

# Seattle Municipal Court

## Update for Seattle City Council

*Public Safety Committee*

September 9, 2025

Anita Crawford-Willis, Presiding Judge

Josh Sattler, Court Administrator

# Seattle Municipal Court

- The judicial branch of Seattle City government.
- Authorized under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 35.20.
- Adjudicates misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor offenses, infractions, and civil violations under the Seattle Municipal Code and Revised Code of Washington statutes.
- 7 elected judges, 5 appointed magistrates, 4 service areas.



*Seattle Municipal Court's mission is to provide a forum to resolve alleged violations of the law in a respectful, independent and impartial manner.*



# Judges Pro Tempore

- Often shortened to “pro tem judge”, an attorney appointed to serve as a temporary judge when an elected judge is unavailable due to illness, absence, or disqualification.
- Pro tem judges hold all the powers of a duly elected judge while serving and take an oath of office for the same term as elected judges.
- SMC 3.33.140 requires city residency for pro tem judges.



# Ordinance 121064 – Judges Pro Tempore

- Removes city residency requirement for pro tem judges.
- In 2025, Washington State legislature changed RCW eliminating city residency requirement for municipal courts authorized under RCW 35.20.010.
- Seattle Municipal Court is the only court authorized under RCW 35.20.010.
- Other municipal and district courts are already authorized to recruit pro tem judges without a residency requirement.
- SMC Magistrates are already able to serve as pro tem judge under SMC 3.33.150 without city residency requirement.

# Why this change matters

- ✓ Without pro tem coverage, SMC calendars are canceled or consolidated, causing delays and impacting the efficient delivery of justice.
- ✓ Court service impacts: delays in infraction hearings and cancellation of debt reduction hearings by using magistrates in formal court instead of infractions.
- ✓ Increasingly more difficult to recruit qualified pro tem judges who reside in city limits.
- ✓ There is no rational justification for imposing the added burden of requiring city residence for pro tem judges on only one municipal court in our state.

# Seattle Municipal Court Updates

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TECH STABILIZATION & DATA  
EXCHANGE IN PLACE WITH CITY  
ATTORNEY

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ADDED MARSHAL STAFFING

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LAUNCH OF DRUG PROSECUTION  
ALTERNATIVE







# Thank you and Questions?

[www.seattle.gov/courts](http://www.seattle.gov/courts)