

HardisonInk.com

Three of four judge candidates speak at forum in Williston

Circuit Judge
8th Judicial Circuit, Group 12
(Vote for One)

Juez de circuito
8° Circuito Judicial, Grupo 12
(Votar por Uno)

- Sean Brewer
- AuBroncee Martin
- Nathan A. Skop
- Dan Weisman

This graphic representation shows the approved ballot where people can fill in one circle to choose for whom they vote to be the next Eighth Judicial Circuit Court judge.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © June 30, 2022 at 8:12 a.m.

WILLISTON – In a two and one-half forum on Friday night (June 24), where 18 candidates in various races spoke to the people, three of the four men seeking to be elected on Aug. 23 as the next Eighth Judicial Circuit Court judge spoke.

Sean Brewer, AuBroncee Martin and Nathan A. Skop each had as many as seven minutes to speak. Given the rules in their candidacy, there were no questions and answers.

Dan Weisman, who like the other three candidates is an attorney that lives in Gainesville, was not at this forum.

HardisonInk.com

Sean Brewer

Sean Brewer speaks to people at the June 24 event in Williston.

Sean Brewer spoke about his background, his family's background and then he told listeners about his traits, skills and experiences that reflect him as being a good fit on the judiciary.



Since the latter part of his adolescence, Brewer grew up in Seminole (a city in Pinellas County). He graduated from Seminole High School in 1989. He started at the University of Florida in 1989. He put himself through undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Florida and then at the University of Florida Fredric G. Levin College of Law.

Brewer graduated both from UF and then from the UF College of Law with honors.

He met the woman who would become his wife at UF in 1991, and Brewer said during the forum that is the most important thing that happened to him during his college years.

His wife Laura Quisling Brewer grew up in Gainesville, where her father was a doctor at Shands, candidate Brewer said.

They were married in 1995 while he was still in law school. This past May, they celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary. They stayed in the Gainesville area because her family was still in that area, Brewer said.

They raised and are raising three boys. Their three sons are Justin, 20, who will be a junior at UF in the fall; Kyle, 17, a senior in high school this fall; and Blake, 14, a freshman in high school this fall. Brewer said all three boys are hearty eaters.

Laura Brewer has been a teacher in Alachua County since 1996. She became a reading resource teacher who helps children in elementary schools. She brings them up to the point in their skill level where they are reading at the correct grade level with their classmates.

As for candidate Brewer's work history, he always lived in Gainesville. He started in his professional career in 1998 as an assistant state attorney with Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Brad King for four years. The Fifth Judicial Circuit includes Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion and Sumter counties.

All told, Brewer has been a prosecutor for 24 years in the two neighboring circuits, the Fifth and the Eighth.

Brewer specialized in prosecuting people who were charged with having committed crimes that hurt children and women, including sex abuse cases against children and women.

HardisonInk.com

In 2002, as the couple awaited the birth of their first child, the assistant state attorney said he needed to work closer to home rather than commuting to the neighboring county.

In the Eighth Judicial Circuit, Brewer started in Levy County, where he served for about three years. Brewer said he got to know the people of Levy County during those years, and he loves the people of Levy County.

“I got to see the people of Levy County both on their best days and on their worst days,” Brewer said. “It’s a tightknit community. I’ve gone to the death scenes. I’ve been there in Levy County.”

“There’s one particular scene there that will never leave my mind,” he continued. “There was a murder scene that I came to as an assistant state attorney with the police, right here in Williston.”

While Brewer served in Levy County with the Office of Eighth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Bill Cervone, he handled 50 percent of the cases, including all of those cases where defendants were charged with crimes they allegedly committed against women and children, because that was his specialty.

When he and his wife had their second child, Brewer saw the need for him to serve in Alachua County to help his wife transport the two boys to school. With that transfer, State Attorney Cervone assigned Brewer to a unit dealing with felonies committed against woman and children.

After a couple of more years, Brewer became felony division chief -- or supervisor. He became the division chief of all crimes against women and children, which he did for 10 years.

For the next two and a half years after that, he became the division chief of the major gun crimes unit. These cases include mandatory minimum prison sentences of 10-to-20-years to life imprisonment.

As he switched to run for the circuit court judge position, he became the intake unit chief.

Having spoken about his background, his family and his service as a prosecutor, Brewer then shared insight about his helping in the community beyond his profession.

“With three boys,” Brewer said, “I have coached about 125 different sports teams at the youth level. We’re talking (about) the three year olds all the way up to 14.”

Brewer said he made the cutoff for coaching at middle school. With his youngest son now entering high school, he said he needed to find something else to do – and so he is running for office to be a circuit court judge, he joked.

Through his years of coaching, Brewer said he has enjoyed the opportunity to meet many families. To have been even in a small way a part of those many young athletes’ lives, the gentleman said he feels honored.

Brewer told the audience that as he watched the installation ceremony for Williston Police Chief Mike Rolls recently, in the very room where he was speaking – the R. Gerald Hethcoat Community Center – he was approached by a woman who told Brewer that she was grateful to him for coaching her godson, back in 2005 when he was three years old.

“Now he’s 21 and he’s playing baseball in college,” Brewer said, “and I coached him in T-ball. Obviously, nothing I did had anything with him going to college by playing baseball.”

Brewer said she told him that she recognized him from the T-ball team picture where

HardisonInk.com

he was in it with her godson, back then, 18 years ago, and it is on the mantle at her home.

The traits, skills and experience that will make Brewer a good fit on the judiciary, he said, include trial experience.

“I’m a trial attorney,” Brewer said. “That’s what a circuit court judge does.”

The attorney went on to say this duty covers trials, negotiations, hearings and every aspect of law, which he has been doing for 24 years.

“I’ve been with the families of the murder victims,” Brewer said, “where we have to decide -- Where are we going with this case? What are we wanting to do to avoid some pain for you, but to get justice for your loved one?”

Brewer said he has been with the children who have been molested as he sat with their families. He knows children who would be willing to go through trial, but he knows, too, what having to testify as a victim of molestation can do to the child. He has negotiated multi-decade sentences for the perpetrators without making those children testify.

Also, however, he has gone through trials to bring those perpetrators to justice when they cannot be negotiated with.

By having three sons, serving as a coach and dealing with children who have been victims of crimes, Brewer said he is qualified to serve as a family law judge, which is a job that is part of being a circuit court judge.



AuBroncee Martin

**AuBroncee Martin
speaks to people
at the June 24
event in Williston.**

AuBroncee Martin reminded voters that electing a circuit court judge is a rare occurrence.

Martin said that with this in mind, he is making sure

everyone in the circuit will have an opportunity to see and hear from him as a candidate for circuit court judge.

“As a circuit court judge,” Martin said, “we don’t have any particular agenda. We can’t come here and say ‘If I am elected, I am going to do this,’ or ‘If I am elected, I won’t do that.’”

“The only thing that we can promise you,” Martin continued, “the only thing that we can assure you – is that we will be fair and impartial.”

Martin said therefore the voters can look at the candidates’ experience and background to have some insight into the decision-making process the candidate will use if he is elected.

HardisonInk.com

Martin has served as an assistant public defender for more than 24 years.

“I’m a felony division chief in the Public Defender’s Office, here in the Eighth Judicial Circuit,” Martin said. “And to be clear, Levy County is part of the Eighth Judicial Circuit. I’ve tried cases from first degree murder to driving while license suspended.”

Martin is a former president of the Eighth Judicial Circuit Bar Association. He is an instructor at the Prosecutor/Public Defender Program, which is a statewide program offered by The Florida Bar. Martin trains both prosecutors and public defenders on trial advocacy, he said.

He is also a certified county and family mediator, which means he has experience in family law, as well as matters regarding eviction in civil circuit court.

In October, AuBroncee and his wife Telisha will herald their 24th wedding anniversary. They have three sons Jared, a student at Santa Fe College; Jason, a student at the University of North Florida; and Joshua Elijah, a seventh grader at Fort Clark Middle School.

He has been the chair of the Mid-Florida Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Martin has been an honorary member of the Martin Luther King Commission, which is a group of individuals who believe firmly in the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“We are all created equal,” Martin said, “and we all should be treated that way. And that legacy should continue.”

As a judge, he intends to treat all people equally, Martin said.

Martin said the most important thing from his background is that he has been a public defender for 24 years.

“The thing about being a public defender,” Martin said, “is that you’re not always the most popular person in the room. Your clients are not the most popular person in the room. But you have a duty to represent those individuals.

“You have a duty to follow the law,” Martin continued. “And to do what the law requires, and to do what is right. After 24 years, I have learned that my desire to do what is right, and what the law requires, is not connected to a pat on the back.”

He went on to say that the Lord knows Martin serving in the profession related to justice is not connected to obtaining a lot of money, nor is it connected to obtaining a promotion.

“I have to have a sense of self-worth,” Martin said, “and a drive from doing what the right thing is, at the right time. And I think that at its core, that is what a judge needs to do. A judge needs to look at what the law says, listen to the facts, and regardless of what everyone else may think, do what the law requires, and (do) what’s right.”

Martin reminded listeners that at the core of American democracy there are three pillars.

“You have military service,” he said. “You have jury service. And you have voting.”

The election to decide which of the four candidates is chosen is set for Aug. 23, Martin said.

“Come out and vote,” he said. “People fought too long and too hard, for everyone to stay home on that particular day. So please, please, come out and vote. I hope you vote for AuBroncee Martin for circuit court judge.”

HardisonInk.com

Nathan A. Skop

Nathan A. Skop speaks to people at the June 24 event in Williston.

Nathan Skop told listeners that voting for who is the judge is important.

As a circuit court judge, Skop said he will assure fair and equal treatment in providing justice for everyone in the community.

Skop promised to be fair, impartial and committed to upholding the law and the United States Constitution.

“My values are very simple,” Skop said. “I believe in God, country, and the Constitution. That’s a core value here in rural counties.”

Skop said he came from humble beginnings and that he has been an attorney for 15 years. Before that, he worked in the aerospace and engineering professions.

In addition to this, Skop earned an MBA.

Skop’s background includes being appointed by the governor, and unanimously approved by the Florida Senate, as a commissioner on the Florida Public Service Commission.

While he was on the PSC, they decided questions of law and questions of fact, as well as making the final agency decisions, including granting the former Progress Energy Florida permission to build two nuclear-powered electric generation plants in Levy County.

That project never reached fruition.

Skop said he is a very experienced attorney, who has a background in criminal defense as well as in civil circuit court cases.

“I’m running for judge because we need good, well-rounded, qualified candidates,” Skop said. “I’m a fresh set of eyes. The bench needs a fresh set of eyes. I’m not involved in the process of being a prosecutor or a public defender.”

Like Brewer and Martin, Skop is a graduate of the University of Florida Fredric G. Levin College of Law. Also, Skop mentioned that he attended the same high school as Martin.

“Go Rams!” Skop said, and that comment was echoed from the back of the room, probably from Martin.

Skop is not married.

