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7 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
8 IN AND OF THURSTON COUNTY

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10 BRIAN SONNTAG, a Pierce County voter
11 and former County official; JEFF JOSEPH, a
12 Pierce County voter and Republican Precinct
13 Committeeperson; and HOLLIE ROGGE, a
14 Pierce County voter and a former Pierce
County Charter Commissioner,

Petitioners,

15 vs.

16 PIERCE COUNTY, a home rule charter
17 county government,

Respondent.

No.

DECLARATION OF JEFF JOSEPH IN
SUPPORT OF PETITION TO VOID
CHARTER AMENDMENT 53 AND
PROHIBIT PIERCE COUNTY FROM
PLACING AMENDMENT 53 ON THE
BALLOT

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19 I, JEFF JOSEPH, make the following statement under oath subject to penalty of perjury
20 under the laws of the State of Washington:

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22 1.1 I am over the age of eighteen and competent to testify in this matter.

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24 1.2 My testimony is based upon my education, training, and experience as an elected Pierce
25 County official – past Republican Precinct Officer and current Republican Precinct
26 Committeeperson, and Pierce County voter. I am testifying based upon my personal
27 knowledge.
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1.3 I oppose Charter Amendment 53 and make this declaration in support of voiding it and to prevent its placement on the November ballot. I am a petitioner in this matter and am seeking a preliminary injunction.

1.4 I voted for Sheriff Swank.

1.5 I voted for him because I trusted he could carry out the duties and responsibilities of Pierce County Sheriff in a manner consistent with my beliefs and expectations from my local government.

1.6 I voted for Pierce County Executive. I did not vote for Executive with the understanding the Executive could appoint my Sheriff or take the office of Sheriff away from the voters. Voters on Amendment 53 would be voting to give power to an elected official who was elected without such powers. Voters did not know they were picking an Executive with the capacity or competence to supervise or control public safety. I understood no other official, not even the Legislature, could control the Office of Sheriff or otherwise interfere with the Sheriff's authority.

1.7 I want Pierce County Sheriff to be independent from all other County offices. I value such independence because I want a Sheriff whose priority is public safety, not adhering to the political whims or oversight of the Executive or any other policy makers.

1.8 When facing an active shooter, I want local law enforcement thinking about my safety, not what the Executive thinks. I do not want any oversight obligating a Sheriff to pause or wait for Executive approval to deploy whatever tactics he deems warranted by the circumstances. I also do not want the Council or any other legislative body telling him how to do his job based upon popular vote.

1.9 Charter Amendment 53 changes the Office of Sheriff to an appointive office that eliminates direct accountability to me and the other Pierce County voters. The Amendment also interferes with continued service by the Sheriff I voted for until January 1, 2029 – the full four-year term. Pierce County charter set the term at four years.

1.10 I am requesting judicial review now to prevent the irreparable harm should Amendment 53 appear on the ballot.

1.11 The irreparable harm suffered involves my elected Sheriff having to divert his time and resources away from the public office of Sheriff that demands his undivided attention.

1.12 Our Sheriff should not be distracted. The public safety issues facing Pierce County require focus. He should not be worrying about or campaigning for continued service. The established election laws and County Charter afford him four years without political distractions associated with his own election or continued service in the office he achieved. Amendment 53 compromises public safety and wastes resources Pierce County voters already committed to Sheriff Swank when electing him to a four-year term.

1.13 I personally suffer the irreparable harm of having to devote my time, attention, and resources to defeating a measure that was ill conceived for improper purposes. Amendment 53 is directed at Sheriff Swank. I observed the deliberations on Amendment 53. There were comments condemning Sheriff Swank in his absence where he could not defend his actions. I devoted considerable resources in support of Sheriff Swank's election. Now, I am expending additional resources and time to continue my support and protect the success we achieved.

1.14 As Republican Precinct Committeeperson, I have an active role in Pierce County partisan elections. If I had known, Ryan Mello wanted to take control over the office of Sheriff, I

would have deployed campaign resources on his lack of qualifications to over see Sheriff to ensure he was unsuccessful.

1.15 Amendment 53 directly undermines my vote in 2024. Whether the measure is affirmed or rejected, I have had to fight to preserve the integrity of my vote and protect the office of Sheriff for the people. The longer the measure goes unchallenged, the more resources the Sheriff and his supporters like myself must devote to the problem and to protect our investment.

1.16 Continued commitment of county resources to place Amendment 53 on the ballot and to process its publication are a waste of resources. Pierce County should not be expending resources to put before the voters a charter amendment that should not pass constitutional muster.

1.17 A vote on Amendment 53 risk will disenfranchise voters who would naturally assume Pierce County Commissioners did not make an unconstitutional or unenforceable recommendation. Placing an unlawful measure on the ballot forces an unconstitutional choice and immediately interferes with the underlying assurances of having already elected the Sheriff in 2024 to serve to 2029. Any inference that Amendment 53 is valid distorts the democratic process causing injury that cannot be undone after votes are cast.

1.18 If votes are cast in an election, the legal status quo is shattered and the injury to the voters and to the Sheriff and his reputation are shattered.

1.19 I bring this action to preserve the status quo to prevent public confusion and post-election litigation uncertainty. I also bring this action to protect the integrity of the office of Sheriff and ability of Sheriff Swank to continue to serve constituents like myself as our elected Sheriff.

1 The above information is true and correct to the best of my abilities.

2 Dated this 21st day of August, 2026 at Fircrest, WA.

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4 *Jeff Joseph*

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6 Petitioner Jeff Joseph
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