



**Candidate Questionnaire - County Judge  
August 2022 Primary Election**

Your name: Chris Brown  
Your email address: chris@bsrlegal.com  
Your phone number: 239-989-4671  
Your age: 49  
Today's date: 5-17-2022

*What forms of voluntary professional and community service have you been involved with in Collier County in the past? Currently?*

Wow. I grew up here so this could get fairly lengthy. I have coached Pop Warner football, hockey and baseball. I have been an active member of two different parishes of the Catholic Church since serving as an alter boy during my middle school years. My family also attends Covenant Presbyterian as my wife is Presbyterian. Our children are being raised in both faiths. I have lectured on Constitution Day in the Schools and my family, each year, endows an annual scholarship in our late father's name which goes to a student from Immokalee High (where Dad taught) who is the first in her/his family to go to college. I am a 4<sup>th</sup> Degree Knight of Columbus and very involved in that organization.

My wife "Lynn" and I volunteer at our kids' school. My firm is actively involved in doing annual pro bono work for Collier citizens. I do not mention names of clients for obvious reasons but one example (he has given me permission to mention it) is a gentleman I (along with the State Attorney's Office) helped secure an exoneration from a wrongful felony conviction just this year. My firm mentors local students when we can. This has included interns from high schools and colleges, as well as from Ave Maria Law School. I have also guest lectured at Ave as well as judging mock trial and moot court.

*What has been your greatest accomplishment in your legal career?*

You ask tough questions! I cannot pinpoint one case. I have represented thousands of folks and have tried over 150 cases. I have also argued dozens of appeals. I guess I would point to the body of work and recognition of my peers and our judiciary that has resulted from 20+ years of effort, collectively, as my greatest accomplishment. I am Board Certified by the Florida Bar and AV rated by Martindale-Hubbell. Both of those distinctions require a rigorous background check of opponents and other colleagues as well as judges and attorney has worked in front of. In addition to that I have been

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE.  
Please email your responses to [sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com](mailto:sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com)  
no later than June 3, 2022.*

featured in Super Lawyers Magazine, have a 10/10 on Avvo.com and have been recognized as a Top Lawyer by Naples Illustrated.

*Which of the various types of matters that would come before you as a County Judge would present the least challenge for you? Why?*

I am a firm believer in judicial restraint and the philosophy of Originalism. A judge's first fealty should be to the Florida and U.S. constitutions. Therefore, almost any legal decision I would be called on to make should be relatively straightforward as long as I consistently return to those first principles. Therefore, my decisions should always be easy to understand and predictable because they will be grounded in the laws we all agree to live by.

*Which of the various types of matters that would come before you as a County Judge would present the greatest challenge for you? Why?*

My first reaction is sentencing. I have always been an advocate for people. The role of a judge sometimes calls on him/her to pronounce judgment on a fellow citizen of the community and there are a variety of factors a judge must consider when doing so. Florida law calls for punishment as a first consideration but other factors include rehabilitation and utility. Justice, when possible, should be tempered with mercy. Florida appellate courts have long held that a judge must consider not just the crime but the person before her/him when imposing sentence. It is also critically important that the needs and wishes of the victim of the offense be considered. So, this is no simple process. But if called to serve I promise to do my best to be fair and impartial; I will look only to the facts and what is right and never consider my own emotions or opinions.

*Who are your judicial role models? Why?*

On a national level I would start with the late, great Antonin Scalia as well as Justice Clarence Thomas. Justice Scalia's opinions were not just some of the most beautifully written opinions in American history but they consistently held true to the text of the Constitution itself and left the law-making to the law-makers. I had the great pleasure of being at a Federalist Society Dinner a few years back where Justice Thomas (introduced by one of his former clerks as the "greatest living American") was the speaker. He described the philosophy of Originalism by simply saying "what do you do when you drive up to a stop sign? You stop." That sums it up. There has never been a stauncher defender of our Constitution and a civil society, based on laws and not men, than this great judge.

On a local level there are too many to mention. As a young lawyer I was unbelievably fortunate to be mentored by great judges like Ed Volz and Bill Nelson. You never remember hard lessons learned like those early lessons in a career. They made me into a lawyer. I also had the pleasure of getting to try several cases in front of Jack Schoonover. Judge Schoonover tragically passed a few years back but he will never be

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE.  
Please email your responses to [sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com](mailto:sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com)  
no later than June 3, 2022.*

forgotten. He was the first judge from our circuit to serve in an appellate capacity and then he retired from that court to come back and try cases. Those of us who practiced in front of him used to say he had probably forgotten more about the law than we will ever know.

Current judges? There are too many to name without leaving out someone important. As a lawyer who spends part of almost every day, in a courtroom, I can say I have learned something from each of them. A few that immediately come to mind (because I have tried a lot of cases with them) are Frank Porter, Christine Greider, Bruce Kyle, Alane Laboda, Maria Gonzalez, James Shenko, Margaret Steinbeck and both Judge Thompsons.

I'd also like to specifically address our Collier Judiciary. Our citizens are blessed with an amazing group and because I love practicing in front of every one of them, I don't want to leave anyone out (once again). I would note, as an example, that our Circuit Felony positions have been ably filled, for the last few years, by Judges Manalich and Foster. Both of those gentlemen are models of how judges can run courtrooms efficiently while the attorneys and members of the public that appear before them are all given a fair opportunity to be heard and treated with courtesy and respect. Our County Bench (where I hope to serve) is equally well staffed by fine jurists. I truly love appearing in front of each and every one of them.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not bring up Judge Mike Provost (the man whose seat I am running for). I have known Judge Provost since before I was an attorney and before he was a judge (he is a former prosecutor). We both coached teams for the Lely Seminoles and he, along with my Dad, actually coached my little brother Matt, along with his son Andy. You will find no one in our community who would have a bad thing to say about Judge Provost. Every day he has taken the bench he has demonstrated nothing but patience and respect to everyone in his courtroom. He has been a fantastic judge and he will be sorely missed upon his much-deserved retirement in December. I am not going to claim I can be exactly like Judge Provost, if I am called on to serve, but I will do my level best to try every day.

*What are the pros and cons of serving as a judge as compared to practicing law?*

When practicing law, you serve as an advocate for a client. This can be difficult as that person (or business) is counting on you to help them achieve their legal goal. It is also rewarding, though, as you get to feel like you make a difference in people's lives every day. Also, because of our adversarial system, you know where you stand in relation to your client. You are his/her champion and you are there to advocate for their position.

A judge has a radically different role. A judge must sit as a neutral arbiter of these disputes between parties (when it comes to bench trials, motions, etc.) and as a fair referee when it comes to jury trials. We must completely abandon the role of an advocate if we wish to put on that robe. Because judges are people too, they naturally are emotionally affected by the things they see and hear in the courtroom; but in the case of the best of them, you would never know it. To put it in the simplest terms, it is

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE.*

*Please email your responses to [sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com](mailto:sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com)  
no later than June 3, 2022.*

like going from being a player to a referee. If a lawyer is not ready to abandon the role of advocate and to assume a posture of objective neutrality than he is not at the point in his career where he is ready to assume this responsibility.

*Have you ever been disciplined by the bar association or any other authority on attorney or judicial conduct?*

No.

*Why should voters support you rather than your opponent?*

I would prefer to, respectfully, explain to voters why I believe I am qualified for this job rather than to comment negatively on an opponent. Furthermore, I do not know my opponent and certainly have nothing negative to say about her. In fact, she seems to be a good lawyer. Like me, she and her spouse have three kids in school here in Collier. We both grew up here and went to high school here (different schools) and I am sure she and her husband share the same love for our community that Lynn and I do.

I believe the voters should pick me because of proven experience that is directly related to doing this job. As mentioned above, I have been trying cases and arguing appeals for over 20 years. I have literally spent thousands of hours of my life in courtrooms working before our judges and learning from them. I believe this is why I am proud to be endorsed by both our State Attorney, Amira Fox and our Public Defender, Kathy Smith. I am also endorsed by our great Clerk of the Collier County Courts, Crystal Kinzel. They have backed me because they know I have the proven experience to step in and run a Collier County courtroom in a way the citizens deserve.

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE.  
Please email your responses to [sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com](mailto:sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com)  
no later than June 3, 2022.*