

JUDICIAL CANDIDATES FORUM

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

PRESENTED BY THE NORTH TAMPA BAR ASSOCIATION

13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Group 39

JUDGE STEVEN SCOTT STEPHENS



What is the source of your value system?

Treating everyone that way you would want to be treated is a core value that everyone should share, no matter what their religion or other belief system may be. Religious precepts and many secular works e.g., Rawls, A Theory of Justice; A. Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Bryson, Science of Good and Evil, reach the same conclusion.

Why do you want to be a judge?

I have been on the Circuit Bench since 2005. I still look forward to work each day. There is a real feeling of contribution to the betterment of the legal system by remaining neutral in the face of pressure to take sides, remaining logical in the face of pressure to respond emotionally, and remaining judicious in the face of personal attacks.

What have you done over the years to prepare yourself specifically for judicial service?

My doctoral dissertation, The Uncertainty of Legal Rights, was about how the unpredictability of courts affects business decision making. Now, I am the one responsible for making the court decisions predictable. It's harder than it looks from the academic world, but I think I am doing well.

What distinguishes you from the other candidates?

Learning and improving as a judge since 2005; teaching at stetson law when some other candidates were still in school there; served five years in family law and wrote a family law reference book. Hundreds of trials. Re-elected twice without opposition. Spotless record.

How do you describe your temperament and personality?

I like people and want to make them happy. I love entertaining and making people laugh. But my job is serious. There's no reason to be unpleasant about it (unless someone insists on it) but at the end of the day you must be able to disappoint one side -- often both actually-- and be respectful toward them at the same time.

What would make you a competent judge?

No responsible person has questioned my competence in the almost fifteen years I have been a circuit judge. What makes me a competent judge is an innate sense of fairness, a learned ability to make sure everyone is fully heard-- more than what the rules require-- and permanent awareness of the duty to continually improve.

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FORUM MODERATED BY ADRIA DICKEY & JARED KRUKAR

