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Judge Rondolino Elected Chief Judge Of Sixth Judicial Circuit

CLEARWATER – Circuit Judge Anthony Rondolino has been unanimously elected chief judge of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, the court system for Pasco and Pinellas counties.

On Wednesday, Feb. 25, Rondolino was elected by the 68 other judges in the circuit to succeed J. Thomas McGrady, who opted not to seek re-election after serving three two-year terms. The term for Rondolino, who has been a judge in the circuit since 1990, begins July 1, and will last until June 30, 2017.

“I appreciate the confidence my fellow judges have shown in my ability to carry out this important responsibility,” Judge Rondolino said. “And I look forward to seeking ways to improve the service we provide the public.”

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 Rondolino has served as a circuit judge longer than any other in the sixth circuit except for one, and he has played a role in roughly 300 jury trials, either during his 15 years as a lawyer or during his 25 years on the bench. While a judge, he has presided over a wide range of civil cases, including accident claims, medical malpractice actions and three lengthy tobacco litigation trials.

Judge Rondolino has also served as the administrative judge for the circuit’s civil division, and for the circuit’s criminal and family divisions as well. Three times, the Florida Supreme Court appointed him an associate judge, to serve on the Second District Court of Appeals.

A native of Lexington, Kentucky, Judge Rondolino graduated with honors from the Florida State University School of Law in 1974, and shortly thereafter joined the local public defender’s office, rising to the position of chief assistant public defender in a mere five years.

He has taught courses as an adjunct professor at Stetson Law School, and has served on several boards and committees, including the Child Support Enforcement Coordinating Council, of which he was the chairman, and the Pinellas County Domestic Violence Task Force; His awards include the St. Petersburg Bar Association’s Judicial Appreciation Award, the William Castagna Award for Judicial Excellence, and in 1988 he was named Outstanding Assistant Public Defender in Florida.

Judge Rondolino’s predecessor, outgoing Chief Judge McGrady, leaves behind a string of accomplishments -- and some memories of some difficult times.

“I think the greatest challenge in the last six years has been to fully serve the citizens and Pasco and Pinellas with limited resources,” McGrady said. “We were able to succeed by providing timely justice to those who would appear before the courts thanks to a hard-working judiciary and an underpaid and overworked staff.”

During McGrady’s tenure as chief judge, the circuit has, among other things, slashed a backlog of some 20,000 mortgage foreclosure cases, started up veterans’ treatment courts in both counties, and helped establish Pinellas Safe Harbor, the county’s homeless shelter.