Meet the candidates

Umatilla-Morrow County District Court Judge Department 2

Peter Fels

Peter Fels, 42, Pendeton, has lived in Umatilla County for the past 10 years and is currently the incumbent for district court judge department 2. He was appointed by Governor Barbara Roberts upon Judge Ralph Currin's retirement the first of the year. He and his wife, Nancy Helget, have two children, six and nine.

Fels attended Amhurst College at Amhurst Massachusetts and the University of California at Berkeley where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in Spanish literature and minored in anthropology. He attended the university of Oregon School of law and received his J.D. in 1978. He was admitted to the Oregon State Bar in 1978 and the U.S. District Court for Oregon in 1980.

From 1988 to Dec. 1991 Fels was regional director at the Pendleton regional office of the Oregon Legal Services Corporation. From 1989 to present he was judge pro-tem of the Tribal Court of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. From 1983 to 1988 he was co-director and staff attorney for the Oregon Legal Services Corporation at Pendleton and from 1982-83 staff attorney there. He was farmworker staff attorney for the Ontario Regional Office of the Oregon Legal Services Corporation from 1979-81. He has also been a student advisor for the Oregon Student Public Interest Research group, a law clerk for a law firm in Eugene and in private practice from Sept. '78 to Jan. '79.

Fels has been a member of the Umatilla County Jail Monitoring Committee, the Umatilla County Juvenile and Youth Services Commission, the Great Start Advisory Committee, the board of directors of the Pendleton Arts Council, the Affordable Housing Development Forum, board of directors for the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Umatilla County, Oregon State Bar committees on Rights of the Handicapped and Affirmative Action, board of directors for NOVA Enterprises and the Pendleton Volleyball Association.

"My goal has been to run the court in a fair and professional manner," commented Fels. "As judge, I understand the law and apply it as it is written, not according to my own personal views. My policies have been to make sure that everyone who comes to court has a fair chance and does not lose because of lack of having a lawyer or money or failure to understand the law.

"I have made some changes since becoming judge. I had speaker phones installed in the court in Hermiston so that attorneys and litigants can have telephone hearings recorded and avoid the expenses of travel. This includes people from Morrow County who want restraining orders, who previously had to wait until the judge came to Heppner on Friday or go to Hermiston. I have imposed stiffer sentences for drunk drivers and used electronic surveilance and community service as sentencing options, which were not previously used. I have allowed first time simple fish and game infractions to be handled by the court clerk, like traffic tickets, so people don't have to wait in court for hours just to pay their fine. And I have insisted that victims be consulted and allowed to testify at sentencing of criminals, which, although required by law, was not always done in the past.

"My plans include to work with all other courts to establish consistency in fines, bail schedules and sentences; to fight to make sure that there are no closures or reductions in the Heppner or Hermiston courts; and to utilize the court in Irrigon where more convenient.

"My record shows that I am well qualified to carry out the duties of judge. Besides having been judge in district court, I have over two years' prior judicial experience as a part time judge in Umatilla Tribal Court, handling

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5 to 8 p.m.

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