

The Courts Explained



Our mother and firm co-founder, Carol A. Fuller, was a superior court judge from 1979-1993. She was the first female superior court judge in Washington State outside of King County.

Do you find yourself confused when you hear or read about the court system? Here is how the courts work in Washington State. (The federal court system is separate.) All Washington courts have elected judges who serve terms; none are lifetime appointments. Some courts have appointed commissioners who help the judges.

- **Municipal Court** – Some cities have municipal courts with jurisdiction over traffic citations and misdemeanors committed within the city limits.
- **District Court** – Each county has a district court, with jurisdiction over traffic citations, misdemeanors (including many DUI and domestic violence cases), and civil lawsuits involving less than \$75,000 in damages.
- **Small Claims Court** – These courts are run by the district court to handle cases involving less than \$5,000. People represent themselves, without lawyers.
- **Superior Court** – Each county also has a superior court. It is the court of general jurisdiction and hears cases involving family law, felonies, juvenile matters, estates and probates, appeals from the lower courts, and civil lawsuits involving more than \$75,000 in damages.
- **Court of Appeals** – There are three divisions of the appellate court in the State of Washington. If you lose in superior court, you have the right to appeal to the court of appeals. This court can overturn decisions made in the lower courts.
- **Washington State Supreme Court** – The supreme court is the highest court in the state and consists of nine justices. These justices decide which cases they will hear that are appealed from the three courts of appeal.
- **Therapeutic Courts** – Some municipal, district and superior courts have special programs and dockets for therapeutic courts, including drug court, mental health court, veterans treatment court, and domestic violence court.

Fuller & Fuller, Accident and Injury Attorneys has been in business for over 40 years, and we have had cases in all of the major branches of the Washington court system, including the supreme court.

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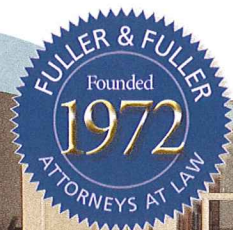
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