



Tampa Bay Chapter
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Dear Editor,

On behalf of the American Board of Trial Advocates, I am writing you to respond to your recent column regarding Pinellas Circuit Judge Pamela Campbell.

Judges are bound by a code of ethics that prohibits them from responding to the media, even to defend themselves from an inaccurate or unfair portrayal. The writer's reference to Judge Campbell being reversed 22 times since 2012, without more, paints a distorted picture of the job she is doing as a circuit court judge. Indeed, during that time frame, Judge Campbell has resolved 7,497 filed cases. Against this backdrop, her reversal rate is a mere .003, an enviable statistic.

I commend Ms. Phillips for acknowledging a trial judge's reversal rate is but one measure of her performance as a judge. Moreover, a trial judge who exhibits the courage to rule on difficult issues without fear of reversal, is an asset to the bench.

The trial judge's perspective is distinctly different from a reviewing appellate court. Trial judges are the "on-field referees" of the court. Like their sports counterparts, they are required to make critical judgments in real time, in the heat of a contentious trial. They do not have the luxury of slow motion or an instant replay booth, which is more akin to the measured review of an appeals court. Just as we are continually amazed at how often these referees "get it right", I think we can be rightfully proud of the job our dedicated trial judges do week in and week out.

Trial by jury is one of the most important ways in which we, as a democracy, govern ourselves. Giving respect to the men and women who serve as trial judges, goes a long way in determining how the public at large views the judicial branch of government.

Very truly yours,

Mark E. McLaughlin