1923 in Seattle Washington. He was an altar boy, swept the docks of Seattle as an early job, and attended O'Dea High School and Seattle College.

During World War II, he joined the United States Marine Corps and became part of the Special Officers Candidate School, where he was part of a special group of 400 strong who were trained to lead men into combat in the Pacific Theater. On his birthday (at least it was his birthday in Seattle) he led a Machine Gun platoon in the first waves of the assault at Iwo Jima, receiving two Purple Hearts in the process. After the war he served in the Marine Corps Reserves while attending Gonzaga University.

Commissioner Hurson graduated from Gonzaga Law School in 1950, and during the Korean Conflict served as a Judge Advocate General officer at Camp Pendleton. At that time, he was a defense counsel and helped introduce the newly passed Uniform Code of Military Justice (May 1951) to the Marine Corps.

Commissioner Hurson was admitted to the Washington bar in 1951. He, his wife Kathleen, and five children settled in Kennewick in the 1950's. During that time, Commissioner Hurson was an assistant prosecuting attorney and in private practice. For two decades starting in 1971, he served as a court commissioner handling the

juvenile and domestic relations calendars for Benton County. He was active in Kennewick Kiwanis, The Tri-City Country Club, and St. Joseph Catholic Church. In 1971, he was Kennewick Man of the Year, and in 1979 he was President of the Benton County Bar Association.

Commissioner Hurson retired to Seattle in 1985 where he doted on his grandchildren and reminisced about the days in Seattle as an altar boy at Immaculate Conception and his friends and days in Kennewick. He passed away peacefully on July 31, 2016.

John G. Carroll was born July 29, 1924, in Seattle, Washington. He was co-valedictorian of his class of 1941. Commissioner Carroll enlisted in the Navy as a naval aviation cadet in 1942. He was commissioned 2nd lieutenant aviator in the Marine Corps in 1944 and became a flight instructor until his discharge from active duty in 1945.

Commissioner Carroll obtained a degree in history at the University of Washington and graduated from the University of Washington Law School in 1951. He was the president of the law school. He was admitted to the Washington bar in the same year.

Commissioner Carroll's legal career was put on hold when he was recalled to active duty in the Marines on the same day he took the oath of an attorney. While in the Marine Corps Reserve Squadron, VMF-216, he flew out of Sandpoint in Seattle. He also served as a legal officer in El Toro, California.

Upon Commissioner Carroll's return to Seattle in 1954, he and John Erlichman started a successful law firm. When John Erlichman joined President Nixon's staff, Commissioner Carroll returned to the Tri-Cities. After many years of private practice, he was appointed as a part-time Court Commissioner of the Benton Franklin Counties Superior Court in 1976. In 1985, was appointed full-time. He worked primarily with juveniles. He served in that capacity until 1994.

Commissioner Carroll was known by judges, lawyers, and members of the community as a "kind and gentle person, who is accessible to all; whose office door is always open for consultation and advice on how to be a good lawyer." John was recognized by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services as "Outstanding Volunteer of the Year - 1999". Commissioner Carroll died December 27, 2005, in Richland.

Herbert H. Davis was born on October 24, 1909. It is believed that he was born in Butte, Montana. Nothing is known of his early years. But he was a classmate of Henry “Scoop” Jackson at the University of Washington. They were also members of the Delta Chi fraternity and graduated together from the University of Washington Law School in 1935. Commissioner Davis practiced law for several years in the Seattle area until he was persuaded by Pat Sensney to join him in the Benton County Prosecutor’s office in Prosser. Mr. Sensney had been appointed as the Prosecuting Attorney in 1950.

After serving as a deputy prosecuting attorney for several years, Commissioner Davis was elected to the position of Prosecuting Attorney in 1958. He was re-elected three times and served in that capacity until he returned to private practice in 1974. Sometime thereafter, he was appointed to the position of part-time Court Commissioner. He served in that capacity until 1994, retiring due to poor health. He moved to Spokane, Washington and lived with his daughter until his death on April 8, 2000.

Michael R. Johnston was born in 1937 in Kirkland, Washington. After graduating from Kent-Meridian High School, he entered Washington State College. He graduated with a B.A. in political science in 1959. He was awarded a Juris Doctor degree from University of Washington in 1962.

Commissioner Johnston was an Assistant Attorney General from 1962 to 1968, assigned to the Opinions Section and the Fisheries and Game Departments. He was a deputy prosecuting attorney in Stevens County until he and his partner formed the law firm of Campbell and Johnston in 1969. His was principally a civil practice that continued until 1991. He was also a hearings officer for the Higher Education Board.

Commissioner Johnston was appointed to the part-time position of Benton Franklin Superior Court Commissioner in 1976. He served until 1983. He was re-appointed to the commissioner position in 1985 and served until his retirement in 2000. After retirement, he often served as a judge pro tem. He considered his experience in juvenile court to be his most rewarding legal experience. Commissioner Johnston continued living in Pasco, Washington until he passed away on September 25, 2025.

Lonna Malone was raised in Eastern Washington on a dryland wheat farm. She graduated from Washington State University in 1973 with a B.A. degree in Social Studies Education. After graduating from college, she worked as a substitute secondary education teacher and ultimately as an administrative assistant to the Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at Central Washington University for a number of years. She was admitted to Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College and received her juris doctor degree in 1986. Commissioner Malone was admitted to the Washington bar in 1986.

She began practicing law as an associate attorney with Critchlow, Williams, Ryals, Schuster and Merriman in 1986 and became a partner in the firm of Critchlow, Williams,

Schuster, Malone and Skalbania in 1990 with an emphasis on domestic relations, criminal defense, and personal injury until her appointment to the position of Commissioner of Benton Franklin Superior Court in 1994. She retired in 2011.

She was active with the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, Washington State Trial Lawyers Association and Benton Franklin Counties Family Law Committee. She was a member of the Washington State Superior Judges' Association Juvenile and Family Law Committee, member of the Washington State Dependency and Termination Equal Justice Committee, mentor for the Washington State Bar Association's Lawyers Assistance Program, Region 2 judicial team leader for the annual State CPS/Domestic Violence Summit, and proudly the first drug court judge for Benton Franklin counties.

She was active with the American Association of University Women, Richland Kiwanis, Rape Relief and Sexual Assault Program, Tri-Cities Recreation Committee for the Handicapped, and served on the CBC Foundation board prior to her appointment as a trustee for Columbia Basin College from 1993-2004.

Joseph Schneider was born in Renton Washington in 1949. After graduation for Columbia High School, in Richland, he enrolled in Gonzaga University. There he earned a bachelor's degree in political science. He earned his juris doctor degree from Gonzaga University School of Law in 1976. He was admitted to the Washington bar in the same year.

Commissioner Schneider was in private practice as public defender in superior court, district court and Prosser municipal court. He also represented the Prosser Hospital District, Prosser School District and the Benton County Fire Protection District No. 3. He served as the Prosser City Attorney from 1990 until 2000.

Commissioner Schneider was appointed to the position of Commissioner of Benton Franklin Superior Court on a part-

time basis in 1994. He was appointed full time in 2000. He served in that capacity for 16 years, presiding over domestic and juvenile matters. Commissioner Schneider retired in June 2016.

Commissioner Schneider has served on the boards of the Washington State Association of School District Attorneys and the Washington State Association of Municipal Attorneys. He was active in many court-related projects including WE the People, Mock Trial, National Adoption Day, Law Day and the Reasonable Efforts Symposium.

Jerri Potts was born in 1952 in Colville, Washington. After graduating from Walla Walla High School, she enrolled in Eastern Washington State University. She received her B.A. degree in English Literature in 1986. She received her Juris Doctor degree from the University of Idaho Law School in 1991.

Commissioner Potts was an Assistant Attorney General in its Kennewick office from 1992 until 1998. She then entered private practice with an emphasis on domestic and juvenile matters. She was appointed to the position of Benton Franklin Superior Court Commissioner in 2002. She presides over domestic and juvenile matters.

She was active in the Children's Justice Task Force and Superior Court Family and Juvenile Law Committee. Commissioner Potts retired in June 2019.

Jacqueline Stam. Commissioner Stam was in private practice for 18 years, focusing on family law guardianships, probate and estate planning. She also served as a guardian ad litem and as a mediator. She was appointed to the position of Benton Franklin Superior Court Commissioner in 2011 where she presided over domestic and juvenile matters.

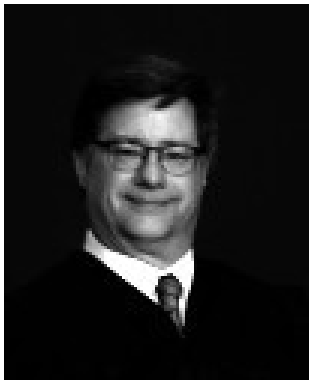
Court Commissioner Stam became Judge Stam on August 2, 2021. She was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to replace retired Judge Runge.

Pamela Peterson was appointed to serve as a Superior Court Commissioner in July 2016. She worked at the Kennewick Office of the Attorney General from 1998 through 2009, where she focused on litigation in the areas of dependency and termination of parental rights cases. Commissioner Peterson also advised Walla Walla Community College, Columbia Basin College, and various state agencies.

In 2009, Commissioner Peterson moved to the private sector and served as an associate and then as a partner at Cowan, Moore, Luke, Carrier and Peterson. She focused on family law and civil litigation while at Cowan Moore. She later worked as a parents' representation attorney for the State Office of Public Defense on cases involving dependency and termination of parental rights.

Commissioner Peterson served on the WSBA Judicial Recommendation Committee until being appointed to the Bench. She also serves as a board member for Benton-Franklin Counties Legal Aid.

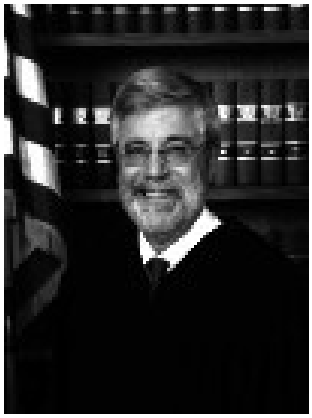
Commissioner Peterson graduated from Willamette University School of Law in 1997. Prior to that, she obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education at Central Washington University, where she graduated summa cum laude as a President's Scholar. Commissioner Peterson also received a graduate degree in Education. Commissioner Peterson retired in June 2021 after faithfully serving the citizens of Benton and Franklin Counties.



Darin R. Campbell was born in 1964 in Vancouver, Washington. His family moved frequently, and he attended schools Southwest Washington and the Tri-Cities. In 1983 he graduated from Kelso High School and enrolled in Washington State University. He studied market research analysis and obtained his B.A. in Business Administration in 1987. He obtained his law degree from the University of Puget Sound School of Law in 1991.

Commissioner Campbell worked in the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office for over 12 years. He served in both the civil and criminal departments of the Prosecutor's office. Commissioner Campbell then opened a private law office, focusing on juvenile law and child welfare cases for over 15 years.

In 2019 Commissioner Campbell was appointed to the bench as a Superior Court Commissioner. He presides over juvenile and domestic matters.

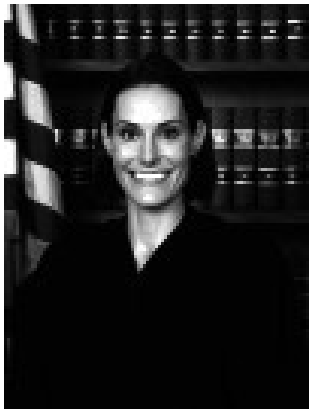


Arthur D. Klym was born in Portland, Oregon in 1952. He was raised in Cornelius, Oregon on a chicken farm. After high school graduation from Laurelwood Academy in Gaston, Oregon, he went on to Walla Walla College where he earned a B.A. in History in 1974. He attended Willamette University College of Law in Salem, Oregon and there earned his Doctor of Jurisprudence in 1977.

After passing the bar exam in 1977, he began his career in Walla Walla. He moved to the Tri-Cities in 1980 and was in private practice until he was appointed Court Commissioner in 2021. He also served as a guardian ad litem in Family Law cases for 25 years.

For many years Commissioner Klym was active in community theater productions, previously served on the Board of The Richland Players, and is currently on the Board of The Rude Mechanicals, a Shakespeare Company. He was a founding Board member of both the Academy of Children's Theatre and the Three Rivers Children's Museum Foundation. He is a past President of the Benton-Franklin Counties Bar Association and the

Walla Walla College Alumni Association. Since 2009 he has been a volunteer off-ice official at home games of the Western Hockey League's Tri-City Americans.

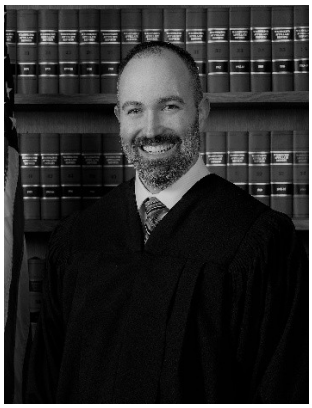


Diana N. Ruff was born in Richland, Washington seven minutes after her fraternal twin sister Katherine, to Lyman and Esther Powell. She attended Gonzaga University in Spokane, where she graduated magna cum laude with a double major in Political Science and Journalism. After college, she attended Marquette University School of Law in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for one year, but then transferred to and, in 2009, graduated from Gonzaga University School of Law.

After law school, Commissioner Ruff joined Allen Brecke Law Offices as an associate attorney handling litigation and negotiation of personal injury cases. She then joined the Benton County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in 2013 as a deputy prosecutor, where she focused on domestic violence, sexual assault, and internet crimes against children cases. After leaving the Benton County Prosecutor's Office in 2018, she worked as a judge pro tem in Franklin County District Court and Pasco Municipal Court. In September 2020 she became an Administrative Law Judge for the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings. She was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner for Benton and Franklin Counties on August 16, 2021.

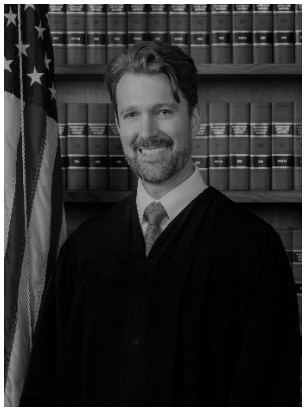
She has served on the City of Richland Parks and Recreation Commission (a commission that her mother was once Chairwoman of in the 1990s and which sparked her love of parks and recreation); City of Kennewick Parks and Recreation Commission; and Benton County Park Board. Commissioner Ruff also served on the Board of Directors for the CREHST (Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology) Museum for three years prior to the museum closing. Commissioner Ruff was active in the Benton Franklin Counties Bar Association, serving as Secretary/Treasurer, President of the Bar Association, and on the Board of Trustees.

Commissioner Ruff served in that capacity until June 2022, when she was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to the position of Judge of Benton Franklin Counties Superior Court.



Brandon P. Holt was born in Anchorage, Alaska and was raised in Southern California. Shortly after 9-11, he joined the U.S. Army. He was attached to the Third Infantry Division in Georgia and deployed to Iraq for a total of 36 months, wherein he received many service medals including the combat medic badge. After nearly six years in the military, Brandon joined the Macon Police Department in Georgia. While in service, he attended American Military University and graduated with a degree in Political Science. Thereafter, he attended the University of Idaho, College of Law and worked as a Legal Research and Writing Teacher's Assistant, served as Editor for the Critical Legal Studies Journal, won the Best Oralist award in the McNichol's Moot Court Competition, Best Brief in the National Duberstein Bankruptcy Moot Court Competition, and earned several CALI awards for the highest grade in the class.

After graduating law school and passing the bar exam, Brandon clerked for the Honorable Judge Rich Christensen of the First Judicial District of Idaho before moving to Tri-Cities. He has served as the Richland Riverside Rotary President, President-Elect of the Benton-Franklin Counties Bar Association, the Young Lawyer Liaison for the Family Law Executive Committee, the Southeastern Representative for the Young Lawyers Division, and served as a judge pro tem before being appointed as Superior Court Commissioner in 2022 and ceremoniously sworn-in by Judge Christensen. He was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner for Benton and Franklin Counties on July 15, 2022.



Andrew M. Howell was born in Billings, Montana. He attended Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska for his undergraduate studies, and law school at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana. While at Creighton, Commissioner Howell met his wife, Theresa, who was born and raised in the Tri-Cities. After graduating Creighton, she returned home for graduate studies and work at PNNL.

Commissioner Howell worked as an intern first at Rettig, Osborne, Forgette and then the Benton County Prosecutor's Office. After graduating from law school, Commissioner Howell accepted a position as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Benton County. Commissioner Howell spent his legal career at the Prosecutor's Office, working in all 3 criminal divisions and rising to Division Chief of both the Juvenile and District Court divisions.

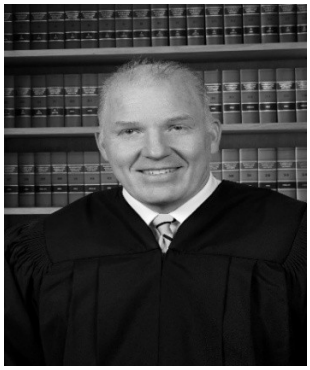
Commissioner Howell gained valuable trial experience trying every type of case from DUI to Murder. Commissioner Howell specialized in handling sex offenses and was one of the first Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys to work with the regional Internet Crimes Against Children Taskforce tackling internet-facilitated sex crimes.

Commissioner Howell was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner for Benton and Franklin Counties on September 16, 2022. Commissioner Howell and his wife have two young children, and they enjoy camping and exploring the Pacific Northwest. Court Commissioner Howell became Judge Howell on June 1, 2026. He was appointed by Governor Bob Ferguson to replace Judge Ruff.

Megan A. Whitmire was born in Longview, Washington in 1968, and graduated from Mark Morris High School in 1986. Before completing college, she worked for the Franklin County and King County Prosecutor's Offices in various capacities including receptionist, victim/witness coordinator, and trial calendar coordinator.

Commissioner Whitmire graduated from Central Washington University through the extension night program in Lynnwood, Washington in 1996 with a degree in Criminal Justice. After graduating from Seattle University Law School in 1999, she worked as a deputy

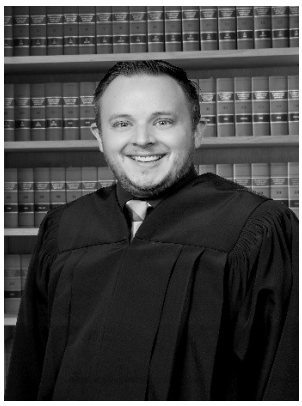
prosecutor in both Cowlitz and Benton counties for a total of 14 years. She has also been in private practice in Cowlitz and Benton counties, specializing primarily in criminal defense, for over 8 years. She was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner for Benton and Franklin Counties on September 23, 2022.



Bronson J. Brown was born in Richland, Washington. A lifelong resident of the Tri-Cities area, he graduated from Kennewick High School in 1994, earned two Bachelor's degrees (Law and Justice and Spanish) from Central Washington University in 2000 where he also was a member of the Rugby team, and received his Juris Doctor from California Western School of Law in 2003.

His legal career includes serving as General Counsel for school districts and public agencies, city attorney for cities and was a long-time law partner in a small firm local law firm. Judge Bronson Brown is a past president of Benton Franklin Legal Aid and is a long-time board member.

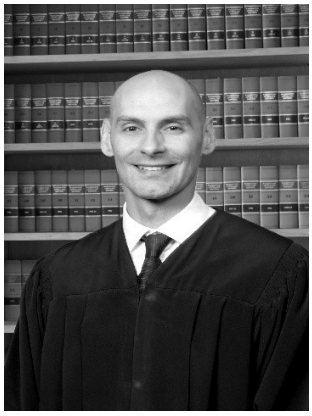
Bronson Brown served as a part-time Superior Court Commissioner in Benton County from January 2023-November 2024. Bronson was elected to the Benton Franklin Superior Court and sworn as a full-time judge in December 2024. He and his wife, Wendy, have raised five children and remain active in the community.



Quinn J. Bell was born in Tacoma, Washington. His family moved to Tri Cities not long after and after spending some time living in Pasco and Kennewick, his family finally settled down in Richland where he graduated from Richland High School. Commissioner Bell attended Brigham Young University where he obtained his undergraduate degree in Psychology, before attending Willamette University School of Law for his Juris Doctorate. As an attorney, Commissioner Bell returned to the Tri-Cities and joined a local firm and started his career doing prosecution for the Cities of Richland, West

Richland, and Pasco, as well as practicing in other areas of civil law.

After a few years, Commissioner Bell opened his own solo law firm, where he continued to assist his old firm in handling criminal prosecutions, but also serves as general counsel for some local agencies, practices estate planning and probate law, as well as other areas of general civil practice. Commissioner Bell was appointed as a part-time Superior Court Commissioner for Benton County on October 20th, 2025, where he continues to serve, currently handling the Ex-Parte docket in Benton County Superior Court.



Caleb DiPeso was born in southern California but raised in Washington. Two days after graduating from high school, he joined the United States Marine Corps. He served four years on active duty, primarily in Twentynine Palms, CA, but he also saw service in Australia, Egypt, Japan and at sea. After being honorably discharged, he attended the University of Washington and graduated with a degree in English and then attended Seattle University Law School. While in law school, Commissioner DiPeso joined the Washington Army National Guard, and he served part-time for the next sixteen years, first as an infantryman, then later as an armor officer and judge advocate officer.

After graduating from Seattle University Law School, Commissioner DiPeso began his legal career as a public defender, first as a contractor, and later for the Benton County Officer of Public Defense, where he eventually became the Chief Staff Defender. There he gained valuable experience both as a supervisor and as a trial attorney appointed to defend some of the most difficult and serious criminal cases in Benton County. As a part-time judge advocate officer, Commissioner DiPeso advised commanders, litigated administrative separations, and provided services to soldiers and their families.

After more than eight years in public defense, Commissioner DiPeso joined the Washington State Office

of the Attorney General, where he litigated juvenile dependency matters. After two years at the AG's Office, he joined the United States Department of Energy, Hanford Field Office, where he handled procurement and administrative law matters for the next two years. In early 2025, Commissioner DiPeso rejoined the Benton County Office of Public Defense as a staff defender, where he remained until he was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner for Benton and Franklin Counties on June 8, 2026.

Families are encouraged to provide additional biographical information and photographs. Submissions may be sent to tiffany.runge@co.benton.wa.us