



Administrative Office of the Court
The Sixth Judicial Circuit of Florida

14250 49th Street North, Suite 2000
Clearwater, Florida 33762
(727) 453-7176

Fax: (727) 453-7166

Gay Lynne Inskip
Trial Courts Administrator

Public Information Office

Judge Rondolino Named Jurist of the Year

CLEARWATER - Chief Judge Anthony Rondolino was given the prestigious Jurist of the Year award by the Florida Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (FLABOTA) on Friday, July 22, 2022, at the organization's 24th annual convention at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, in Orlando.

In announcing the award, Chris Schulte, a Tampa attorney serving as president of the Tampa chapter of ABOTA, first noted Judge Rondolino's legal background, his awards, his history of teaching law, and the committees on which he served before mentioning his responsibilities as chief judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit.

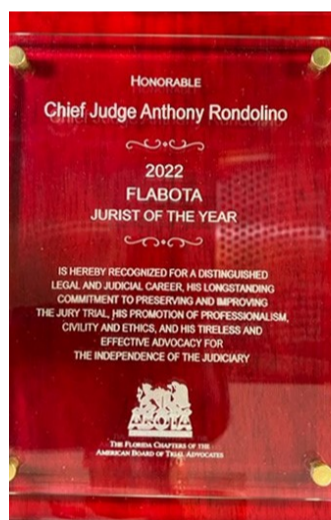
Judge Rondolino, Mr. Schulte said, is "constitutionally responsible for the administrative supervision of the courts and court staff within the 6th Circuit, which serves more than 1.5 million residents in a geographically and constituent diverse two county circuit."

Mr. Schulte went on to say that Judge Rondolino, who has been a judge since 1990, has the honor of having served as a circuit judge longer than any other judge in the 6th Circuit, and has played a role in more than 400 jury trials, either during his 15 years as a lawyer or during his 32 years on the bench.



Chief Judge Rondolino

While a judge, Judge Rondolino has presided over a wide range of civil cases, including accident claims, medical malpractice actions and three lengthy tobacco litigation trials. He has also served as the administrative judge for various divisions throughout the years, and, three times, the Florida Supreme Court appointed him as an associate judge to serve on the Second District Court of Appeals.



In the field of tobacco litigation, Judge Rondolino was one of the first judges to preside over so-called Engle progeny cases, which touch on, among other things, the type of illness a cigarette smoker has to have had to sue a tobacco company, and how damages are to be determined.

Judge Rondolino was drawn to these cases by their complexity, Mr. Schulte said. He was aware that some matters in such cases had already been decided and needed no more litigating.

"His ability to challenge the lawyers to assure that the arguments were based on sound legal analysis demonstrated his hallmark talents," Schulte said. "He counts these cases as his most memorable."

With legislative changes in 2018, Judge Rondolino also successfully helped devise the procedures for risk protection orders, keeping in mind the constitutional issues, privacy issues, the need for public transparency, and the safety concerns that were in play. And he did so by working with the other stakeholders, such as the State Attorney, Public Defender, and the two counties' sheriffs. He also served on a statewide committee that reviewed the new risk protection order law, and developed standard forms and procedures.

Judge Rondolino has also been a fierce advocate for the proper and full funding for the judicial branch. As a member of the Trial Court Budget Commission, Judge Rondolino passionately advocated for a Legislative Budget Request to fund the results of a pay plan study for court personnel to address issues of recruitment, retention and equity.

Eventually, the Trial Court Budget Commission voted to submit the pay plan, marking it as the single-most important issue for the entire judicial branch in fiscal year 2019/2020. Ultimately, more than \$10 million dollars was allotted, with most judicial staff receiving an increase in pay as a result of the pay plan.

During Covid-19, having the vision to recognize the changes about to come for the courts, he was instrumental in equipping all the judges and courtrooms with the technology and training to continue court operations safely. He created a Community Violence calendar recognizing the challenges that the pandemic has created and the increased need to address domestic violence issues.

Additionally, since significantly fewer people were in the courthouse, he pushed forward with much-needed major renovations to the St. Petersburg Judicial building and advocated to bring to conclusion the construction of additional space at the County Justice Center in Pinellas County.

"Judge Rondolino is regarded as a legal scholar, carefully analyzing and reasoning through issues particular to individual cases, as well as the myriad of administrative issues he faces as the chief judge of one of the largest, most urban circuits in Florida," Mr. Schulte said. "He is well-respected and held in high esteem by his fellow judges, who often seek his advice and counsel, as well as lawyers and other leaders of our community both local and statewide."

"He reveres the rule of law," Schulte said, "and uses that basic premise to both lead and serve ...in an exemplary manner."