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Circuit court judge candidates share insight



The candidates for Circuit Court Judge Eighth Judicial Circuit, Group 8, are (from left) David Robertson, Julie Waldman and Gloria Walker. Here they relax just before their turn speaking to the crowd on Saturday (July 28).

Photos and Story

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 31, 2018 at 4:28 p.m.

WILLISTON -- Three candidates for the single open seat for circuit court judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit told about 100 people some of their background at a political forum on Saturday (July 28) in Williston.

Circuit Court Judge candidates David Robertson, Julie Waldman and Gloria Walker all seek to serve the people of Florida in the Eighth Judicial Circuit, which includes Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union counties. They are in group 8 of the circuit,

Two circuit court judges in this circuit were reelected because there was no one who ran against them. They are Judge Susanne Wilson Bullard and Judge Stanley H. "Stan" Griffis III. And incoming Circuit Court Judge Denise R. Ferrero was elected as a result of no other candidate in her group qualifying.

The entire list of active Eighth Judicial Circuit Court judges currently includes Chief Judge Toby S. Monaco, Judge Monica J. Brasington, Judge Bullard, Judge James M. Colaw, Judge William E. Davis, Judge Griffis, Judge Robert K. Groeb, Judge Victor L. Hulslander, Judge Donna M. Keim, Judge David P. Kreider, Judge Mark W. Moseley, Judge James P. Nilon and

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Judge Phillip A. Pena.

Circuit Court Judge Hulslander is retiring and this opened the position. He has a distinguished career in law, which included his service as an Alachua County Court Judge from 2005 to February of 2010.

He graduated with a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Florida Levin College of Law in 1974, after earning a Bachelor of Science degree from UF, which was presented to him as a member of the UF Class of 1969.

The three candidates seeking his post each were given a short time to tell everyone about themselves. All three candidates have extremely impressive credentials.



The candidates (from left) David Robertson, Julie Waldman and Gloria Walker speak to the people.

David Robertson

Robertson first told the people about the circuit, what a circuit court judge must, and what Robertson sees as essential traits for a person seeking to be circuit court judge.

Robertson has been an attorney for more than 20 years.

In that profession, he has represented business interests, individuals, state and local government entities across North Florida in state court, federal court and at the appellate level.

He started his practice in law in a small firm in 1977 in Lake City. In private practice, Robertson has represented clients in family law matters, child custody and visitation, and adoptions.

He has worked with the Suwannee River Water Management District in regard to water permits and environmental law.

Robertson has served as a city attorney. Some of the many types of cases he has been involved with had to deal with age discrimination, sexual harassment and consumer protection, to name a few.

During the past 10 years of his career, Robertson has been the general chief counsel for the Florida Department of Transportation, District 2, which includes the following 18 counties in North Florida -- Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union counties.

In this capacity, he has been involved with cases of eminent domain, where the state acquires property needed for road development. Robertson has been involved with legal matters and agreements between the FDOT and developers, and between the FDOT and other

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governmental bodies. Employment law and environmental law matters have required his work as well.

Robertson ran out of time before he was able to mention that he is a United States Army officer with 16 years of military service, which included combat zone deployment in the global war on terrorism. He is currently a major subordinate Command Judge Advocate for the Florida National Guard.

He is also a husband and father with six children.

Julie Waldman

Waldman said she decided to become a lawyer when she was about 12 years old, "... because to me, being a lawyer was the noblest of professions."

Attorneys had the power to make a difference in the world, Waldman said.

Throughout her teen years, high school and through college, her dedication to the profession never wavered, Waldman said.

In 1988, Waldman graduated from Tulane Law School and started her career in Miami, where she worked for a seasoned attorney, who specialty was in real estate law.

Waldman's passion however, was not real estate law, but instead to be of service.

In 1989, in Miami, is when and where she began working for the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS).

Working in HRS, she discovered many opportunities that few attorneys experience in their early careers.

Waldman was trying cases in 11th Circuit Court (Miami-Dade), in administrative forums and in the Florida Third District Court of Appeal.

Her first years in practice gave her experience which she has carried on in the past 30 years since graduating from law school.

In 1993, Waldman was offered a position at Tacachale.

Tacachale is in Gainesville and it is the oldest and largest community for Floridians with developmental disabilities. It is a progressive community dedicated to offering its residents the opportunities and services which respect and encourage their personal choices, enhance their quality of life, and maximize their individual potential.

Since moving to North Central Florida 25 years ago, Waldman said she is happy to have moved from Miami to this part of Florida.

Working for HRS, has given Waldman a broad and unique perspective on legal issues facing Floridians.

She has tried cases in all 20 circuits of Florida, and almost in all 64 counties.

Waldman has been involved with civil and criminal cases, mental health and guardianship cases.

She has been involved with cases regarding employment matters, license issues, and whistleblower discrimination cases, to name a few types.

Waldman has taken cases to four out of the five Florida district courts of appeal.

HRS, she said, over the years became the Florida Department for Children and Families (DCF). Now, she serves in a leadership position with the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities as the Deputy Center Administrator at Tacachale.

Currently at Tacachale, Waldman is the deputy center administrator and she is responsible for overseeing the residential, vocational and leisure programming for 330 developmentally disabled adults.

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During her decades as a practitioner of Florida law, her focus has been on helping children, the elderly and developmentally disabled adults.

In June, The Florida Bar Association recognized Waldman with the 2018 Claude Pepper Award for Outstanding Government Service. The award is presented to only one Florida attorney each year.

The purpose of The Florida Bar's Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer Award is to recognize a lawyer who has made an extraordinary and exemplary contribution as a practicing government lawyer.

The award is named in honor of the Honorable Claude Pepper, a Florida attorney, United States Senator, and United States Congressman, who was an advocate on behalf of the people, and who represented the highest ideals of government service through twelve presidential administrations.

This prestigious award originated in 1989.

Every nominee for the award must be a member of The Florida Bar in good standing and currently a practicing government lawyer, who has provided legal services at least 10 years in full-time government employment. The nominee should exemplify the highest ideals of dedication, professionalism, and ethics in service to the public. The nominee should have made outstanding contributions in providing legal services for the public interest.

Waldman shared with the audience on Saturday, too, that she has worked with people from all walks of life.

She has participated with students in mock trial competitions. Waldman has advised students at a sorority at the University of Florida.

Waldman has worked with at-risk youths to help them explore opportunities in leadership development, and potential. And she has worked with older women who are reentering the workforce in regard to employment issues.

All of these experiences helped her develop more patience, understanding and compassion.

From her total experience as an attorney, Waldman said, she has gained the qualities necessary to serve the people as a circuit court judge.

"Experience in the courtroom that I have had," Waldman said, "is important. But it is not the only experience needed. You also have to have life experiences. Legal issues aren't always just about what is legal.

"Sometimes," Waldman continued, "people just need to be treated fairly to ensure that they are given an opportunity to be heard. Experience. Integrity. Justice with compassion. I'm Julie Waldman. Please vote for me on Aug. 28. Thank you."

Gloria Walker

Like Robertson, Walker detailed for listeners the many criminal and civil court type of actions a circuit court judge must be qualified to adjudicate.

Except for criminal felony cases, Walker has handled all of these types of cases in her legal career, she said. Her husband is an assistant state attorney, and she has been told by him that her work as a defense attorney is even more difficult than his as a prosecutor.

Walker is a lawyer with 15 years of experience. She has handled cases in the state, federal and appellate courts.

"I am the only candidate who attended the University of Florida," she said, adding, "and graduate the University of Florida with honors, twice – both as an undergraduate and law school."

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Walker said she took eight years to complete her bachelor's degree, because she had to work to make a living while attending college.

"I pulled myself up by my bootstraps," Walker said. "And I am running for circuit court judge today because I have always been a public servant."

It was 22 years ago, Walker said, when she started as a guardian ad litem. She represented abused, neglected and abandoned children.

Today, Walker continues to represent the abused, neglected and elderly clients. She works for people who come to Three Rivers Legal Services for help.

Three Rivers Legal Services is active in 17 Florida counties -- Serving Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Nassau, St. Johns, Suwannee, Taylor and Union counties.

Three Rivers Legal Services is a non-profit law firm with law offices in Gainesville, Jacksonville and Lake City. It is dedicated to the provision of quality legal assistance to the poor, abused, disabled and elderly, and to empowerment through preventive legal education.

Walker is the managing attorney of the Gainesville staff of eight attorneys. She is also the director of litigation out of the Gainesville, Lake City and Jacksonville offices.

She is active in civic groups, including the PACE Center for Girls.

PACE began in 1985 with one Center in Jacksonville, serving 10 girls. PACE began as a community response to the realization that girls involved with the justice system were either being placed in programs designed for boys or placed further into the system for their own protection.

There were no effective alternatives.

Started by Vicki Burke and guided by the research-based recommendations which called for gender responsive programming, PACE created a new alternative to institutionalization or incarceration for girls.

"I also adopt a daughter every other year through Santa Fe College," Walker said, "and she shadows me at my office. This is a middle-school aged child who aspires to be a lawyer."

Walker also teaches at the UF Law School as an adjunct professor.

"My life experiences have prepared me to be your next circuit court judge," Walker said. "I have the right judicial temperament. I thoroughly understand the judicial system, both procedurally and analytically. I have common sense. I like to treat people fairly, with dignity and respect.

"I listen carefully," Walker continued, "but assure you that I will be firm and decisive. I will uphold the Constitution, and the law. So, I ask that you vote for me – Gloria Walker on Aug. 28, or vote early on Aug. 13 through the 25th."