

# A Culture of Selflessness

*Judge Robert J. Morris, Jr. was recently chosen by Gov. Charlie Crist to fill a vacancy on the Second District Court of Appeal. During his two years as chief judge in the Sixth Judicial Circuit, Judge Morris dealt with economy-induced budget cuts, staff reductions, a year-long hiring freeze and pay cuts. This farewell message to the employees of the Sixth Circuit – courts for the citizens of Pasco and Pinellas counties – was published in the July edition of Third Branch Bulletin, internal newsletter for the Circuit.*

These days, I am frequently asked what I will miss the most about leaving my assignment here in the Sixth Circuit. The answer is an easy one, and it came immediately to mind when I was asked this question the first time: “The people who work here.”

Those in the public sector in general, and in the Sixth Circuit in particular, are a special breed. Typically they have been drawn to a life of public service because of their routine deference to others. They find honor in quietly passing on their own needs while those of others are met first. They find silent satisfaction in taking on a burden so others don’t have to. The choice of this career for these special people is about the conscious decision that serving others is more self-fulfilling than awakening each day consumed with the notion that “it’s all about me.” These people abound in the Sixth Circuit. It is the culture of our workplace and that is what makes working here so special.

In this tough economy we have had to become better at doing more with less. As our resources steadily disappeared, I watched with admiration as so many of you quietly, with grace and courtesy, stepped up to take on more and more responsibility to provide seamless service to the public; no matter the obstacles. What impressed me the most was that so many of you did this, without the slightest complaint, in spite of the fact that no one in the entire state-wide Judicial Branch has had a raise in four years. Some of you did this even in the face of a pay cut!

Selflessness, in the modern era, has fallen out of fashion. Today, the emphasis is on each of us being “special” or that we are entitled to some preferred treatment because “we deserve it”. In some ways, those who work in the public sector are a remnant from another time when a culture of selflessness pervaded all of society. We are blessed to have among us many devoted and gifted public servants who reach beyond themselves to serve others every day of their lives. You know who they are; we all do.

The “givers” among us (and there are so many here) exude an attitude of gratefulness about everything they do. They can’t do enough for others. You never have to ask them to help, they call you and say: “I have got my work done for today, can I help someone else?” Or, better yet, they don’t even ask; they know who needs help, and they just go about doing it without asking, complaining or seeking attention for it. The best part about this attitude is that it is contagious and, if nurtured, will lead to the very best possible working environment. Please never take it for granted. Build on it.

I will miss all of you. It has been a privilege to be here and serve you. I have learned so much from you about dignity and decency. Thank you for that and for all you do.

Robert J. Morris, Jr., former Chief Judge  
Sixth Judicial Circuit

*Robert J. Morris, Jr., a judge in the Sixth Judicial Circuit since 1997, will begin his new assignment on Aug. 3 as a judge on the Second District Court Appeal.*