



**Flagler County Court Judge
D. Melissa Distler
Division 60
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Bunnell, FL 32110
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Judge D. Melissa Distler has been a County Court Judge in Flagler since 2013. Before being elected to the bench, Judge Distler was in private practice from 2001 through 2012 concentrating on criminal defense and family law matters. From 1998 to 2001, she worked for the State Attorney's Office in the Seventh Judicial Circuit as an assistant state attorney, handling a variety of misdemeanor, felony, domestic violence, child sex offense, and career criminal cases. She is currently and has been Board Certified in Criminal Trial Law since 2006.

Judge Distler earned an undergraduate degree from Florida Atlantic University, Magna Cum Laude in December of 1994 and her Juris Doctor, Cum Laude, in July of 1998 from the University of Florida. She currently presides over the County Court Criminal docket and the Juvenile Delinquency docket at the Kim C. Hammond Justice Center. She previously presided over all Small Claims, County Civil, and Eviction cases as well as Traffic Infractions for Flagler County until November 2019 when the legislature funded a second county Judge for Flagler County. She was statutorily the Canvassing Board Chair from 2013 to 2019 and serves on the Public Safety Council.

Judge Distler is President for the Conference of County Court Judges. She previously served as Legislative Chair, the Chair of the Committee of 33 (solo county judges) and Chair of the Canvassing Board Committee for the Conference. She also serves on the DUI Adjudication Lab Committee, Criminal Rules, and Administration and Management Committees.

Judge Distler is currently a member of the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability, Unified Committee of Judicial Compensation, Florida Court Education Council, Florida Court Education Council Publications Committee and Florida Judicial Wellness Program. She has also been active at the Florida Bar level, previously having served on the Law Related Education Committee and having chaired that committee for a year. Judge Distler currently serves on the Florida Bar Criminal Procedure Rules

Committee and the Constitutional Judiciary Committee. In her capacity as President of the County Conference, Judge Distler is an ex-officio member of the Trial Court Budget Commission.

Judge Distler's involvement in continuing Judicial Education began early in her judicial career. She began at the Traffic Adjudication Lab, instructing since 2014 on multiple topics including civil traffic infractions, driver's license records, commercial driver's license issues, and constitutional matters. The Traffic Adjudication Lab is an intensive weeklong course for traffic hearing officers and judges, focusing on DUI and other traffic related cases. Judge Distler continues to instruct at this program.

Judge Distler has been an instructor at Judicial College Phase II since 2016; she served as an instructor on the County Civil track, focusing on Landlord and Tenant laws, case management, and best practices handling county civil cases. Judge Distler then transitioned onto the Criminal Track and has served as Criminal Track Leader since 2020. In 2024, she additionally taught on First Appearances and Pleas at Judicial College. Judge Distler was also invited to present at Advanced Judicial Studies in 2017, teaching on Child Support matters. Subsequently, she also served as a General Interest Track Leader of Advanced Judicial Studies for several years. Judge Distler served as the Associate Dean for Advanced Judicial Studies, responsible for assisting the Dean and developing full day courses for a week of judicial education across multiple topic areas, for several years as well.

Judge Distler continues to serve the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida as a presenter as well. She has presented at the annual conference since 2016 on topics ranging from First Appearance and Extradition, Dealing with difficult litigants, Traffic Infractions, Legislative updates, and Canvassing Board. In 2023, Judge Distler was honored by her colleagues as the recipient of the Judge Amy Karan Award at the Annual Conference of County Court Judges of Florida.

In the community, Judge Distler presented at the Flagler Library in Palm Coast, Florida on Constitution Day for the public in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, on different topics including the Fourth Amendment, Juvenile Delinquency, the Judicial Branch Election and Retention, and Pretrial Release. In 2018, she presented at the New Clerk Academy in Palm Coast on the topic of Juvenile Delinquency Cases.

Judge Distler was an active member of the Flagler County Chamber of Commerce. From 2013 to 2016, she was a board member for the Flagler County Chamber Young Professionals Group. She has accepted the invitation to speak numerous times at Chamber functions. Judge Distler welcomed Chamber Leadership Flagler, and Youth Leadership Flagler groups to visit her courtroom, amongst other organizations. Judge Distler has participated in the reading of the Declaration of Independence at the county's Independence Day celebration for several years.

Judge Distler gives her time to mentor and inspire the youth of Flagler County as well. She has been a Justice Teaching volunteer from 2007 to 2020 at Old King's Elementary School, speaking to fifth and sixth grade classes twice a year on the Constitution and the three branches of government. Judge Distler also has been a Flagler County Education Foundation Take Stock in the Children Mentor since 2012. Judge Distler is invited to speak at several events for the Education Foundation events throughout the year. Most recently, Judge Distler began volunteering with the Matanzas High School Law and Justice flagship program, instituted in 2019. She previously coached the students for the Mock Trials competition and now speaks to them regularly as well as inviting them into the courtroom to observe jury trials. In 2024, she was invited to speak to the youth at the Rise Up program regarding felony sentencing and adult charges. She is very dedicated to helping the youth of Flagler County.

Judge Distler seeks to improve the judicial branch in any way she can. Upon taking the bench, she recognized a need in Flagler County. She presented her concerns to the Public Safety Council and spent time compiling data, which was then presented to that council. Ultimately the County Commission funded the creation of Flagler's Pre-Trial Release program, which was implemented in 2014.

In her free time, Judge Distler enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, and practicing yoga.