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Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Shawn Crane Re-Elected Chief Judge

CLEARWATER - Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Shawn Crane has been re-elected the chief judge of the Sixth Judicial Circuit. The election took place Feb. 19, 2025. The new term begins July 1, 2025, and ends June 30, 2027.

The chief judge is constitutionally responsible for the administrative supervision of the courts and court staff within the sixth circuit, which serves almost 1.5 million residents in the two counties. Forty-five circuit judges and 24 county judges preside over court proceedings in seven locations and are supported by an administrative staff of approximately 235.



Judge Crane

Since he was first elected chief judge two years ago, Judge Crane has won the support of the Pasco County Commission for the construction of what would be the third courthouse in Pasco County, a proposal, to paraphrase one county commissioner, that has been like a can kicked down the road for way too long. That courthouse is needed to meet the needs of a growing population. A new courthouse is also needed in Pinellas, as the space judges in civil and family divisions use at 315 Court St. will in the future not be available. This new, updated, courthouse will be built on land in mid-Pinellas County. Judge Crane will play a crucial role in making that courthouse a reality as well.

Judge Crane has also worked with the state attorney and public defender, along with other stakeholders, in advance of, during, and after the hurricanes Helene and Milton, making sure employees and members of the public alike remained safe while ensuring justice was still being served. To that end, Judge Crane signed more than two dozen administrative orders. Communication during these stressful times has been improved, with the implementation of a texting tree for judges. That supplemented blast emails from Judge Crane, along with website updates and Facebook posts.

Security and personal protection for judges and staff alike have also been improved. For instance, there is now a threat management assessment team under Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, which is taking preemptive measures whenever there's a threat, rather than waiting until something unfortunate happens. It is becoming a gold standard for the rest of the state. But not all is doom and gloom. Soon there will be a dog on hand to comfort children coming to court.

Judge Crane began his legal career as an assistant state attorney with the Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney's Office. At one point, he was a division director, supervising more than 30 lawyers handling thousands of cases in county court. He has received the local Prosecutor of the Year Award, and, for his work educating prosecutors statewide, he received the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association's Distinguished Faculty Award.

In 2001, Judge Crane was appointed a county judge, a role he fulfilled until he was appointed to the circuit bench in 2006. While assigned to the family law section, Judge Crane received recognition from Family Partnerships, a Pasco County visitation center, with the "You Make The Difference Award." In essence, he was recognized for "promoting healthy family values and striving to keep our children safe."

Judge Crane has presided over Pasco's Adult Drug Court since 2010. Drug court is a treatment and rehabilitation program for non-violent, felony drug offenders. And, recognizing the need to address the unique issues facing veterans, he has also presided over Pasco County's Veterans Treatment Court. These court-supervised programs offer an alternative to time behind bars, with support and treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues. Building on the success of these programs, the court was able to expand treatment court opportunities to those at risk of losing parental rights by instituting a Dependency Drug Court and Early Childhood Court.

Even now, with a full plate as chief judge, Judge Crane continues to serve on several statewide committees concerning treatment courts, as he is considered an expert on the subject.