

Judge Janis Brustares Keyser

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by David A. Greene

“Getting people to communicate with each other and helping them resolve their disputes”

Judge Keyser fulfilled a vision of becoming a lawyer. Born and raised in Miami, the seed for Janis Brustares Keyser’s interest in becoming a lawyer was planted by her late father, a manager for Motors Insurance Corporation, who wanted to become a lawyer himself. Her interest grew when she worked as a gofer and file clerk for an appellate law firm, while working towards her undergraduate degree at Florida State University. She initially planned a career as a college history professor, but instead decided upon a career in the law. After graduating from FSU summa cum laude, Janis Keyser then attended University of Florida College of Law, where she first met her husband, Gregory Keyser.

Judge Keyser’s father again helped influence her career path by suggesting she send her resume to every Federal Judge in the Southern District of Florida. She was fortunate enough to obtain a clerkship with United States District Court Judge Jose A. Gonzalez Jr., whom she fondly describes as “a brilliant jurist.” The most important lesson that Judge Keyser learned from Judge Gonzalez was that you can work hard at the practice of law and still manage to have a good time.

After her two-year clerkship with Judge Gonzalez, Judge Keyser became an associate with Jones & Foster, P.A. At Jones & Foster, P.A., Judge Keyser met and worked closely with Hayward D. Gay, whom she considers a mentor and good friend. She recalls traveling throughout the country and having substantial deposition and trial support experience as a young lawyer.

Judge Keyser then obtained a clerkship with Fourth District Court of Appeal Judge James C. Downey. During this approximately year-long clerkship, Judge Keyser developed an interest in and appreciation for appellate law practice. She subsequently continued to develop her appellate law practice and obtained Florida Bar Board Certification in Appellate Practice, a distinction that she continues to maintain today.

After her children Mallory and Spencer were born, Judge Keyser worked part-time with Reid, Ricca & Rigell, P.A. During her five years with that firm, Judge Keyser continued her appellate and litigation support practice.

Judge Keyser ultimately went back to work with her mentor, Hayward Gay, who had by then formed the firm of Gay, Ramsey & Lewis, P.A. She continued to work with Hayward through the firm's merger with Billing, Cochran, Heath, Lyles, Mauro & Anderson, P.A., where her husband Gregory is a partner.

After her children left home for college, her daughter Mallory to the University of Florida and her son Spencer to Florida State University, Janis Keyser decided that she was ready for a new challenge. She completed a challenging application and interview process and, while on I-95 en route to a Uniform Motion Calendar hearing in Broward County, she received a telephone call from Governor Jeb Bush who asked her how would she like to be a judge. Judge Keyser was then appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Susan Lubitz and was thrilled that her father, who had inspired her so greatly, had the opportunity to know that she had been appointed as a judge. Shortly thereafter, Judge Keyser was sworn in by Judge Gonzalez, the "brilliant jurist" who had such a great influence on her.

Since taking the bench in April 2006, Judge Keyser has done a great deal of reading and learning. Serving in the County Civil division has presented many new challenges to her, but she enjoys meeting those challenges and learning all that comes with them. She takes particular pleasure in getting the parties that appear before her to communicate with each other, in an effort to resolve their differences upon mutually acceptable terms.

Judge Keyser is grateful for the assistance of fellow judges, such as Judge Bosso-Pardo, Judge Crow and Judge Lewis. She is, however, particularly grateful for the assistance and guidance of Judge Evans, whom she describes as a "wealth of knowledge." Judge Keyser also noted the importance of her staff and is truly appreciative of all the support she receives from her judicial assistant and courtroom deputy.

Judge Keyser maintains many outside interests. She enjoys playing tennis and walking. She is also an avid reader and a history buff, having recently read books about Abraham Lincoln and Harry Truman. Finally, Judge Keyser is an avid fan of the University of Florida Gators; just please do not tell her son.

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