



FLORIDA FAMILY  
ACTION

FloridaFamilyAction.org

FLORIDA VOTER

# ENDORSEMENT GUIDE

2020 FLORIDA JUDICIAL ELECTIONS



## SELECTING JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

OUR RATING METHODOLOGY FOR PICKING TRIAL COURT JUDGES

by John Stemberger

Finding the best judicial candidate is more complicated and dynamic than picking elected officials for legislative races. In most elections, the main issue is, “Will the candidate vote for conservative policies?” However, the same cannot be asked when electing good Trial Court judges. *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.*

For instance, consider two judicial candidates: one claims to be a Christian and appears to have a conservative judicial philosophy, while the other does not attend church and appears to lean liberal. 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 left-leaning, 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.

These are just some of the considerations we have used in evaluating which Circuit Court and County Court judicial candidates that we have endorsed or rate as “acceptable.”

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 interviewed local lawyers who know and work with these candidates to determine their reputation in the community. Often, we discover the differences between judicial candidates are too hard to compare and distinguish because they are either both very mediocre, or both equally qualified.



**Our ENDORSEMENT rating (E)** indicates we have a high confidence level that the candidate is the *best* judicial candidate among the other choices listed on the ballot.



**Our ACCEPTABLE rating (A)** indicates one or more judicial candidate(s) who we prefer as better overall than the other candidate(s) running in the same race but who, for some reason, we cannot endorse. An Acceptable status may also indicate that two judicial candidates are too close in qualifications, experience, and philosophy to recommend one over the other.

# ELECTED TRIAL COURT JUDGES

## CIRCUIT COURT

KEY: \*Incumbent

COUNTIES	CIRCUIT	GROUP	NAME	COUNTIES	CIRCUIT	GROUP	NAME		
Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla	2	4	A Nina Moody	Hillsborough	13	9	A Kelly Ayers		
			A Amanda P. Wall				A John Schifino		
	16	A Kevin Alvarez	19		A Ashley Ivanov				
		A Angela Dempsey			A Michael J. Scionti *				
Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter	5	22	E George G. Angeliadis *		30	A Danny Alvarez	A Helene Daniel		
			6					28	A Evan Frayman
					A Eva Vergos	39	A Steven Scott Stephens *		
Pasco, Pinellas	44	A Elizabeth "Liz" Jack	Palm Beach		15		16	A Jeffrey Gillen *	
						7		6	E Mike Orfinger *
					14		A Dan Hilbert		30
A MaryEllen Osterndorf	A Adam Myron								
Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, Volusia	27	E Bryan Robert Rendzio *	Broward	17	16	A Dennis Daniel Bailey *			
						9	1	E Mikaela Nix	18
				21	E Alan Apte *			27	
34	E Mike Kraynick *	30			A Dale C. Cohen *				
	39		E Mark Van Valkenburgh	50	A Ian Richards				
Orange, Osceola		11	55		A Olanike "Nike" Adebayo	Brevard, Seminole	18	15	E Tesha Scolaro Ballou *
	57			A Carmen Cabarga	18				E Steve Henderson
				65					E Thomas J. Rebull *
	67				A Marcia Giordano Hansen				25
				75	A Dava J. Tunis *				
Miami-Dade	Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie	19	11		E Louis "Lou" Larsen				

# ELECTED TRIAL COURT JUDGES

## COUNTY COURT

KEY: \*Incumbent

COUNTY	GROUP	NAME	COUNTY	GROUP	NAME
BAY	1	<b>A</b> Tim Campbell *	MIAMI-DADE	9	<b>E</b> Joseph J. Mansfield *
BROWARD	22	<b>E</b> Casey Mills		24	<b>E</b> Christine Bandin *
	27	<b>E</b> Phoebee Francois *	SEMINOLE	1	<b>A</b> John L. Woodard III *
	31	<b>E</b> Natasha DePrimo *		6	<b>E</b> Wayne Culver
DUVAL	1	<b>E</b> Scott Mitchell *	NASSAU	1	<b>A</b> John Joseph Cascone
	6	<b>E</b> Erin Perry *			<b>A</b> Jan Carver
HENDRY	1	<b>A</b> Darrell Hill *	PASCO	5	<b>E</b> Joseph F. Justice
HILLSBOROUGH	7	<b>E</b> Bill Yanger	PALM BEACH	12	<b>A</b> Debra Moses Stephens *
MANATEE	4	<b>E</b> Kristy Zinna	VOLUSIA	6	<b>E</b> Chris Miller *



FLORIDA FAMILY ACTION

4853 South Orange Avenue, Orlando, FL 32806 | [www.FloridaFamilyAction.org](http://www.FloridaFamilyAction.org)