

Judge John Kastrenakes

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by Grier Pressly

What does an accomplished prosecutor who was named the most effective criminal lawyer in South Florida by the Daily Business Review, who is a three-time recipient of the U.S. Department of Justice Director's Award, and who has successfully tried cases that were the subject of television shows and crime novels, do for a career encore? For Judge John Kastrenakes, a move to the bench was a natural progression in a career defined by public service.

After ten years sharpening his trial skills at the Dade County State Attorney's Office, where he prosecuted several high profile murder cases in the major crimes division, Judge Kastrenakes was recruited to the U.S. Attorney's Office in 1995. It was as a federal prosecutor that Judge Kastrenakes gained his reputation as a superior trial lawyer feared by international drug traffickers and foreign spies, and more recently, as a crusader for honest local government. While he relished the experience of trying cases in front of the best judges in the world as an advocate, Judge Kastrenakes feels like he has reached the pinnacle of public service as a member of our Circuit bench. Moreover, having spent the last 15 years in federal court, Judge Kastrenakes is grateful to be back in the state court system which he considers to be a true "public system", rich with opportunities to interact with dedicated and talented (though underpaid) people every day. Judge Kastrenakes vows to be a judge known for his preparation and his respect for the lawyers and their clients in his courtroom.

Judge Kastrenakes is not alone in his love for the law. His wife, Pia, is a practicing attorney, and Judge Kastrenakes swore in his oldest child, Eleni, during his own investiture ceremony in October. Eleni will begin her legal career with Holland & Knight in Miami. Judge Kastrenakes' middle child is an investment banker in Atlanta and his youngest is a senior at UNC-Chapel Hill. Off the bench Judge Kastrenakes is an avid follower of Gator football, making the trek to Gainesville several times each Fall. When the Gators aren't playing Judge Kastrenakes enjoys playing golf and reading military history.

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