



Supreme Court of Florida

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Office of the State Courts Administrator

Lee County Judge Tara P. Paluck presented Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence

TALLAHASSEE – Lee County Judge Tara P. Paluck, described by colleagues as a steady leader, dedicated mentor, and tireless advocate for her community, is the 2026 county court recipient of the Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence. The award was presented to Judge Paluck during the annual education program of the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida.

In a nomination letter, one of Judge Paluck's colleagues wrote "Judge Paluck loves her job, she loves her hometown of Fort Myers, Florida, and she takes great pride in representing the bench each and every day with grace, poise, and a keen insight of making sure justice is done as efficiently and effectively as possible so that everyone in her courtroom feels heard."

Fellow judges highlighted her leadership within the Conference of County Court Judges, as well as her steady support for her colleagues and her community.

"Her leadership and selflessness, both locally and at the statewide level, exemplify the qualities sought to be recognized by this prestigious award," one colleague wrote in a nomination letter, adding that "Judge Paluck's integrity is beyond reproach."

Judge Paluck was first elected to the county court in 2006 and took the bench in January 2007. She has served as an administrative judge of Lee County Court twice, most recently from 2020 to 2023, and has been chair of the Lee County Public Safety Coordinating Council since 2016. She has also served as chair of the Lee County Canvassing Board and has been a designated mentor judge for new county court judges since 2016. She is a member of the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability, where she chairs the Court Interpreter Expansion Workgroup.

Within the Conference of County Court Judges, she has served as circuit representative, Second District vice president, and secretary, and currently serves as editor of the *Courier*, the Conference's statewide publication. She also founded the Conference's Hurricane Relief Committee, an initiative to support judges affected by natural disasters that grew out of her own experience recovering from Hurricane Ian.

Judge Paluck began her legal career as an assistant state attorney in the 20th Judicial Circuit, handling domestic violence, narcotics, and firearms cases. She later worked in insurance defense before opening her own law practice focused on family law and mediation. She earned her law degree from Creighton University School of Law and her undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame.

The Chief Justice Awards for Judicial Excellence, established in 2015 and presented annually, recognize one county court judge and one circuit court judge who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the judicial branch and who personify judicial excellence. The circuit court judge recipient will be announced in August.