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Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Doneene Loar Honored by Bar Association

CLEARWATER - On Thursday, Feb.15, 2024, Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Doneene Loar, who currently presides over a community violence division, was presented the 2024 Judicial Appreciation Award by the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) at its annual Judicial Reception hosted at the James Museum in St. Petersburg.

Annually, a jurist is selected to receive the award based upon nominations submitted by bar members to the SPBA Board of Directors. Among the factors considered are a nominee's courtroom demeanor, his or her judicial experience, helpfulness to lawyers and litigants, and activities off the bench that promote the administration of justice and civic participation.

Other judges in the Sixth Judicial Circuit who have been given this award in the past include Kimberly Todd, Marion Fleming, Michael Andrews, Thomas Ramsberger, and Lorraine Kelly.

Judge Loar is a native of Florida. She graduated with honors from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington with a bachelors of science degree in business information systems. While at UNCW, Judge Loar was the executive vice president of Alpha Delta Pi sorority and a member of the campus judicial board.

Upon graduation, Judge Loar returned to Florida to work as an Information Systems Specialist. She entered the University of Florida School of Law with the intent to specialize in technology patent law. However, after encouragement by a professor, she took a trial advocacy class. After completing a semester internship at the Jacksonville State Attorneys office, Doneene fell in love with the courtroom and the fight for justice.

Judge Loar worked as an assistant state attorney in the Sixth Judicial Circuit for some 15 years. She handled thousands of cases and tried over 90 jury trials including numerous homicide cases. Her experience includes several years in the Pinellas Career Criminal Division prosecuting dangerous repeat offenders. She spent 4 years supervising and mentoring young prosecutors in the County Court and was a member of the State Attorney's elite specialized Traffic Homicide Unit for 12 years. The Traffic Homicide Unit required Judge Loar to respond to fatal traffic crash scenes in the middle of the night to provide guidance and insight to law enforcement investigators.

She was elected to the bench in 2018.



Judge Loar is flanked, on her right, by former Chief Judge Thomas McGrady, and, on her left, by Chief Judge Shawn Crane. Standing apart is Melissa Byers, executive director of the St. Petersburg Bar Association.