

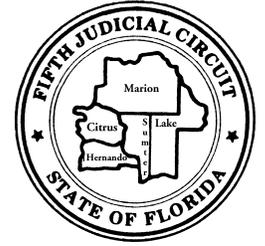


STATE OF FLORIDA

FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

CITRUS, HERNANDO, LAKE, MARION, AND SUMTER COUNTIES



Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.
Chief Judge

Jeffery K. Fuller
Trial Court Administrator

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 29, 2026

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PRESS RELEASE

PASSING OF CIRCUIT JUDGE RICHARD A. HOWARD

It is with profound sadness that the Fifth Judicial Circuit of Florida announces the passing of the **Honorable Richard A. Howard**, who passed away January 29, 2026, at the age of 72. Judge Howard served the Fifth Judicial Circuit with distinction and dedication for over two decades, leaving a lasting impact on the legal community.

Appointed to the Circuit Court bench by Governor Jeb Bush in December 2000 and sworn in the following January, Judge Howard initially began presiding over the Family Law Docket, before transitioning to the Criminal Division, where he served the remainder of his judicial career.

During his tenure, Judge Howard presided over 558 jury trials, including the high-profile 2007 trial of John Evander Couey. His judicial excellence was recognized with the Florida Council on Crime and Delinquency Distinguished Service Award (2010), and he was voted “Best Judge” by readers of the *Citrus County Chronicle* in 2021.

Howard earned his bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from the University of South Florida in 1975 and his Juris Doctor from Stetson College of Law in 1978. He began his legal career as an Assistant State Attorney in the Sixth Judicial Circuit before joining the Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney’s Office, where he served as Senior Trial Attorney and Division Supervisor from 1978 to 1988, overseeing prosecutions in Pasco, Pinellas, Sumter, and Lake counties.

From 1988 to 2000, Judge Howard practiced law in Brooksville, establishing his own firm in 1993 with a focus on personal injury, criminal defense, and family law.

Judge Howard was deeply respected for his commitment to justice, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to the rule of law.

The Fifth Judicial Circuit extends its heartfelt condolences to Judge Howard’s family, friends, and colleagues.

Information regarding memorial services will be shared as it becomes available.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Citrus County Courthouse
110 N. Apopka Avenue
Inverness, FL 34450
(352) 341-6700
(352) 341-7008 FAX | <input type="checkbox"/> Hernando County Courthouse
20 N. Main Street
Brooksville, FL 34601
(352) 754-4402
(352) 754-4235 FAX | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake County Courthouse
P.O. 7800/550 W. Main Street
Tavares, FL 32778
(352) 253-1604
(352) 253-1630 FAX | <input type="checkbox"/> Marion County Judicial Center
110 N.W. First Avenue
Ocala, FL 34475
(352) 401-6701
(352) 401-7883 FAX | <input type="checkbox"/> Sumter County Courthouse
215 E. McCollum Avenue
Bushnell, FL 33513
(352) 569-6950
(352) 569-6985 FAX |
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