

## **Judge April Bristow Judicial Profile**

Judge Bristow is not only an example of what a judge should be, but she is an inspiration for those who aspire to achieve the American dream.

Judge Bristow comes from humble beginnings, growing up in Homestead, Florida. Her father was a Navy veteran who was injured during his service and maintained odd jobs as a mechanic and electronics technician thereafter. Her mother was a homemaker who was very involved in their local church, and religion played a prominent role in shaping Judge Bristow's morals and values. While her childhood was not one of wealth or opulence, she was surrounded by the love of her family. Judge Bristow looked up to her grandfather, a World War II amputee, who never shied away from hard work and was always present to provide assistance and guidance. Her grandfather was also a Baptist minister who often preached the concept of Agape Love, showing love to your fellow people, and service to others. These principles have driven Judge Bristow to where she is today.

Judge Bristow did not know any lawyers growing up, in fact, she did not know any professionals and had no model for higher education. But at the young age of 8, she knew that she wanted to be a lawyer and had a natural curiosity for knowledge. Even at a young age, Judge Bristow's immense intellect was apparent. Throughout grade school, she was blessed to have the guidance and support of a few educators who identified Judge Bristow's talents and helped to foster and grow her intellectual gifts.

Her hard work paid off. Judge Bristow earned a Bright Futures Scholarship and early admission to the Honors Program at the University of Florida. But this was only the beginning. Judge Bristow graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor's degree in English. She was then welcomed to the Stetson University College of Law on an academic scholarship where she also graduated *cum laude*. But being at the top of her class was not enough for this intellectually curious future judge. She also earned the prestigious honors of serving as a Digest Writer for the Stetson Law Review, a student editor for the Journal of International Wildlife Law and Policy, as a teaching fellow for the legal writing department, and acceptance into the school's Honors Program.

Judge Bristow began her legal career in Tampa with the prestigious Carlton Fields law firm where she handled complex construction litigation. After three years in private practice, Judge Bristow's desire to serve her community in the public sector led her to take a position as a career attorney at the Fourth District Court of Appeal, working with famed jurist Judge Dorian Damoorgian. In the nearly seven years she spent at the Fourth District, Judge Bristow learned the sacrifice and hard work that is required of jurists. This only increased her dedication to serving the people of Florida and Palm Beach County on the bench. In 2019, Judge Bristow became General Counsel for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. In her new role, Judge Bristow advised the Chief Judge, the Trial Court Administrator, and judicial officers. She also oversaw and managed the law clerks and multiple court programs.

In May 2021, when longtime County Court Judge Sandra Bosso-Pardo announced her impending retirement, Judge Bristow had positioned herself well for a judicial appointment. Judge Bristow earned the backing and recommendations of almost all of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit bench,

including Chief Judge Glenn Kelley. With an impeccable background, superior knowledge, and the well-earned support of the Fifteenth Circuit bench, Judge Bristow was a perfect choice for the position.

Judge Bristow took the bench in October of 2021, and her commitment to fairness and justice quickly became evident to those in her courtroom. Anyone who has practiced in front of her will tell you that Judge Bristow is patient, approachable, and polite. She aims to model her judicial temperament after Palm Beach County judges who she admires; Judge Joe Marx (ret.) and Judge Daliah Weiss, individuals who are both empathic and decisive. But do not mistake her caring judicial temperament for weakness. Judge Bristow has the confidence, intellect, and fortitude of judges she also admires, such as Krista Marx (ret.) and Caroline Shepherd.

Judge Bristow has a natural inclination to want to help people. Whether you are an attorney, plaintiff, defendant, or court personnel, you will find that Judge Bristow is open, caring, and always willing to help. She puts others before herself and always desires to give a helping hand. This can present a challenge sometimes in court as Judge Bristow recognizes that role as a judge is limited. Judge Bristow is mindful of her limited role and careful not to exceed the scope of her authority. As she will tell you, her goal is to always “follow the law and, when afforded discretion, exercise it wisely.”

As Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, John Roberts said: “Judges and Justices are servants of the law, not the other way around. Judges are like umpires. Umpires don’t make the rules, they apply them. The role of an umpire and a judge is critical. They make sure everybody plays by the rules, but it is a limited role. Nobody ever went to a ball game to see the umpire.”

The citizens of Palm Beach County are lucky to have the service and dedication of Judge April Bristow. Her caring nature makes Judge Bristow an incredible asset to our bench. Unlike the umpires in Chief Justice Roberts quote, I recommend going to courtroom 9F to see this umpire apply the rules, you will be impressed. After all, her maiden name is Justus!

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