

MERIT RETENTION OF APPELLATE COURT JUDGES

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

BALLOT QUESTION FOR SUPREME COURT:

“Shall Justice _____ of the Supreme Court be retained in office?”



Charles T. Canady



John D. Couriel



Jamie Grosshans



Jorge Labarga







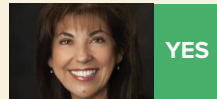




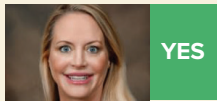

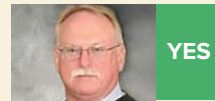
















Ricky Polston

DISTRICT COURT OF APPEALS (DCA)

BALLOT QUESTION FOR ALL DCA RETENTION VOTES:

“Shall Judge _____ of the _____ District Court of Appeal be retained in office?”

1st DCA	2nd DCA	3rd DCA	4th DCA	5th DCA
 Ross L. Bilbrey	 Patricia J. Kelly	 Alexander S. Bokor	 Edward Artau	 Jay Cohen
 Susan L. Kelsey	 Nelly Khouzam	 Edwin A. Scales III	 Cory Ciklin	 James A. Edwards
 Robert E. Long Jr.	 Suzanne Y. Labrit		 Dorian Damoorgian	 Brian D. Lambert
 Lori S. Rowe	 Matt C. Lucas		 Jonathan D. Gerber	 Mary Alice Nardella
 Bo Winokur	 Robert J. Morris Jr.		 Robert Gross	 Daniel Traver
	 Stevan J. Northcutt		 Spencer D. Levine	 Carrie Ann Wozniak
	 John K. Stargel		 Melanie May	
	 Craig C. Villanti			



SELECTING JUDGE CANDIDATES

OUR RATING METHODOLOGY FOR PICKING TRIAL COURT JUDGES

by John Stemberger

When principled conservatives vote for elected officials, the primary issue usually is, “Where does a candidate stand on core policy issues?” However, thinking about how to pick the best judge candidates is a more complicated and nuanced than picking candidates for legislative races.

Even picking the best trial court judges differs from picking the best appellate court judges. When picking an appellate court judge judicial philosophy is the main issue. These judges are actively writing legal decisions that become published as part of case law. So, we are looking at questions like: Does the judge have a limited and restrained understanding of the role of the court? Does the judge understand their role is to follow the law and interpret the law but not make new law? Is the potential appellate judge committed to a textualist / originalist philosophy when interpreting the constitution.

However, when picking the best trial court judges’ judicial philosophy is still important but not as critical. Ideally, a good trial judge will also have qualifications like an even-handed temperament, a strong intellect, jury trial experience, a sense of fairness, and a good reputation in the legal community. This is because a trial court judge is actively in contact with thousands of members of the community over time, litigants, jurors, and others overseeing hearings and trials.

For instance, consider two judicial candidates: The first claims to be a Christian or a conservative and appears to have a conservative judicial

philosophy, while the other does not attend church and appears to lean moderate to left in politics. If the first candidate has been disciplined by the Bar, lacks legal experience, has never tried cases, has a poor reputation, or is angered easily, then that candidate is probably not the best person to serve as a judge, especially if another otherwise highly qualified, though politically liberal, alternative exists.

While having a conservative judicial philosophy is always important, it is far more critical that Appellate and Supreme Court judges possess it than do lower Trial Court judges. This is true because if lower court judges behave as activists and insert their views in place of the law, they can usually have their rulings overturned by appellate courts.

In evaluating judicial candidates, our team researched campaign websites, news articles, disciplinary records, church/ synagogue affiliations, Florida Bar Judicial Candidate Statements, and social media. We also look for associations and ties with the LGBTQ political movement and listing “proper pro-nouns.”

We also interviewed other lawyers who know and work with these candidates to determine their reputation in the community.

Our process is not perfect, but there is no other voter guide product like this anywhere in Florida that evaluates and makes recommendations for every judge candidate on the ballot, County, Circuit, District Court of Appeals, and Florida Supreme Court.

CIRCUIT COURT			ELECTED TRIAL COURT JUDGES				
COUNTIES	CIRCUIT	GROUP	NAME	COUNTIES	CIRCUIT	GROUP	NAME
Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union	8	12	Sean Brewer	Broward	17	51	Tamar N. Hamilton
Broward	17	23	Tania Maria Williams				

COUNTY COURT			ELECTED TRIAL COURT JUDGES			
COUNTY	GROUP	NAME	COUNTY	GROUP	NAME	
BREVARD	4	Renee Torpy	PINELLAS	1	Megan Roach	
BROWARD	15	Chris M. Brown	POLK	8	Ruth Moracen Knight	
HILLSBOROUGH	14	Mike Isaak	WAKULLA	7	Eddie Evans	
MARION	1	Renee Thompson				