

December 9, 2010

VIA EMAIL AND FACSIMILE

Letters to the Editor
The Palm Beach Post
P.O. Box 24700
West Palm Beach, Florida 33416

Re: Judge Amy Smith

Dear Editorial Board :

The American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) is a national, invitation only organization comprised of experienced lawyers who represent both plaintiffs and defendants in litigation. As part of its mission, ABOTA responds to unwarranted or unjust attacks of Judges, who are ordinarily not allowed to personally answer charges made against them. Lawyers, under the Code of Professional Responsibility and the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, have a duty to defend Judges against unjust criticism. Mr. Randy Schultz' December 9 editorial criticizing Judge Amy Smith was both unwarranted and unjust.

Judge Smith has an outstanding reputation as a fair and knowledgeable Judge. The sentence she gave was a legal sentence under the laws for youthful offenders, such as Ms. Woods. While the wide notoriety Ms. Woods' case has received is unusual, Judge Smith showed courage by not treating Ms. Woods differently than other youthful offenders would be treated for similar crimes.

It should be pointed out that Ms. Woods hardly "got off easy." Significantly, the victim specifically requested that Ms. Woods not go to prison, given the nature of her involvement in the crime. Ms. Woods had been held in jail since the day of her arrest over a year ago. Judge Smith previously denied requests for bond. Ms. Woods will have to go through a drug treatment program and be subjected to a lengthy probation. Any material violation of probation will result in a 15-year prison sentence. Hopefully, the weekly drug testing Judge Smith ordered will help Ms. Woods get her life on track and become a productive adult.

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The outrageous suggestion that Ms. Woods' sentence was impacted by such irrelevant factors as her hair color is, respectfully, absurd. The victim, who did not want her sent to prison, undoubtedly did not care that Ms. Woods is a blond.

Doing the right thing – even when it is unpopular – is the hallmark of a good Judge. Our community is fortunate to have Judge Amy Smith. She is an excellent Judge.

Sincerely,

Mickey Smith
for ABOTA,
Palm Beach Chapter