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Judge Elizabeth Bozzuto Talks Family Court, Her Heroes and Transitioning to a New Role

In a wide-ranging interview, Judge Elizabeth Bozzuto spoke about her passion for family court, the parents and children she met there over the years and of her love and admiration for her parents.

By Robert Storace | August 30, 2018

Editor's note: *This profile of Judge Elizabeth Bozzuto is the seventh in a series of interviews with judges and recently retired jurists.*

As she prepares to put away her black robe and leave the Hartford Judicial District Courthouse Family Division on Washington Street for the last time for her short walk to her new digs on Capitol Avenue, [Elizabeth Bozzuto](#)

(https://ballotpedia.org/Elizabeth_A._Bozzuto) said it's the parents and the children—especially the children—that she'll miss the most.



Judge Elizabeth Bozzuto. Courtesy photo

Bozzuto was a successful partner at Waterbury's Secor, Cassidy & McPartland (<https://www.ctlawyers.com/>) before she was appointed to the bench in 2000 by then-Gov. John Rowland. For 18 years she worked in many jurisdictions in the state from courthouses in Bridgeport, Litchfield, Waterbury, Danbury, Bristol and Hartford. But 15 of those, including the past five years as chief administrative judge for the family division, has seen Bozzuto preside over family court.

On Monday, the 55-year-old Watertown native will transition to deputy chief court administrator. She said she is eager to learn the ropes in her new job, which will entail working on the day-to-day operations of the state's judicial branch and liaising with Chief Court Administrator Judge Patrick Carroll III and Chief Justice Richard Robinson (<https://www.jud.ct.gov/external/supapp/justiceRobinson.htm>). But above all, Bozzuto is grateful for her past opportunities, and said it's the families that she saw in her courtroom that she'll always remember.

Known throughout the judicial district as patient and a good listener, Bozzuto has many unwavering supporters, including her predecessor, Judge Elliot Solomon. Also experienced in family law, Solomon said he is a big fan of Bozzuto's style and temperament.

"She is extremely fair, a great listener and not one to pre-judge anything," Solomon said Thursday. "Her objective, which she meets, is making people feel like they were heard when they leave the courthouse. If they feel like a judge listened to them and took into consideration everything they said, they'd certainly understand the process and have a greater respect for it."

In addition, Solomon said Bozzuto knows "it's never about her. When she was doing all of the family court initiatives that she did, the only question she had was, 'Does it make things better?'" And, when the project was completed, she always gave credit for it to everyone else, never herself."



Judge Elliot Solomon

One of those court initiatives and innovations included a focus on non-adversarial divorce.

“If you have two people and no kids to fight over and no money to fight over and all they want is a divorce, they can get through the system instantaneously now,” Solomon said. “Before, there was a long process, sometimes upwards of five months.”

‘We Are a Target’

Bozzuto told the Connecticut Law Tribune on Thursday that she did everything in her power to convince parents going through a divorce, nasty or otherwise, to spare the children from litigation. It is in everyone’s interest, especially the child’s, to make that a reality, she said.

“Most people represent themselves and they are in a very unfamiliar forum,” Bozzuto said. “It’s an uncomfortable place for them to be. It’s usually a divorce matter and they are sharing with you details of their lives. My goal is to steer the parents away from litigating any issues relevant to the children. I’ve been doing this a long time, and I cannot find one case where kids have benefited from having parents fighting over them and from spending a part of their childhood in a courtroom.”

The alternative, she said, is often not pretty.

“Otherwise, a complete stranger in a black robe will tell them what to do and no one benefits from that,” Bozzuto said. “The parents stand in the best position to make these decisions.”

And, Bozzuto said, it might be surprising for some people to realize that—in most cases—parents are able to avoid litigation. It is from those parents, Bozzuto said, that she finds inspiration and hope.

“I was inspired everyday by the courage and strength of two parents who put together a parenting plan for their kids, even though it’s gut-wrenching,” she said. “Every parent in those situations walk away with less time with their kids. But, the vast majority of parents put together that parenting plan. Those are the heroes we should be talking about. Family court is a hard place, but we have parents every day doing the right thing.”

Bozzuto is well aware that family court, for many judges, is the last place they want to be. While she enjoyed the interaction with the parents and working on solving problems in family court, she understands the reluctance on the part of some judges to want to work in that division.

“Many do not want to do family because family judges receive more scrutiny than other judges,” she emphasized. “That’s the real reason for the reluctance. ... We are a target.”

While much of her time was spent navigating other people’s family squabbles and divorces, Bozzuto said her heroes were her parents, who were married 65 years until the 2017 death of her father, Richard Bozzuto.

Her father, who went to law school for one year but did not complete it because of family obligations related to his wife and four children, was her hero.

“He was the most selfless man I’ve ever come across,” the judge said. “I do not recall ever being lectured by them [her father and mother, Pidge Bozzuto]. He was the first to say ‘I love you’ when you thought you might be disappointing him.”

A fan of the water, Elizabeth Bozzuto has her own boat and loves boating. She is also an avid skier and traveler. She graduated from Western New England University School of Law in 1988.

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