

Editorial: Rowe-Linn, Ticktin bring experience, demeanor to bench

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In Group 14, the battle is over whether Palm Beach County Circuit Judge Diana Lewis deserves a third term. Challenger **Jessica Ticktin**, a partner at the Ticktin Law Group, says no. And we agree.

Ticktin, unlike Lewis, says she would relish the opportunity to work in foreclosure and family law — both divisions of judicial need. She's been a practicing attorney for more than 10 years. Before she became a partner in her father's Deerfield Beach law firm, Ticktin was the firm's managing partner, overseeing 24 attorneys and 4,500 cases in 10 offices statewide.

Before the past 12 years on the bench, Lewis had been practicing mostly as a corporate defense attorney for about 20 years. But the judge's issues are not about her experience.

The Post, in 2008, recommended the then-one-term jurist have another six years to change what local lawyers described as a condescending and hostile courtroom demeanor. According to a 2013 poll by the Palm Beach County Bar Association, little has changed. In fact, it appears her courtroom reputation is worse.

Indeed, poll after biannual poll of local lawyers shows Lewis scoring poorly in various areas. For example, that 2013 poll has 46 percent of 216 county Bar attorneys giving Lewis a "needs improvement" in the area of impartiality. In 2007, that number was 34 percent.

Lewis writes the poll results off as a small sample of some 6,500 attorneys in the county, and the fact that in any case "you can only make 50 percent of the people happy."

And, just as Lewis' challenger did in 2008, Ticktin raises the issue of the judge's reversals on appeal. According to legal research firm Westlaw, Lewis' reversal rate is about 41 percent on 165 cases that were appealed.

To be sure, working the court's foreclosure division can tax any jurist's patience. Frustrated homeowners can cycle through as many as three times a

year, and judges are under pressure to clear cases in two years. Moreover, Lewis makes no secret of the fact that she'd like to get out of the high-octane division as soon as possible.

However, a judge has to be able to work with attorneys to get the best outcome for people who come before them. And while polls and opinions may be subjective and anecdotal, the sheer volume is too much to ignore.

Another six years isn't likely to change that. Ticktin's experience and demeanor make her a more than capable replacement.