Redacted Copy

Myriam Irizarry

Application to Sixth Judicial Circuit Nominating Commission For Nomination To Pinellas County Court Judge

March 31, 2015

APPLICATION FOR NOMINATION TO THE Pinellas County COURT

(Please attach additional pages as needed to respond fully to questions.)

DATE: March 31, 2015 Florida Bar No.: 0044814

GENERAL: Social Security No.: s. 119.071(5)(a), F. S.

1. Name Myriam Irizarry E-mail: Irizarryjm@aol.com

   Date Admitted to Practice in Florida: March 24, 1995

   Date Admitted to Practice in other States: June 18, 1981

2. State current employer and title, including professional position and any public or judicial office.

   s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

3. Business address: s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

   City s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. County s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. State s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. ZIP s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

   Telephone s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. FAX s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

4. Residential address: s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

   City s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. County s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. State s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. ZIP s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

   Since April, 2001 Telephone s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

5. Place of birth: Loiza, Puerto Rico

   Date of birth: s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. Age: 60

6a. Length of residence in State of Florida: 30

6b. Are you a registered voter? ☒ Yes ☐ No

   If so, in what county are you registered? Pinellas

7. Marital status: Married

   If married: Spouse's name s. 119.071(4)(d) F.S.

   Date of marriage s. 119.071(4)(d) F.S.

   Spouse's occupation s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

If ever divorced give for each marriage name(s) of spouse(s), current address for each former spouse, date and place of divorce, court and case number for each divorce.

Never divorced.

8. Children

Name(s)	*Age(s)*	*Occupation(s)*	*Residential address(es)*
s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.			

9. Military Service (including Reserves)

Service	*Branch*	*Highest Rank*	*Dates*
N/A			

Rank at time of discharge _____ Type of discharge _____

Awards or citations _____

HEALTH:

10. Are you currently addicted to or dependent upon the use of narcotics, drugs, or intoxicating beverages? If yes, state the details, including the date(s).

No

11a. During the last ten years have you been hospitalized or have you consulted a professional or have you received treatment or a diagnosis from a professional for any of the following: Kleptomania, Pathological or Compulsive Gambling, Pedophilia, Exhibitionism or Voyeurism?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If your answer is yes, please direct each such professional, hospital and other facility to furnish the Chairperson of the Commission any information the Commission may request with respect to any such hospitalization, consultation, treatment or diagnosis. ["Professional" includes a Physician, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Psychotherapist or Mental Health Counselor.]

Please describe such treatment or diagnosis.

11b. In the past ten years have any of the following occurred to you which would interfere with your ability to work in a competent and professional manner?

- Experiencing periods of no sleep for 2 or 3 nights
- Experiencing periods of hyperactivity
- Spending money profusely with extremely poor judgment

- Suffered from extreme loss of appetite
- Issuing checks without sufficient funds
- Defaulting on a loan
- Experiencing frequent mood swings
- Uncontrollable tiredness
- Falling asleep without warning in the middle of an activity

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please explain.

12a. Do you currently have a physical or mental impairment which in any way limits your ability or fitness to properly exercise your duties as a member of the Judiciary in a competent and professional manner?

Yes ☐ No ☒

12b. If your answer to the question above is Yes, are the limitations or impairments caused by your physical or mental health impairment reduced or ameliorated because you receive ongoing treatment (with or without medication) or participate in a monitoring or counseling program?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Describe such problem and any treatment or program of monitoring or counseling.

13. During the last ten years, have you ever been declared legally incompetent or have you or your property been placed under any guardianship, conservatorship or committee? If yes, give full details as to court, date and circumstances.

No

14. During the last ten years, have you unlawfully used controlled substances, narcotic drugs or dangerous drugs as defined by Federal or State laws? If your answer is "Yes," explain in detail. (Unlawful use includes the use of one or more drugs and/or the unlawful possession or distribution of drugs. It does not include the use of drugs taken under supervision of a licensed health care professional or other uses authorized by Federal law provisions.)

No

15. In the past ten years, have you ever been reprimanded, demoted, disciplined, placed on probation, suspended, cautioned or terminated by an employer as result of your alleged consumption of alcohol, prescription drugs or illegal use of drugs? If so, please state the circumstances under which such action was taken, the name(s) of any persons who took such action, and the background and resolution of such action.

No

16. Have you ever refused to submit to a test to determine whether you had consumed and/or were under the influence of alcohol or drugs? If so, please state the date you were requested to submit to such a test, the type of test required, the name of the entity requesting that you submit to the test, the outcome of your refusal and the reason why you refused to submit to such a test.

No

17. In the past ten years, have you suffered memory loss or impaired judgment for any reason? If so, please explain in full.

No

EDUCATION:

18a. Secondary schools, colleges and law schools attended.

Schools	*Class Standing*	*Dates of Attendance*	*Degree*
Rutgers-Newark School of Law	Top 20%	1977-1980	JD
Rutgers College, Rutgers University	Honors	1973- 1977	BA
New Brunswick High School	Top 10%	1971-1973	HS Diploma

18b. List and describe academic scholarships earned, honor societies or other awards.
National Honor Society and Rutgers Outstanding Alumni of the Educational Opportunity Program

NON-LEGAL EMPLOYMENT:

19. List all previous full-time non-legal jobs or positions held since 21 in chronological order and briefly describe them.

Date	*Position*	*Employer*	*Address*
None			

PROFESSIONAL ADMISSIONS:

20. List all courts (including state bar admissions) and administrative bodies having special admission requirements to which you have ever been admitted to practice, giving the dates of admission, and if applicable, state whether you have been suspended or resigned.

Court or Administrative Body	*Date of Admission*
United States Supreme Court	May 22, 2006
Florida Supreme Court	March 24, 1995
New Jersey Supreme Court	June 18, 1981
U.S. District Court, New Jersey	June 18, 1981

LAW PRACTICE: (If you are a sitting judge, answer questions 21 through 26 with reference to the years before you became a judge.)

21. State the names, dates and addresses for all firms with which you have been associated in practice, governmental agencies or private business organizations by which you have been employed, periods you have practiced as a sole practitioner, law clerkships and other prior employment:

Position	*Name of Firm*	*Address*	*Dates*
Please see attached resume			

22. Describe the general nature of your current practice including any certifications which you possess; additionally, if your practice is substantially different from your prior practice or if you are not now practicing law, give details of prior practice. Describe your typical clients or former clients and the problems for which they sought your services.

Currently I serve as the s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. In this capacity I am responsible for all legal issues arising in the s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. These issues involve problem resolution with citizens, attorneys, judges, and stakeholder agencies. The work is primarily transactional work involving the interpretation and application of Florida statutes and rules. I direct all litigation legal strategies which may involve collaborative work with the s. 119.071(4)(d) F.S. This position involves working closely with the s. 119.071(4)(d) F.S. on the review and implementation of Administrative Orders. I also represent the s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. in employee related disputes which go before the s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. I monitor all new legislation for operational implementation. In my s. 119.071(4)(d) F.S. role I oversee all court related departments of the s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. consisting of approximately 400 employees.

23. What percentage of your appearance in courts in the last five years or last five years of practice (include the dates) was in:

Court		Area of Practice	
Federal Appellate	0 %	Civil	20 %
Federal Trial	0 %	Criminal	10 %
Federal Other	0 %	Family	30 %
State Appellate	0 %	Probate	20 %
State Trial	0 %	Other	20 %
State Administrative	0 %		
State Other	0 %		
	%		
TOTAL	100 %	TOTAL	100 %

24. In your lifetime, how many (number) of the cases you have tried to verdict or judgment were:

Jury? approx. 20 Non-jury? 300

Arbitration? 0 Administrative Bodies? 20

25. Within the last ten years, have you ever been formally reprimanded, sanctioned, demoted, disciplined, placed on probation, suspended or terminated by an employer or tribunal before which you have appeared? If so, please state the circumstances under which such action was taken, the date(s) such action was taken, the name(s) of any persons who took such action, and the background and resolution of such action.

No

26. In the last ten years, have you failed to meet any deadline imposed by court order or received notice that you have not complied with substantive requirements of any business or contractual arrangement? If so, please explain in full.

No

(Questions 27 through 30 are optional for sitting judges who have served 5 years or more.)

27a. For your last 6 cases, which were tried to verdict before a jury or arbitration panel or tried to judgment before a judge, list the names and telephone numbers of trial counsel on all sides and court case numbers (include appellate cases).

The cases tried were in New Jersey when I served as Criminal Defense Counsel and as Legal Services Staff Attorney some years ago. The most recent experience involves administrative type proceedings internals 119.071(4)(d) F. S. s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

27b. For your last 6 cases, which were settled in mediation or settled without mediation or

trial, list the names and telephone numbers of trial counsel on all sides and court case numbers (include appellate cases).

N/A

27c. During the last five years, how frequently have you appeared at administrative hearings?
0 - 1 average times per month

27d. During the last five years, how frequently have you appeared in Court?
0 average times per month

27e. During the last five years, if your practice was substantially personal injury, what percentage of your work was in representation of plaintiffs? N/A % Defendants? _____%

28. If during any prior period you have appeared in court with greater frequency than during the last five years, indicate the period during which this was so and give for such prior periods a succinct statement of the part you played in the litigation, numbers of cases and whether jury or non-jury.

N/A

29. For the cases you have tried to award in arbitration, during each of the past five years, indicate whether you were sole, associate or chief counsel. Give citations of any reported cases.

N/A

30. List and describe the six most significant cases which you personally litigated giving case style, number and citation to reported decisions, if any. Identify your client and describe the nature of your participation in the case and the reason you believe it to be significant. Give the name of the court and judge, the date tried and names of other attorneys involved.

N/A

31. Attach at least one example of legal writing which you personally wrote. If you have not personally written any legal documents recently, you may attach writing for which you had substantial responsibility. Please describe your degree of involvement in preparing the writing you attached.

Please see attached writing sample

PRIOR JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE OR PUBLIC OFFICE:

32a. Have you ever held judicial office or been a candidate for judicial office? If so, state the court(s) involved and the dates of service or dates of candidacy.

No

32b. List any prior quasi-judicial service:

Dates	*Name of Agency*	*Position Held*
None		

Types of issues heard:

32c. Have you ever held or been a candidate for any other public office? If so, state the office, location and dates of service or candidacy.

I was a candidate for City Council in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1982.

32d. If you have had prior judicial or quasi-judicial experience,

(i) List the names, phone numbers and addresses of six attorneys who appeared before you on matters of substance.

(ii) Describe the approximate number and nature of the cases you have handled during your judicial or quasi-judicial tenure.

(iii) List citations of any opinions which have been published.

(iv) List citations or styles and describe the five most significant cases you have tried or heard. Identify the parties, describe the cases and tell why you believe them to be significant. Give dates tried and names of attorneys involved.

(v) Has a complaint about you ever been made to the Judicial Qualifications Commission? If so, give date, describe complaint, whether or not there was a finding of probable cause, whether or not you have appeared before the Commission, and its resolution.

(vi) Have you ever held an attorney in contempt? If so, for each instance state name of attorney, approximate date and circumstances.

(vii) If you are a quasi-judicial officer (ALJ, Magistrate, General Master), have you ever been disciplined or reprimanded by a sitting judge? If so, describe.

BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT:

33a. If you are now an officer, director or otherwise engaged in the management of any business enterprise, state the name of such enterprise, the nature of the business, the nature of your duties, and whether you intend to resign such position immediately upon your appointment or election to judicial office.

None

33b. Since being admitted to the Bar, have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business or profession other than the practice of law? If so, give details, including dates.

No

33c. State whether during the past five years you have received any fees or compensation of any kind, other than for legal services rendered, from any business enterprise, institution, organization, or association of any kind. If so, identify the source of such compensation, the nature of the business enterprise, institution, organization or association involved and the dates such compensation was paid and the amounts.

I served as Adjunct Instrutor for St.Pete College where I received compensation for teaching classes in the Paralegal Studies Department.

POSSIBLE BIAS OR PREJUDICE:

34. The Commission is interested in knowing if there are certain types of cases, groups of entities, or extended relationships or associations which would limit the cases for which you could sit as the presiding judge. Please list all types or classifications of cases or litigants for which you as a general proposition believe it would be difficult for you to sit as the presiding judge. Indicate the reason for each situation as to why you believe you might be in conflict. If you have prior judicial experience, describe the types of cases from which you have recused yourself.

None

MISCELLANEOUS:

35a. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or a first degree misdemeanor?

Yes _____ No __x__ If "Yes" what charges? _____

Where convicted? _____ Date of Conviction: _____

35b. Have you pled nolo contendere or pled guilty to a crime which is a felony or a first degree misdemeanor?

Yes _____ No __x__ If "Yes" what charges? _____

Where convicted? _____ Date of Conviction: _____

35c. Have you ever had the adjudication of guilt withheld for a crime which is a felony or a first degree misdemeanor?

Yes _____ No __x__ If "Yes" what charges? _____

Where convicted? _____ Date of Conviction: _____

36a. Have you ever been sued by a client? If so, give particulars including name of client, date suit filed, court, case number and disposition.

No

36b. Has any lawsuit to your knowledge been filed alleging malpractice as a result of action or inaction on your part?

No

36c. Have you or your professional liability insurance carrier ever settled a claim against you for professional malpractice? If so, give particulars, including the amounts involved.

No

37a. Have you ever filed a personal petition in bankruptcy or has a petition in bankruptcy been filed against you?

No

37b. Have you ever owned more than 25% of the issued and outstanding shares or acted as an officer or director of any corporation by which or against which a petition in bankruptcy has been filed? If so, give name of corporation, your relationship to it and date and caption of petition.

No

38. Have you ever been a party to a lawsuit either as a plaintiff or as a defendant? If so, please supply the jurisdiction/county in which the lawsuit was filed, style, case number, nature of the lawsuit, whether you were Plaintiff or Defendant and its disposition.

No

39. Has there ever been a finding of probable cause or other citation issued against you or are you presently under investigation for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by any court, administrative agency, bar association, or other professional group. If so, give the particulars.

No

40. To your knowledge within the last ten years, have any of your current or former co-workers, subordinates, supervisors, customers or clients ever filed a formal complaint or formal accusation of misconduct against you with any regulatory or investigatory agency, or with your employer? If so, please state the date(s) of such formal complaint or formal accusation(s), the specific formal complaint or formal accusation(s) made, and the background and resolution of such action(s). (Any complaint filed with JQC, refer to 32d(v).

No

41. Are you currently the subject of an investigation which could result in civil, administrative or criminal action against you? If yes, please state the nature of the investigation, the agency conducting the investigation and the expected completion date of the investigation.

No

42. In the past ten years, have you been subject to or threatened with eviction proceedings? If yes, please explain.

No

43a. Have you filed all past tax returns as required by federal, state, local and other government authorities?

Yes ☒ No ☐ If no, please explain. _____

43b. Have you ever paid a tax penalty?

Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please explain what and why. _____

43c. Has a tax lien ever been filed against you? If so, by whom, when, where and why?

No

HONORS AND PUBLICATIONS:

44. If you have published any books or articles, list them, giving citations and dates.

Published President's Message Column in the Clearwater Bar Association's bar journal

45. List any honors, prizes or awards you have received. Give dates.

Florida Bar - President's Pro Bono Service Award for Sixth Judicial Circuit, Jan. 2012

Clearwater Bar Association's Ralph Richards Award, May 2012

Hispanic Leadership Award, Tampa Hispanic Heritage, September 2012

Clearwater Bar President's Award, May 2013

Hispanic Outreach Center President's Award, October 2013

Status of Latino Students Award, USF, October 2012

Mount Carmel Baptist Church Law Day Award, June 2013

New Brunswick High School Hall of Fame Distinguished Alumni Award, June 2013

46. List and describe any speeches or lectures you have given.

As President of the Clearwater Bar, I spoke at many bar related functions.
s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.
I taught as an Adjunct Instructor in the Paralegal Studies Department of St.Pete College and in the Puerto Rican Studies Department at Rutgers University .

47. Do you have a Martindale-Hubbell rating? Yes ☐ If so, what is it?___No ☒

PROFESSIONAL AND OTHER ACTIVITIES:

48a. List all bar associations and professional societies of which you are a member and give the titles and dates of any office which you may have held in such groups and committees to which you belonged.

Immediate Past President of Clearwater Bar Association, May 2014 - present

President of Clearwater Bar Association, May 2013 - May 2014

Immediate Past President of Hispanic Outreach Center Board, May 2012 - present

President of Hispanic Outreach Center 2009 - May 2012

Member - St.Petersburg Bar Association 2000 - present

Member - Florida Bar 1995 - present

Member - New Jersey Bar - 1981 - present

Board Member, Clearwater Bar Foundation 2000 - 2005

Board Member, Community Law Program 2000 - 2007

48b. List, in a fully identifiable fashion, all organizations, other than those identified in response to question No. 48(a), of which you have been a member since graduating from law school, including the titles and dates of any offices which you have held in each such organization.

Member, Pinellas County Republican Executive Committee 2001 - 2005

Republican Committee Woman - Precinct 633, January 2001 - 2005

Eucharistic Minister, St. Ignatius Catholic Church

Bookends Book Club 2009 - present

48c. List your hobbies or other vocational interests.

Reading, dancing, and civic involvement

48d. Do you now or have you ever belonged to any club or organization that in practice or policy restricts (or restricted during the time of your membership) its membership on the basis of race, religion, national origin or sex? If so, detail the name and nature of the club(s) or organization(s), relevant policies and practices and whether you intend to continue as a member if you are selected to serve on the bench.

No

48e. Describe any pro bono legal work you have done. Give dates.

I have provided pro bono services at the Hispanic Outreach Center and at Mount Carmel Baptist Church through advice clinics for the past seven years. I also volunteer at [redacted] s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. [redacted] where we place students interested in the law and serve as mentors to them. All of the above pro-bono efforts were recognized In January 2012 when I received the Circuit's Pro-Bono award which was presented by the Florida Bar President at the Florida Supreme Court along with other awards I have listed separately. I have felt humbled and honored by all of the recognition.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

49a. Have you attended any continuing legal education programs during the past five years? If so, in what substantive areas?

I typically carry well over the required CLE credits as I attend CLE programs offered by the Bar Associations as well as by the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers which offer seminars on new legislation touching on all areas of the law.

49b. Have you taught any courses on law or lectured at bar association conferences, law school forums, or continuing legal education programs? If so, in what substantive areas?

Yes I am a presenter at Bar seminars and at the Florida Association of Court Clerks.

50. Describe any additional education or other experience you have which could assist you in holding judicial office.

I have not only kept up with my CLE requirements, but typically surpass the requirements. I have kept up with all law and rule changes. The experiences that I have gained is diversified across all court areas. I would be able to take on any judicial assignment within County Court. In addition to my legal skills, I would bring strong organizational and time management skills to the handling of court calendars and the expeditious resolution of issues. My ability to work with many different people from all walks of life and from all professions would be a great asset. I have a deep sense of respect for people and always work to achieve positive outcomes. My commitment towards public service work would serve me well, as I believe the foundation for a good judge is one who would ensure that all litigants are treated fairly, with respect, patience and with a calm judicial temperment.

51. Explain the particular potential contribution you believe your selection would bring to this position.

I would be hardworking, always maintaining the highest of ethical standards, and dedicated to being a really good judge who shows respect for parties and lawyers at all times. My aspirational goal of becoming a judge has always come from my passion for public service work. I am committed to serving others to the [illegible] s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. [illegible] model in my community. My message of diversity and inclusion during my year as President was extremely well received by the Bar. I have grown tremendously through these experiences and through the hard work and perseverance of growing up poor with a single mother and six siblings in Puerto Rico and New York. These experiences are what makes me the woman that I am and the perspective that I can bring to enrich the Bench.

52. If you have previously submitted a questionnaire or application to this or any other judicial nominating commission, please give the name of the commission and the approximate date of submission.

While it is difficult to pull this information together because I have been applying for judgeships for many years, I will say that out of the approximately nine times that I have applied, my name has been submitted to the Governor on three occassions.

53. Give any other information you feel would be helpful to the Commission in evaluating your application.

One of the impediments that I have faced in my previous applications has been the perceived lack of trial work or real legal work performed in my position. I want to ensure the Commission that if I doubted my abilities to do the work of a County Court Judge, I would not be pursuing this as an aspirational long time goal for myself. In my role as s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. I review and approve all pleadings to be filed on behalf of the office. I assist in the preparation of orders not only on the ones to be reviewed for the Clerk but for the template orders used by the judges of our circuit. I make the final determinations as to the proper course of action to proceed in all litigation strategies. This work requires comprehensive knowledge of the law and the rules of procedures for both circuit and county court matters. I review and provide input to the Chief Judge on Administrative Orders prior to their finalization. I prepare employees for trial testimony when they are subpeoned for court and attend with them if necessary. Every inquiry from lawyers, judges, or members of the public which involves a legal issue is handled first by me. The issues are wide ranging which requires not only knowledge of the law but the interpretation and application of the law. In an office as big as the Clerk which is comprised of over 500 employees who are working in the areas of Criminal, Civil, Probate, and Traffic, the number of issues that I resolve on a daily basis is tremendous. Problem resolution of legal issues consumes almost the entirety of my day. There is no doubt that the job that I perform now is broader and bigger than having to specialize in one court area as a judge. With regard to trial work, for example, on the civil side of County Court last year there were fewer than 10 jury trials combined for all County Civil Judges. While trial work is essential on the County Criminal side, the real test is on how effectively one can manage a calendar. As far as trial work, I have conducted 12 person jury trials in New Jersey. While that experience was some time ago, trial practice has not changed. Trials are still handled the very same way and I can jump right back into trial work without hesistation. I am equipped to be an excellent judge. I am well respected by lawyers and judges for the work that I have done in this circuit and for my professionalism. I have a strong work ethic and I am a person of great integrity. I ensure that all 500 employees of the office are also well versed in ethics and I hold myself to the highest standard. One of the questions posed to me by a Commission member was "what have I done to prepare myself to be a judge" . My answer to that is that I have

been preparing for this for the last 27 years of work with the Clerk and my 6 years of prior trial experience. I have never left the law, I am at the very heart of it. I give back to my community through my pro bono work and I am held in high regard by my fellow peers in the profession. I am a leader within the Bar Association and a mentor to many. I am hopeful that this Commission will give me an opportunity to prove myself as a good judge for this circuit. I am confident in what I bring to the Bench and I am hopeful that the Commission will feel that sense of confidence in me as well.

REFERENCES:

54. List the names, addresses and telephone numbers of ten persons who are in a position to comment on your qualifications for judicial position and of whom inquiry may be made by the Commission.

Please see attached list of references.

CERTIFICATE

I have read the foregoing questions carefully and have answered them truthfully, fully and completely. I hereby waive notice by and authorize The Florida Bar or any of its committees, educational and other institutions, the Judicial Qualifications Commission, the Florida Board of Bar Examiners or any judicial or professional disciplinary or supervisory body or commission, any references furnished by me, employers, business and professional associates, all governmental agencies and instrumentalities and all consumer and credit reporting agencies to release to the respective Judicial Nominating Commission and Office of the Governor any information, files, records or credit reports requested by the commission in connection with any consideration of me as possible nominee for appointment to judicial office. Information relating to any Florida Bar disciplinary proceedings is to be made available in accordance with Rule 3-7.1(l), Rules Regulating The Florida Bar. I recognize and agree that, pursuant to the Florida Constitution and the Uniform Rules of this commission, the contents of this questionnaire and other information received from or concerning me, and all interviews and proceedings of the commission, except for deliberations by the commission, shall be open to the public.

Further, I stipulate I have read, and understand the requirements of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct.

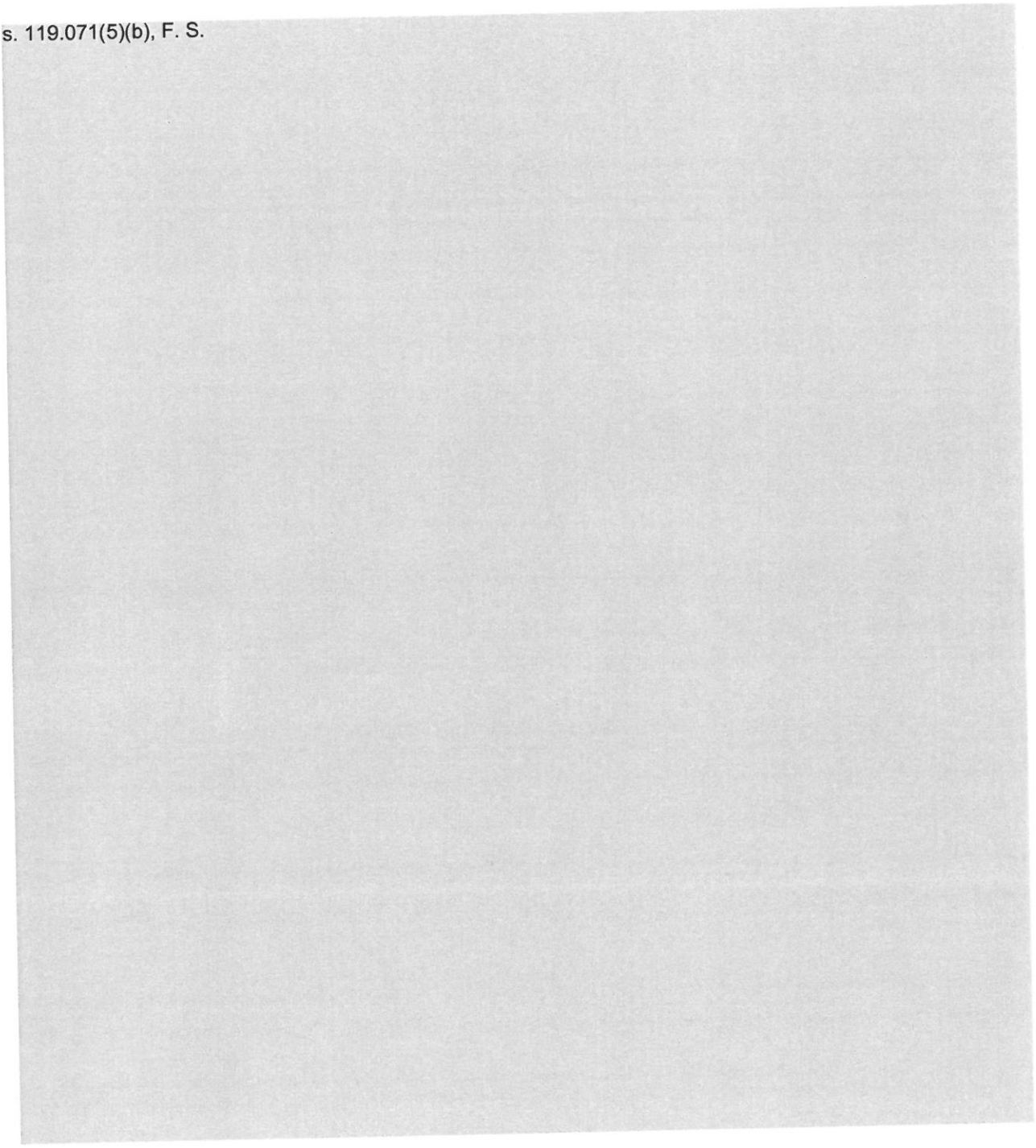
Dated this 31 day of March, 2015.

Myriam Irizarry
Printed Name

Myriam Irizarry
Signature

(Pursuant to Section 119.071(4)(d)(1), F.S.), . . . *The home addresses and telephone numbers of justices of the Supreme Court, district court of appeal judges, circuit court judges, and county court judges; the home addresses, telephone numbers, and places of employment of the spouses and children of justices and judges; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of justices and judges are exempt from the provisions of subsection (1), dealing with public records.*

s. 119.071(5)(b), F. S.



s. 119.071(5)(b), F. S.

s. 119.071(5)(b), F. S.

JUDICIAL APPLICATION DATA RECORD

The judicial application shall include a separate page asking applicants to identify their race, ethnicity and gender. Completion of this page shall be optional, and the page shall include an explanation that the information is requested for data collection purposes in order to assess and promote diversity in the judiciary. The chair of the Commission shall forward all such completed pages, along with the names of the nominees to the JNC Coordinator in the Governor's Office (pursuant to JNC Uniform Rule of Procedure).

(Please Type or Print)

Date: March 31, 2015

JNC Submitting To: Sixth Judicial Circuit

Name (please print): Myriam Irizarry

Current Occupation: s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Telephone Number: s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S. Attorney No.: 0044814

Gender (check one): ☐ Male ☒ Female

Ethnic Origin (check one):
- ☐ White, non Hispanic
- ☒ Hispanic
- ☐ Black
- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander

County of Residence: s. 119.071(4)(d) F.S.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

DISCLOSURE PURSUANT TO THE
FAIR CREDIT REPORTING ACT (FCRA)

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) may obtain one or more consumer reports, including but not limited to credit reports, about you, for employment purposes as defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act, including for determinations related to initial employment, reassignment, promotion, or other employment-related actions.

CONSUMER'S AUTHORIZATION FOR FDLE
TO OBTAIN CONSUMER REPORT(S)

I have read and understand the above Disclosure. I authorize the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to obtain one or more consumer reports on me, for employment purposes, as described in the above Disclosure.

Printed Name of Applicant: Myriam Irizarry

Signature of Applicant: Myriam Irizarry

Date: March 31, 2015

References

REFERENCES

Honorable Chief Judge J. Thomas McGrady
Sixth Judicial Circuit
14250 49th Street North
Clearwater, Florida 33762
(727) 464-7457

Honorable Judge Nelly N. Khouzamn
Second District Court of Appeals
105 E. Memorial Blvd.
Lakeland, Florida 33801
(863) 499-2290

Honorable Ken Burke
Clerk of Circuit Court & Comptroller
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Mount Carmel Baptist Church
1012 Pennsylvania Avenue
Clearwater, Florida 33755
(727) 446-6137

Writing Sample

Appelle's Statement of Case

Appellant, Elizabeth Hentrich, seeks to have the discipline issued on June 22, 2012 rescinded. Appellant was issued a pre-disciplinary hearing notice on May 31, 2012. The notice cited rule violations indicating infractions of Personnel Rule XXIV, Paragraph J, (38), i.e. that the employee is offensive in her conduct; antagonistic toward supervisors, fellow employees, or the public, or whose conduct interferes with the proper cooperation of employees or impairs the efficiency of county service. The summary of the facts leading to such actions contained infractions of said rule on January 20, 2012, March 30, 2012, April 16, 2012, April 24, 2012 and May 17, 2012.

A hearing on these violations was conducted on June 18, 2012. Based upon the information provided by Appellant at the hearing, a letter was hand-delivered to Appellant signed by Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, imposing a one-day suspension. The suspension date would be determined by the management of the Clerk's Records and Information department in accordance with the operational needs of the department.

Appellant appealed the suspension to the Informal Grievance Panel. A hearing was held on September 5, 2012. The Informal Grievance Panel upheld the suspension. Appellant herein appeals the Panel's findings.

Appellee provided testimony at the Informal Grievance hearing through Appellant's Assistant Manager, Sandy Tuller. Tuller's testimony included the counseling sessions which had been held repeatedly with Appellant relative to her inappropriate behavior towards coworkers and in the presence of customers.

Such conduct occurred on each of the dates specified above. Appellant could not provide testimony or evidence that indicated that such behavior did not occur. Appellee also provided the members of the Informal Grievance Panel with Appellant's history of prior discipline with the Clerk's office which includes the following:

April 9, 2002: Appellant received a written reminder for Substandard Quality of Work and Excessive Tardiness.

August 23, 2002: Pre-termination hearing for violations of Rule 24(J) Substandard Quality and Quantity of Work resulting in a demotion and transfer from a Records Specialist at the Criminal Justice Center to a Records Clerk at the Clerk's Records and Information Center where Appellant is presently assigned.

March 16, 2005: Appellant received an oral reminder for Excessive Tardiness.

August 19, 2009: Pre-disciplinary hearing for violations of Rule 24(J) Substandard Quality and Quantity of Work resulting in a written reminder.

May 31, 2012: Pre-disciplinary hearing for violation of Rule 24(J) Offensive Conduct resulting in a one-day suspension.

The sole issue for the Personnel Board is whether the decision by the Informal Grievance Panel upholding management's imposition of a one-day suspension should be affirmed.

Based upon the above referenced history of discipline, Appelle's one-day suspension of the Appellant is not only appropriate, but more than gracious and

lenient. Appellant could have well been terminated for the continued pattern of discipline in her records.

Appellee seeks to have the Informal Grievance Panel's decision upholding the one-day suspension affirmed by the Personnel Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Mryiam Irizarry
Chief Deputy Director/General Counsel
For Appellee, Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller

RESUME AND BIO

MYRIAM IRIZARRY, ESQ.

Myriam Irizarry received her Juris Doctorate degree from Rutgers-Newark School of Law in 1980 and her Bachelor of Arts degree from Rutgers College in New Jersey in 1977. She graduated from New Brunswick High School in 1973.

Myriam is a licensed member of both the Florida and New Jersey State Bars. Myriam was admitted to practice in the United States Supreme Court in 2006. Prior to moving to Florida, Myriam established a private practice in New Brunswick. Previously she served as an Assistant Deputy Public Defender for the Middlesex County Public Defender's Office. Upon graduating from law school she served as a Staff Attorney for the Middlesex County Legal Services Corporation. Myriam was an Adjunct Instructor for Rutgers University where she taught law-related undergraduate level courses and is currently serving as an Adjunct Instructor for the St. Petersburg College.

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Myriam was the recipient of the 2012 Florida Bar's President Pro Bono Award for the Sixth Judicial Circuit for her active participation in legal self-help related activities in the community. She also received the Clearwater Bar's Ralph Richard Award for leadership and support to the Bar and the community in 2012. In that same year she received the Hispanic Leadership award from the Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc. for her work with the Hispanic community. In May 2013 she received the Clearwater Bar President's Award, the Mount Carmel Law Day Award and in June 2013 will be inducted into the New Brunswick High School Hall of Fame with a Distinguished Alumni Award.

RESUME

Myriam Irizarry, Esq.

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

EDUCATION:

Juris Doctorate Newark, New Jersey	Rutgers-Newark School of Law, 1980
Bachelor of Arts New Brunswick, New Jersey	Rutgers College, Rutgers University, 1977

BAR ADMISSIONS:

Florida Bar	March, 1995
New Jersey Bar	June, 1981
United States Supreme Court	May, 2006

LEADERSHIP ROLES:

President-Clearwater Bar Association	2013 – 2014
President-Hispanic Outreach Center	2009 - 2012

EMPLOYMENT:

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

1989 - 2003	**Assistant Director, Court Services Division, Clerk of Court, Pinellas County, Florida** Senior management position involving the overall directing of court departments within the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court. Position involved legal research, organizational planning, policy development, budgetary compliance, development and implementation of strategic technology initiatives, training program development and the management of a large number of employees.

1988 - 1989	**Trainer/Coordinator, Court Services Division, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Pinellas County, Florida** Development and delivery of training programs to Clerk's employees in all aspects of their performance of court related functions.
1983 - 1985	**Partner, Rivera and Rodriguez, Attorneys-At-Law, New Brunswick, New Jersey** Private practice of law involving Civil, Family, and Criminal matters.
1982 - 1983	**Assistant Deputy Public Defender, Office of the Public Defender, Middlessex County, New Brunswick, New Jersey** Representation of indigent clients charged with criminal offenses. Extensive caseload involving criminal defense trial work.
1980 – 1985	**Adjunct Instructor, Rutgers University New Brunswick, New Jersey** Women and Latin American Studies Departments.
2000 – 2013	**Adjunct Instructor St. Petersburg College** Taught in the Para-Legal Studies Department.
1981 – 1982	**Attorney Office Administrator, Essex-Newark Legal Services Corporation, Newark, New Jersey** Administered a clinical law school program at Seton Hall Law School in conjunction with the Legal Services Corporation.
1979 – 1981	**Staff Attorney, Middlesex County Legal Services Corporation, New Brunswick, New Jersey** Representation of indigent clients in civil cases.

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

AWARDS:

Recipient, Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award for Sixth Judicial Circuit, January, 2012
Ralph Richards Award, May 2012 in recognition of Continued Leadership to the Clearwater Bar Association and Community
Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc. 2012 Leadership Award
Hall of Distinguished Alumni, New Brunswick Student Education Foundation of New Jersey, June, 2013
University of South Florida Status of Latino Student Award, October 4, 2012
Mount Carmel Baptist Church Pro Bono Award, May, 2013
President's Award, Intercultural Advocacy Institute of Hispanic Outreach Center, October, 2013
President's Award, Clearwater Bar Association, 2012 – 2013

References: Furnished upon request

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Tampa Bay Times

Clearwater Bar Association names first Hispanic woman as president

Times staff

Saturday, May 11, 2013 4:30am

CLEARWATER

Irizarry installed as bar association leader

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Also on Friday, Clearwater's Hispanic Outreach Center received the Bar Association's Liberty Bell Award, which goes to a nonlawyer.

At the ceremony on Friday, a painting by Irizarry's brother was displayed. It showed the modest home in Puerto Rico where their single mother raised seven children.

"It was so emotional and so moving," she said of the ceremony. She said she is excited, because "My theme for this year is a theme of inclusion, a theme of living the dream."

Times staff

Clearwater Bar Association names first Hispanic woman as president 05/11/13

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s. 119.071(4)
(d), F. S.

President's Message

by Myriam Irizarry

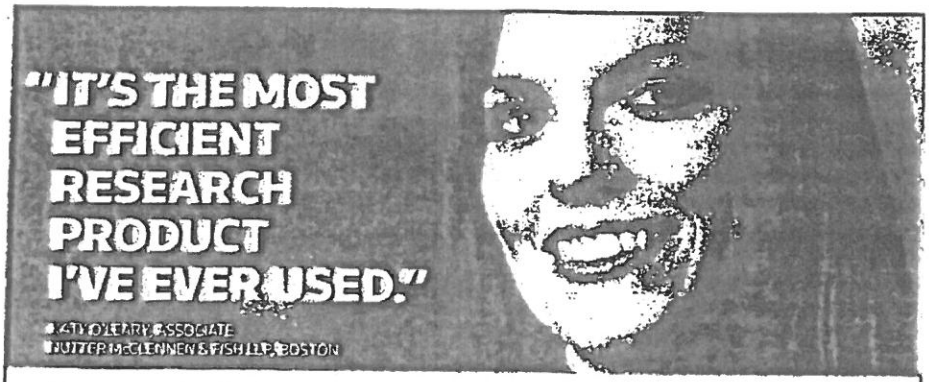
It is difficult to believe that my term as President of the Clearwater Bar Association will soon come to an end on May 16 when we transition to the new Board of Directors and your President-Elect, Josh Chilson, will step into the role of President. As I approach this bittersweet ending to my presidency, it is appropriate to look back at our year in review. It seems like only yesterday that I stood before you at the Law Day Luncheon last May and shared with you the journey of my humble place of birth in Puerto Rico, through the tenement slums of New York City, and to be finally blessed with the opportunity to go to college and law school. What an honor and a privilege it has been to now have the good fortune of serving as your president. I feel as humbled by this experience today as I did that day last year when I stood before you at my installation.

During my remarks that day, I shared with you a vision of what I would like to accomplish during my year. I spoke about the wonderful board that spent an entire day to lay out a vision for the Clearwater Bar that would reach far beyond my presidency. Among some of the highlights were to increase our membership, strengthen Lawyer Referral Service, sustain good CLE programming, find a new home for our CBA offices, and build on the themes of diversity, inclusion and professionalism.

Individual board members took on the leadership of each of these areas. In the area of increased membership, the membership committee was extremely active. They led the effort to have a recruitment luncheon which was very well attended and yielded good results with many who attended, becoming new members of CBA. Another initiative of this committee was to begin sending personal welcome notes written by board members to those newly joining in an effort to connect up with new members at future events and make them feel welcome. Such an event was in fact held at the Meet & Greet where many of the new members attended and networked with board members and other lawyers.

In the area of diversity and inclusion, the February luncheon and symposium provided the framework for an open honest discussion on these critical topic areas. A panel consisting of attorneys from the African-American, Hispanic, Women and the Gay/Lesbian communities shared their personal journeys to becoming lawyers and active members of their respective bar associations. They discussed how they overcame challenges. Their success in becoming leaders in the legal profession is a testament to the wonderful progress made in our profession where one of the participants of the symposium put it so succinctly, quoting the book by author Verna Myers, *Diversity is Being Invited to the Party, Inclusion is Being Asked to Dance.*

see **President's Message** on page 5



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The *Res Ipsa Loquitur* supports participation of the membership in production of the publication. We encourage you to submit articles and letters. However, we reserve the right to edit any submission and to publish only those articles that we, in our sole discretion, deem appropriate.

NOTE: The comments, messages, statements and opinions, legal or otherwise, expressed in the articles herein are exclusively those of the author and shall not be considered to be those of the Clearwater Bar Association, its officers, directors, agents, this publication, its editors or staff. Additionally, the comments, statements and articles contained herein are general in nature and should not be relied upon as a basis for any legal opinion, action or conclusion on the part of the reader with respect to any particular set of facts or circumstances.

Tampa Bay Times

Clearwater Bar Association hands out awards at annual Law Day Luncheon

Diane Steinle, North Pinellas Editor

Friday, May 4, 2012 7:14pm

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Irizarry was named this year's recipient of the Ralph Richards Award in recognition of her work on behalf of indigent clients. A bilingual lawyer who provides legal counsel to the Spanish-speaking community of Pinellas, Irizarry also does pro bono work through the Clearwater Bar, Gulf Coast Legal Services, Stetson University and the Intercultural Advocacy Institute. She also mentors high school and Stetson students.

The award she received is named for the late Ralph Richards, a lawyer who devoted much of his time to community causes and serving the needy.

Approximately 200 people attended Friday's luncheon at the Safety Harbor Resort & Spa for the awards presentation and annual meeting of the Bar.

The Allen Moore Gold Badge award, which recognizes an outstanding law enforcement officer in North Pinellas, went to Deputy Timothy Myers, who has worked for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office since 1999. Since 2007, Myers has been the department's point person on homelessness, helping place people in appropriate shelters, coordinating with the school system when homeless children are identified, and working as the sheriff's liaison to Pinellas Hope, a shelter facility operated by Catholic Charities.

In a departure from tradition, the Bar Association's John U. Bird Distinguished Jurist Award was given to two judges this year: W. Douglas Baird and David A. Demers.

Baird had a private law practice in St. Petersburg for 18 years, then was appointed a judge for Pinellas County Court and later Pinellas County Circuit Court. He has been a Florida Supreme Court mentor for new judges and has been administrator for Pinellas civil and criminal courts. He plans to retire this year.

Demers has been a county and circuit court judge for 31 years and also served as chief judge. In addition to authoring articles on criminal law, Demers is a past president of the Florida Conference of County Court Judges and has been associate dean of the Florida Judicial College. He also plans to retire this year.

Special recognition for "extraordinary effort and outstanding service" to the community and the Bar was given to Leon Russell, former director of the county Office of Human Rights. Russell served in that post for 35 years, overseeing human rights complaints and discrimination issues throughout that period. He also was a leader in the NAACP and numerous human rights organizations. He is retired from the county post.

The Bar Association's 2012 Liberty Bell Award went to Daniel Ruth, a columnist and editorial writer for the *Tampa Bay Times*. The award honors nonlawyers who promote a better understanding of the Constitution, Bill of Rights and the rule of law.

Also during the luncheon, Clearwater lawyer Bridget A. Heptner was inducted as president of the Clearwater Bar Association, which has about 900 members, and outgoing officers and members of the board of directors were recognized.

Diane Steinle can be reached at (727) 445-4184 or dsteinle@tampabay.com.

Clearwater Bar Association hands out awards at annual Law Day Luncheon 05/04/12

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The Florida Bar

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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850/561-5600
WWW.FLORIDABAR.ORG

December 1, 2011

Ms. Myriam Irizarry
s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Dear Ms. Irizarry:

I am pleased to advise you that you have been selected as the recipient of The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award for 2012 for the Sixth Judicial Circuit. The Board of Governors and the 90,000+ members of The Florida Bar salute you for your achievements in this regard.

The time and professional expertise you have contributed in making legal representation available to those otherwise unable to afford it serve as an example of our profession at its best. It is my sincere hope that others in the legal field will follow your outstanding example.

The Florida Bar and the Justices of the Supreme Court of Florida would like the opportunity to personally honor you at a ceremony to be held at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 26, 2012, at the Supreme Court Building in Tallahassee. A reception will be held in the rotunda immediately following the ceremony. You are welcome to bring your family and associates.

The event coordinator, Mr. Dorohn A. Frazier, will be in touch with you in the near future to provide you with specifics on lodging, parking and the ceremony itself.

I hope you will be able to attend on January 26, so that I will have the opportunity to congratulate you in person. I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Sincerely,

Scott G. Hawkins

cc: Mr. John F. Harkness, Jr.
Ms. Gwynne A. Young

Extra

Email: employee.communications@pinellascounty.org
Employee Communications: 464-3836

2ND Quarter 2012 Vol. 8 No. 2

Myriam Irizarry Recognized by Florida Bar for Pro Bono Service

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

The awards recognize pro bono service to one lawyer in each of Florida's 20 judicial circuits and one Florida Bar member practicing outside the state of Florida. Myriam was recognized as the Sixth Judicial Circuit's recipient.

Pro bono service is a priority for Myriam. "I think of pro bono service as my way of giving back to the community. I felt honored and humbled to be among fellow lawyers who across the state are helping so many people gain meaningful access to the legal system. I am fortunate to work with a Clerk like Ken Burke who supports me. Ken was right there with my big family at the Supreme Court."

In the Supreme Court's write up of the ceremony, a Pro Bono

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Coordinator who regularly works with Myriam is quoted as saying "She is always there when I need her. ... She is good with people from all walks of life. And she listens, understands and is empathetic."

Because Myriam is bi-lingual, she is able to provide legal counsel to the Spanish-speaking community in Pinellas County. She volunteers at the Hispanic Outreach Center conducting workshops on such topics as tenant rights, landlord obligations and family matters. She also provides legal assistance at their free legal workshops and is also the Past President of the Center's Inter Cultural Advocacy Institute.

In addition, Myriam mentors law students from Stetson University College of Law and through the Clearwater Bar Association's Student Legal Intern Program. She is President-Elect of the Clearwater Bar Association and has served as Director of the board for many years where she chairs the Diversity Committee. She is also on the Pro Bono Committee of the Sixth Judicial Circuit which covers Pasco and Pinellas counties.

In private practice she handled cases involving civil, family, landlord/tenant, and more through a legal aid program. Currently, she is very involved in many organizations serving the disadvantaged.

Myriam received her Juris Doctor degree from Rutgers-Newark School of Law in New Jersey.

Myriam Irizarry

6th Circuit

Palm Harbor

s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Pro bono service is a priority for Irizarry. When in private practice, she handled cases involving civil, family, landlord/tenant, etc. through a legal aid program. Currently she works with many organizations serving the poor including: Gulfcoast Legal Services, Clearwater Bar Association, Stetson University College of Law, InterCultural Advocacy Institute, and the Clerk of the Court. A Pro Bono coordinator who regularly works with Irizarry shares that "she is always there when I need her. That includes volunteering at the night time free legal workshops offered throughout the community or being a presenter at training for attorneys, willing to take on pro bono cases. She is good with people from all walks of life. And she listens, understands and is empathetic."

Because Irizarry is bi-lingual, she is able to provide legal counsel to the Spanish-speaking community in Pinellas County. She can be found at the Hispanic Outreach Center conducting workshops on such topics as tenant rights, landlord obligations and family matters.

The Clerk of the Court has also benefited from Irizarry's charitable efforts. At the Community Forum about Child Support Issues, a panel of experts provided information and volunteer attorneys answered questions for clients, and ultimately referred them to legal aid providers. She contributed to this project. At the Clerk of Court Self Help Center, she provided oversight to the staff, which in turn provides affordable access to legal services to pro se clients. With the Clearwater Bar Association's Student Legal Intern Program, she offered high school students six weeks with her as mentor, to learn about the legal system and work in a professional office. She also mentors students at Stetson University College of Law. Irizarry has donated an estimate of 250 hours per year during the last 10 years to pro bono service.

Irizarry received her Juris Doctor degree from Rutgers-Newark School of Law. Her Bachelor of Arts degree is from Rutgers College, Rutgers University.

Vote
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Deborah Clark
Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections

May 22, 2013

Myriam Irizarry
s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Dear Myriam:

Congratulations on your installation as President of the Clearwater Bar Association. Your willingness to serve makes you the perfect choice to lead this respected organization, which is recognized for its dedication to providing pro bono services in the community.

The *Tampa Bay Times* article about the ceremony indicated that your theme for this year will be a theme of inclusion and living the dream. You have always personified these ideals, and I know you will carry them throughout your tenure as president of the association.

Best regards,

Deborah Clark
Supervisor of Elections

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LexSB@aol.com
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727.725.4938 (fax)

May 10, 2013

Myriam Irizarry, Esquire
s. 119.071(4)(d), F. S.

Re: Clearwater Bar Association

Dear Myriam:

Congratulations on your installation as president of the Clearwater Bar Association. The Law Day Luncheon was excellent and I was inspired by your remarks and your goals of inclusion for the Clearwater Bar Association. Your goals during your term as president of the Clearwater Bar Association are a great match with "Inclusion: The Path to Unity" - the theme of this year's Convention of The Florida Bar.

Based upon your past service to the Clearwater Bar Association, I know you will be an excellent president. As a member of The Florida Bar Board of Governors, I look forward to working with you during your term as president.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew B. Sasso

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SILHOUETTES

BY TIFFANY RAZZANO

Leaning against a wall in Myriam Irizarry's office at the Pinellas County Courthouse is a blown-up photograph of a ramshackle, one-bedroom home. The home has just a dirt floor, she said, and its worn, wooden frame is unsteady, panels falling off to expose to the elements the inside of the small building.

This is where Irizarry grew up in Puerto Rico with her six siblings and single mother.

Today, Irizarry, chief deputy and general counsel to Ken Burke, clerk of the Circuit Court for Pinellas County, has come a long way from her humble upbringing. That photograph means as much to her as any of the awards and accolades she's received – and she's received many for her work as a community leader, including the Florida Bar's President's Pro Bono Service Award for 2012. The photo represents where she came from, and the hard work it took for her to get where she is now.

More importantly, whenever she speaks at different functions, the most recent of which was at the University of South Florida's Hispanic Heritage Celebration Kickoff event in October, she uses this image to inspire others and spread a message of hope.

"Growing up in that small part of the world to now serving as president of the Clearwater Bar [Association], it's just been an amazing, amazing journey," said Irizarry, who is in the middle of her one-year term as the organization's leader. "I've been able to use that story as an inspirational tale."

Her mother eventually moved Irizarry and her siblings to the United States, but even then "we were very poor," she said, "living in the tenement slums of New York City."

But her mother was intent on her children achieving great things.

"Mom had this dream of me being a lawyer," Irizarry said. "All I could say was, 'Mom, how is this ever going to be possible?' ... My mom, she was my biggest cheerleader. She didn't know where that money was going to come from or how this would happen. But by the grace of God, I was able to do it."

As a teen, Irizarry moved with her family to New Brunswick, N.J. This is where she discovered Upward Bound, a program designed to help poor high school students get on a college track. The program helped her fill out her financial-aid paperwork and find a way to afford college.

She graduated with her bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in Newark, N.J., in 1977. Thanks to the Council on Legal Education Opportunity program, a non-profit entity of the American Bar Association that helps minority students get into law school, Irizarry attended Rutgers School of Law and graduated in 1980, making her and her mother's dreams come true. "My mom was so excited," she said. "When I graduated, that was her moment. She was like, 'Oh my God, we did it,' and I was like, 'I can't believe we did this.'"

Irizarry said she "always had a heart for public-interest work." Her early interest in law stemmed from her desire to give back to the community. "Public-service work has always been a calling," she said. "My mom saw that in me."

She added, "Growing up poor and getting help from a lot of people along the way, it instilled a deep-seated public service thing in me. I felt like I was able to overcome obstacles with the help of programs, student aid and a lot of good people, mentors and teachers along the way. So when I went to law school, I wanted to come back and help people in the community."

This led to her first job following law school, a position with a legal-aid program in New Jersey. Through this program she assisted those who couldn't afford legal representation on their own. She then went on to work for the New Jersey Public Defender's Office. "It didn't pay very much, but I could help people right away," she said. She typically worked on cases involving tenants' rights and family issues.

In 1985, Irizarry and her husband, Jerry, moved to Tampa Bay. They followed on the heels of her mother and siblings, who had moved to the area one by one in previous years. "My family is a big part of my life," she said. "We're so close. We love each other dearly. So when one moves, everyone else follows."

Irizarry loved the world of academia, and had even taught part-time at Rutgers after graduating from law school. So a couple of years after moving to Pinellas County, she was excited to find an employment ad placed by the clerk's office. They were seeking someone to teach law and procedure to court clerks. This year she celebrates 25 years working for the clerk's office. "I came in to [teach] at the clerk's office and I've stayed ever since," she said. As the office's chief deputy and general counsel, Irizarry oversees around 400 employees in all areas of the court's departments.

Even with all of this responsibility, she's still able to give back to the community and pro bono service remains a priority for her. "There have been a lot of opportunities to really be able to help people," she said. Though the clerk's office can't dole out legal advice, it fields calls from citizens regarding myriad issues, from domestic-violence incidents to questions from parents regarding their children in the juvenile-detention system. And Irizarry, along with Burke, was key to creating the county's Self Help Center, which offers affordable legal assistance on issues such as housing, family matters and small claims at $1 a minute.

"Through this process we can help people navigate the system," she said. "We can help effectuate change by directing people and creating such wonderful programs like the Self Help Center."

Irizarry has also long been active with the Clearwater Bar, which has a membership of around 750 lawyers, serving on its board and as chair of its Diversity Committee, she took on the role of president this year.

She also volunteers at the Hispanic Outreach Center in Clearwater, and serves on the center's Intercultural Advocacy Institute, which oversees the organization. The center is a social-service agency that provides a variety of services to the Hispanic community in upper-Pinellas County. The center is a collaborative partnership between the City of Clearwater, the Clearwater Police Department and the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners, making it a truly unique organization, she said.

Services offered include everything from parenting workshops to victim advocacy to legal assistance. She conducts workshops on issues such as tenant rights and family matters. "Things like that to just educate the public," she said.

Irizarry is often able to bring together her work with the center, the clerk's office and the Clearwater Bar. She helps organize outreach clinics through the center and the Clearwater Bar, bringing lawyers to various churches throughout the community. And the clerk's office partners with the Clearwater Bar on a Student Legal Internship Program for underprivileged high-school students interested in a career in law.

She's also incredibly active in her church, St. Ignatius of Antioch Catholic Church, where she serves as a Eucharistic minister.

This past year, Irizarry has received much recognition for her work as a community leader. Since winning the Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award, recognized as the Sixth Judicial Circuit's recipient in January 2012, Irizarry has received a flurry of honors: the Clearwater Bar's Ralph Richards Award, the Intercultural Advocacy Institute's President's Award, the Tampa Hispanic Heritage Leadership Award.

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Daycare Dangers

By Chad LoCicero

Almost 13 million children under the age of six who spend some or all of their day in preschool/day care. If your child is one, do you know everything you should about your facility's safety standards? I cannot stress enough the importance of sending your child to a licensed child care facility. The licensing of day care facilities is extremely important because the license ensures proper safety oversight by the state. It also ensures that the staff has the state-mandated training and experience to care for infants, toddlers, preschool- and school-age children. If you take your children or grandchildren to a day care or even family day care center, please take the time to check on important safety issues.

There are many hidden day care dangers. Even in the best day care centers, there are health and safety violations that can put your child at risk for injury or even death. Become aware and familiar with common day care dangers and take precautions to keep your child safe.

For example, when searching for a child care facility, be aware of the environment inside and outside of the center. Watch how providers interact with the children. Is there one-on-one time and conversation? Do the caregivers speak to the children in cheerful, patient tones? Listen to the children. Do they sound happy and cheerful? Too much noise may mean lack of control; too little may mean lack of activity. Before enrolling your child, interview the director of the center. Ask if any of the staff members are trained in child development. Inquire about the frequency of staff turnover. Also, if you are able, talk to parents that are dropping off or picking up their children about their thoughts on the center.

Some common day care dangers are: Sudden Infant Death (SIDS), choking, falling, illness and playground maintenance/supervision. Reducing SIDS can be achieved by placing a baby on his/her back to sleep and not placing items such as blankets or stuffed animals in the crib with the baby. Choking is another serious danger for children attending day care centers. Some centers may not have a policy of cutting food into small pieces. Many child care workers do not know how to perform the Heimlich maneuver, which is a life-saving procedure for choking victims. Illness is also a danger for babies and young children attending day care. Sick children often attend day care and spread their infections to other children and staff.

Additionally, children are in danger of contracting diseases at day care due to poor sanitation, improper hand washing or lack of hand washing by staff and children. Falling can occur inside the day care if babies on changing tables or in high chairs are not supervised properly. Young children are also in danger of falling from playground equipment. In fact, falls from outdoor gyms are the most common way that children are injured at day care. This is often because of lack of supervision in the play areas and overcrowding on playground equipment.

The key to improving safety at all child care centers is to improve awareness from parents to staff and management. Parents would be wise to stay atop of common day care dangers and do everything in their power to protect their children. Keeping children safe from dangers of day care should be a top priority for families and child care centers.

Chad LoCicero has been the proprietor of a licensed child care center for 14 years. He has cared for thousands of children in that span of time.

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