

**OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
SUPERVISING AN ELECTION
EPISODE 111
OCTOBER 12, 2020
HOSTED BY: DONALD A. MYERS, JR.**

(Music)

NARRATOR: Welcome to another episode of “Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom” in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

And now here’s your host, Chief Judge Don Myers.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: I’m here today with Orange County Supervisor of Elections Bill Cowles. First elected in 1996, Bill supervises the fifth largest county election office in the state. And for the past 24 almost 25 years now, he’s supervised and stewarded our community through scores of elections, and he was recently reelected to the position. With the 2020 Presidential Election mere weeks away, the community is in great hands to handle this election.

It’s great to have you here, Bill. Thanks for joining me.

BILL COWLES: My pleasure, Chief Judge.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, I am really excited to have this conversation as we come up on Election Day. We’re recording this just a couple of weeks in anticipation. You’re in your final countdown, getting ready.

And so let’s start off, if we could, just a little bit of background about you. Tell us about your education and how is it that you became our Supervisor of Elections?

BILL COWLES: Great question. I’m a native Floridian, born in Miami, Eagle Scout, and I decided to go to some small college here in Central Florida called Florida Technological University. It was way out on the east side of Orange County. And I graduated from FTU in 1976 and went to work for the Boy Scouts of America, and I worked for them for 13 years.

And as part of my job, you know, it was to recruit members to be on the Executive Board and to be chairs of events for our Boy Scout Counsel. And I happened to ask somebody if they knew the newly elected Mrs. Carter, and they said yes, and they invited Mrs. Carter to come

meet with me on the assignment. The interesting thing was I was speaking about the newly elected County Commissioner Vera Carter for County Commission District 1, but instead, standing in front of me, was the newly elected Supervisor of Elections Betty Carter.

And so I just went right ahead and recruited her to do it, she became a member of the board, and the next thing I know, she recruited me in 1989 to leave the profession with the Boy Scouts of America and come over and be the Chief -- her office, and I was her Chief Deputy for seven years until the -- 1996, when I ran for the job to replace her.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's incredible. So I think we all intuitively know what the elections office does here. But just give us the nutshell summary of what it is that you-all do.

BILL COWLES: Well, everybody kind of knows us, first, for voter registration. And that's the thing that happens year-round because of the fact you got new people registering to vote, you've got kids who are turning 16 who can pre-register and then vote at 18, you have people who move in, you got people who move out of our county, you got people who pass away that we have to remove, you've got people who become a convicted felon and then we have to remove them, and then when they get the right to restore, we remove [sic] them. So it's a live active file.

And currently we're at about 850,000 registered voters in Orange County. But with the recent book-closing deadline, the last day to register, we're in the midst of processing upwards to 25,000 applications. So if it hadn't been for the pandemic, we were predicting 900,000 registered voters in Orange County for this General Election, but we'll fall a little short of that.

We're also responsible for conducting elections, whether it be City elections, whether it be County elections, whether it be State elections, or whether it be the Federal elections. And so

we conduct those as they come up. I guess that's where the joke comes about supervisors of elections, that we only work two days every other year. But that is not true on that.

And so then the other part is voter education. And so we spend a lot of time working in the community with voter education, with a special emphasis on our efforts in the schools where we conduct the Student Government elections every spring for the high schools. And while we're conducting that, we're also doing a voter registration drive for the students to register to vote.

And finally we have a Records Department, and we're the filers of financial disclosure forms and campaign treasurers' reports and all. So those are kind of the main areas between voter registration, elections, and voter education, and records.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So one of the significant issues that has made its way through our news cycles here over the course of the last, really, couple of years but very intensely over the last couple of months is election security and the issues that surround holding the election process.

And so what I'd like to do is just talk a little bit about the election process. And I want to start with some numbers. You gave us a number, you were at about 850,000 or so. You're still processing another 25,000 applications. That's going to put you at 800-and-roughly-75,000 registered voters in Orange County?

BILL COWLES: Sounds about right. All time high.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And our -- my crack research team tells me that in 2016, that number was like 775,000. So in the course of the last four years, another 100,000 registered voters.

BILL COWLES: That's right. And I just saw a report yesterday that says that we're averaging right now 900 new residents a day moving into the State of Florida. And then also you got to take into consideration the hurricane and the earthquake over in Puerto Rico, and the exodus over here, and most of them to Central Florida are factors that have driven our numbers up.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's just incredible. And it is funny that you brought up the joke, because now you've deprived me of the opportunity to take the punchline. But you -- it isn't a two-day-a-year job. I mean, there's so much more that goes on, and you've given us sort of some of the general categories.

But talk to us about the timeline to prepare for an election like this General Election that's coming up in November.

BILL COWLES: Well, you know, the -- for this election in November really started right after we got done doing those dreaded recounts from the 2018 General Election for Governor and U.S. Senator and Commissioner of Agriculture. So right then you're re-evaluating how you operated and how you're going to move forward.

And so one of the examples is, I told the County Commission that I needed to buy three more high-speed counters to help us sort ballots for the recount. But lo and behold, I really need the three machines right now because of the increase in the vote-by-mail. So, you know, it was just luck -- stroke of luck there that we got the County Commission to agree to that.

But, you know, we start with that. Then the other thing we have to monitor is, after every major election, the Florida Legislature comes in and makes changes to the Election Code, and so we then have to start adjusting those changes. And one of the changes that was put in in 2019, is

to have drop-boxes at all early voting sites for vote-by-mail voters. And so -- you know, so you have to plan for that.

Then along comes -- as you know as an elected official, we got budget time. And so here we go with building our budget. So the budget for this November election was built and submitted in early 2020 to the County for approval, because they are -- the County is my sole funding source for our operation. Except this year, of course, there's the CARES Act grant money that we were able to secure to assist us with the increase because of the pandemic.

And so, you know, you got to get your budget approved. And then one thing that's kind of interesting is this year you had the Presidential Preference and you had the Primary, but those two elections were in the previous fiscal year, because unlike the State fiscal year of July 1, County fiscal year is October 1. So I'm coming out of the Primary, and then I've got to close out my budget and start a new budget to do this election that will be within the first five weeks. And I'll probably spend 50 percent of my budget in that one period of time for next fiscal year.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So I'm a little nosy, so I have to ask the question. You mentioned three of these high-speed counting machines. Are those things expensive?

BILL COWLES: They cost upwards to about 350,000 each for us, and then there's the freight and then getting them set up and maintained.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Wow.

BILL COWLES: So that's a major investment by the Board to help us be ready for this election.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, that's incredible. But obviously one of the concerns we having coming into November 3rd is the ability to get results back in quickly. And so that sort of technology I'm sure is helpful to making sure that happens.

So let's talk through the voting process just a little bit. Folks have two general choices; they can mail in or they can vote in person, right?

BILL COWLES: Correct, that's it. We've got three ways -- we call it three ways because, as you say, you have early voting in person or you have the Election Day in person. So we always talk about the three ways to vote. And actually voting has already begun because the vote-by-mail ballots went out in the mail on September the 30th.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And do you keep track of those as they're received to have some sense of the volume?

BILL COWLES: We do. Right now the key number that we've been monitoring is the fact that we are now -- over 300,000 voters have requested a vote-by-mail ballot be returned to -- be mailed to them. And so it's over 25 percent of the voters in Orange County now have a vote-by-mail ballot in their possession. And it's still not too late to request the vote-by-mail because the state deadline is Saturday, October the 24th, at 5 o'clock. So it's still not too late to request one if you would like one.

So -- well, we are getting the ballots back, and we're getting them back in two major ways. Number one, people are driving down here to the Elections Office, and we've actually set up our drive-thru drop-off operation. And I know you visited recently and it was right in front of the building. But it got so heavy that we've now moved it across the street to where we were going to be during early voting, and we're doing it at the Orange County Work Release Center and we're using their driveways to do our drop-offs. A steady stream every day on that.

And then the other one is those who are actually putting it in the mail, and it's coming back through the mail. And at this point, I know that we've got to be somewhere over 15,000 are already back. But they're coming in every day in a truckload from the post office.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's incredible. What a great testament to the work that you've done to prepare the community, to have everybody ready. And it's obviously a very newsworthy and public election cycle, I think, that we're in this time around with the Presidential Election.

You mentioned drop-off boxes for those mail-in ballots. And tell us again, where are those drop-off boxes going to be located?

BILL COWLES: Okay. The key ones will be October 19th through November the 1st, which is when we will be having early voting, and they will be at our 20 early voting sites all across the county. And with early voting, you can go to any site you want, so if it's closer for home or if it's closer for work. And then the other part is, it's really called convenience voting because we're a service industry community, and we don't work a traditional 8:00 to 5:00, Monday through Friday, and so you go at your convenience.

So whatever -- if you're out shopping or whatever, you just drive up, don't have to get out of your car, because we need the parking spots for the in-person voters, and there will be a person there -- there will be an attendant there who will be wearing gloves, they will have a tray, they stick it out, you put your ballot on the tray, they verify that you signed it, they use their tongs to put it into the drop box that's sealed, and the staff will be going around each day to the sites and picking up and exchanging the tubs as they get full. And all the ballots come back to our office on that night to be protected.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And remind us, when is the deadline for somebody who has a mail-in ballot to have it in the mail postmarked or received?

BILL COWLES: Okay. The key things there is, the United States Postal Service says that First-Class Mail takes two to five days. So we are suggesting that everybody, if they're

going to put their ballot in the mail, do it at least seven days prior to the election, because we also have a Sunday in there and all. So seven days in advance to guarantee that you get your ballot back here.

The good news in Orange County is we pay for the postage on the return. That's not true in every county, but we do pay for the postage coming back. And the other thing that's important is that there is a tracking system on our website, and you can track on the website the date you requested your ballot, the date that it was mailed to you, the date that it was returned, and the status of your ballot on the return. If it says accepted, that means your ballot is going over to be processed.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's excellent. And you have a pretty sophisticated email notification system that tracks that as well.

BILL COWLES: We do. As long as you have an email address associated with your record, you'll get a receipt saying that your ballot has been received and being processed.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's excellent. And what do I do if I'm a voter that's requested a mail-in ballot, I've got it in my possession but I decide, you know what, I really want to go vote in person either at early voting or on Election Day?

BILL COWLES: Yeah. You're more than welcome to go to the polling place or early voting site. If you have the ballot with you, you just give it to the poll workers, they will cancel it, and then they will give you a regular ballot to vote right there and put into the machine.

We hear a lot of times several different strategies. One is, a lot of people think of the vote-by-mail ballot as their sample ballot, and they have it also just in case. So particularly being located just south of Orlando Health Hospital, we hear a lot of times voters will come and say, oh, I got my vote-by-mail but, you know, the doctor said I'm doing good, I feel good

because I went to the doctor today, so I'm going to just come on in and vote in person. That's fine. Bring it -- you know, we cancel it so that they can vote as they please.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And what happens if I show up at in-person hearing [sic] and I've forgotten or lost my mail-in ballot?

BILL COWLES: They still will have you -- when you check in, you'll sign an affidavit saying that you have not previously voted and that you didn't have the ballot with you, and that will be your cancellation of that vote-by-mail request, and then you get your ballot and vote in person.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Great. Now, we know in the national conversation right now that there's a lot of talk about voter fraud, about an election process and system that's under attack from foreign powers. And then I read a statistic that in Orange County about 2.3 percent of our ballots are rejected for a variety of reasons. 2.3 percent; that seems like a pretty substantial number.

BILL COWLES: It is. And it is kind of disappointing when you look at the new procedure that's in play that the Legislature put in after some court action, is that's what's called the cure process. So when your ballot comes in, we capture the -- a picture of the signature on the envelope. We have teams that review and match -- to try to match the signature to the voter's record. Because when you vote by mail, your signature is your ID. That's the only thing we have to compare to.

And so on that first blush, if we see that there's not a match -- and we know people have changed their signature because of identity theft or health issues, aging issues and all -- so there's a cure affidavit that is sent out to the voter, and the voter can fill out the cure affidavit, put a copy of their ID with the affidavit, and that affidavit then updates your record on your signature, the

signature on the cure affidavit then matches the one on the envelope and your ballot is now going to be counted.

So we've given every voter an opportunity to fix their signature or -- and the other side of it, and even the larger group is, it's amazing the number of voters who return their envelopes without signing them at all. And so they too have a chance to cure it by doing an affidavit. So every voter whose ballot is potentially on the rejection side has a chance to correct it and, because you can turn your ballot in up to Election Day, the Legislature has extended the deadline to Thursday at 5:00 p.m., after the election.

So what is most disturbing is the individuals had a second chance to fix their ballot and they don't take advantage of it. And at this point, maybe just a little shout-out or praise -- you know, the final determination of rejecting a vote-by-mail ballot is done by the County Canvassing Board. And so the Canvassing Board is of course made up of a county judge, an alternate county judge, a county commissioner, and in this case an alternate judge who is filling in because the alternate county commissioner withdrew, and myself. So the three, the judge, the commissioner and myself, are the primes, and we have to look at every one that is not a match and make that final determination. So sometimes where the staff may not have seen it as a match, we might see it as a match.

So shout-outs to your judiciary, to County Judge Jeanette Bigney, to County Judge Steve Jewett and County Judge Tina Caraballo.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, we appreciate that. I know how hard they work. Because during the Canvassing meetings, which sometimes occur for days following an election when there are recounts and other issues --

BILL COWLES: We don't mention that word.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Oh, sorry -- other issues to be resolved.

BILL COWLES: That's right.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: We know that they are there, not just during the workday, they're there well into the evenings and late nights to try to move the process along. And so we're grateful for their contributions as well.

BILL COWLES: And they're all veterans. They all -- they seek it out. I mean, they seek it out from me and they seek it out from you to continue to do it. And that really adds to the process.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, that's a testament to the quality of your organization and the good involvement that they have and the good work that gets done as a consequence of the Canvassing Board, so thank you for that.

Tell me, you know, I -- we -- I voted already. I received a mail-in ballot. I was concerned about what November 3rd might hold and my ability to get to the polling location. Is -- but I -- in reviewing my ballot, I know that there are things that have happened since the ballot was printed. And I know that because one of those is directly impacting us in the judiciary. We had a former colleague, now Justice, then Judge Jamie Grosshans, who had been elevated to the Fifth District Court of Appeal and who recently was selected by the Governor to serve on the United States Supreme Court -- excuse me, the Florida Supreme Court. I'm giving her a promotion right on the heels of her last one -- on the Florida Supreme Court. And yet she shows up on our ballot under the retention vote for District Court of Appeal Judges. So tell us about that.

BILL COWLES: Everything's about timing. And we have a schedule for when we have to have ballots in the mail 40 days before an election for the military, and between the 40th

and the 33rd day before the election for locals. So as soon as the August election is over with, we are laying out ballots, and we then get the certified list from the state.

So in her case, she was already up for retention because of her time on the Fifth DCA, and by the time all the court process and the appointment process happened, all the ballots around the state had already been printed. And so right now anybody after the initial mailing of our vote-by-mails have an insert that says, this is a notice to the voter that this retention question is no longer active. And we will be posting signs in all of the voting booths, both at early voting and on Election Day for the voters to be aware of it. And so while we couldn't change the programing on the machine, we'll have numbers but they do not apply to that contest.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Let's talk a little bit about the technology that you-all utilize for counting ballots. If you -- whether you go to a polling station or you receive a ballot in the mail, the ballots look the same, right?

BILL COWLES: They are all the same. They're all the same.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And what is the technology that's utilized to count those votes?

BILL COWLES: Well, at the early voting and at the polling place, they are stand-alone optical scan readers that when you put your ballot in it scans it and records your vote and then drops the ballot down in the tub. It records the votes on a thumb drive. And one of the security concerns that some people have is the fact that after the voting ends at the polling place on election night, we then take and close the machine and then we reopen it and we modem the results out of the machines to our office.

And so we first off have a printout from the machine at the polls, they modem, and the next day we compare the tapes to the modem to verify that they match. And then of course the

good news is we're all paper all the time in voting, and so we can always recreate an election with the paper. So that's the Election Day.

Early voting, same machines. The only difference is early voting, by law, ends on the Monday night before the election, so we are able to bring in the thumb drives and download the thumb drives to get the results off the machines used there.

And then when you vote by mail, we have these eight high-speed counters that we open up the ballots, lay them out flat, put them on there, and they count about 100-and-some ballots a minute for the early voting -- for the vote-by-mail process. And then, of course, that's all happening right here in our office, and we download from those machines nightly the totals and load them up into the results database that gets released after 7:00 p.m. election night.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So there is an important sanctity to that time, to that 7 o'clock p.m. on Election Day, about keeping all of those votes and those results confidential until that time. Why -- tell us about that. Why is that?

BILL COWLES: Well, again, all voting ceases at 7 o'clock. And you've got -- you know, it's hard for Florida is we've got two time zones, so the state doesn't recognize the results from the counties in the Eastern side until the Central time zone closes. But all voting ends at 7:00, and that's why a postmark on a vote-by-mail ballot does not count.

The other thing that will be very interesting about this election, based on things that people have heard and observed through the election process leading up to now, Florida law allows us to begin processing those vote-by-mail ballots as they come in. And so we're processing them all the way up to election night with the last ones the people that bring through the front door.

So then you have -- early voting is over with on the Sunday night before the election, so when we release our first set of results, you have 100 percent of early voting, you have about 95 to 97 percent of the vote-by-mail totals, and we're just waiting for those last ones that came in on -- and then, you know, we're putting out 60 percent or more of the vote totals right after 7 o'clock, and the patterns of the results are starting to be seen then. And then the 247 precincts modem in their results. So usually we're done by 10 o'clock at night with our first set of unofficial results. And the key thing is, in Florida, because we don't have that postmark, you know, we're pretty much done with processing ballots.

But other states have different rules. Like you can't -- in Pennsylvania, you cannot start counting vote-by-mail or absentee ballots until Election Day. And so with this increase, you're going to see states that don't allow early processing -- they're going to be the ones that we're going to be watching after midnight and maybe for days afterwards as they go through the process.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So that early processing really helps you to assure some timely results out of at least the vast majority of the ballots that have been cast.

BILL COWLES: Exactly.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Yeah, that makes great sense. So that's one of the differences between Florida and other states, I guess, is that counting process. Are there others that you think are going to be visible on election night or the following days?

BILL COWLES: I think the vote-by-mail or absentees, as they're called in other states, will be the number one. The other part will be if, and hopefully not, that things do not happen such that people are running into the judiciary and asking for extension of the voting times. So --

and that would be from disturbances or something that may disrupt the actual voting on Election Day. And that's always a concern, that the extension will delay the results as well.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: There is some history of that in our -- in Orange County, isn't that right? Have we had an instance where there were issues with maybe technology that caused us to extend the voting day, or at least to say, if you're in line by 7:00, you're going to get to vote even if it's after 7:00?

BILL COWLES: We've had some occasions like that, but I think they've been incidences outside of us and we become affected when it's a statewide or a multicounty contest. I mean, the one I remember the most is we had a special election and there was a bomb threat at an Osceola County school that shut that polling place down, so the Governor extended the voting in that case for a couple hours in that.

But we've had a few where we've had the extension for a couple hours. But I think this time, I think, people are more concerned about more serious issues that may happen outside the polling place and hopefully not inside.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Yeah. So let's talk just a few seconds about security. You know, one of the concerns that's been raised is individual voters casting multiple ballots. Can that happen?

BILL COWLES: Well, the -- I don't think it can, but occasionally somebody will slip through on it. And I don't have investigative powers, but the State Attorney's Office is the one who we turn the evidence over to, to investigate.

But the bottom line is our system is networked altogether, and so -- and everything is tied together in real time. So, like, if you vote by mail and you bring your ballot and drop it off here on Election Day, it immediately is logged in as being received. And if you then turn around and

try to go to your polling place, the poll books -- the electronic poll books there will show that you have already voted by mail and so you're locked out from voting at the polls.

And the same system works so that if you go to one early voting site and then try to run over to another early voting site, it -- you're not going to be able to vote twice because the system is live. And so very rare, but I can't say that it's 100 percent -- proof. But there's -- at least right now there's one individual that's under investigation by the State Attorney's Office.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So not a major issue in the locality.

BILL COWLES: No. No.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay.

BILL COWLES: No.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Yeah. And there's been some conversation about folks duplicating ballots, printing up their own ballots and submitting those in large quantities.

BILL COWLES: Well --

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: I assume you've got measures to protect against something like that from happening?

BILL COWLES: Yes, there are ballot security procedures. But also there are things related to the ballot that also the machine has to be able to recognize in order to process it.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, that sounds super double top secret, so I won't go into more detail about that, but --

BILL COWLES: Thank you.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And then there's been the issue of signatures. And we've talked a little bit about that as one of the -- those possible issues. But there is a cure period and a process for that.

BILL COWLES: There is the cure period, but there's also in the law now that you can update your signature up to the time before you submit your ballot. And so -- but unfortunately it has to be done on an official Voter Registration form, but it can be done and submitted in advance of it. So what people are telling me these days is, one, look at your driver's license, because that's probably the one signature that you probably use as your official signature, and use that as your guide. The other one that I've also heard is the fact that -- go ahead and update your signature, but before you give me the form take a picture of that signature, keep it on your iPhone, and then refer to it the next time you have to sign your vote-by-mail certificate.

But there are ways to do it. And we have many people who show up here at the office and they'll say, can you show me my signature before I sign my envelope. And so here at our office, we can do that. Out at the other sites, we can't do that.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Sure. That makes sense. And tell us a little bit about voting during COVID. I mean, we're in -- still in the midst of the pandemic, and you mentioned even that you've taken advantage of some of the CARES Act funding to assist you in developing some safe polling places. Tell us a little bit about that.

BILL COWLES: Yes. You know, and again, we probably should point out that in Florida with the pandemic, we were lucky. We got the Presidential Preference Primary in right before it started. And luckily our Primary was when Florida was in the Phase 2, and then we're moving forward. So what people saw in the news happening in Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania and all that are not things that happened here.

But we took it very seriously. We bought Plexiglas shields so that there's a shield between the voter and the poll workers. We eliminated sharing information, so now you hold your driver's license up or your bar code on your sample ballot and we zap it through the

Plexiglas. We've also got sanitizer. We require a mask but we're not going to deny a person their right to vote if they don't wear a mask, but we will try to isolate that voter from the other voters if they're not wearing one.

So we have outside chalk that we're using -- because I don't own polling places, so we're using somebody else's building, so we have chalk to mark off the six-foot distance in it. There's six-foot distance markings inside the polling place. We got supplies to wipe down the voting booths as the voters use them during the day. We got sanitizers to do the pens and -- if they use ours. We encourage voters to wear a mask, bring gloves, and bring a blue or black ink pen to mark their ballot when they're voting. So we've taken those measures to make sure -- we've remodeled the front of our building for those who are coming in for early voting here, the same set up for early voting.

So we've taken use of that CARES grant money, and it's also been available because of the influx of the vote-by-mail ballots. The -- you know, we've almost going to be 100 -- probably 100 percent larger than we were in 2016, when we get to the final day of mailing the last ballots.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Gosh, that's just phenomenal. Well, it sounds like a good, safe environment for people who choose to come and vote in person. And I can't help but reflect back to my own scouting days, which were not as successful as yours, but Robert Baden-Powell, the scouting founder, adopted or formed the motto for the Boy Scouts, Be Prepared. It sounds like our Supervisor of Elections is prepared.

BILL COWLES: Thank you.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Bill, thank you so much for joining me. Thanks for sharing this timely information, and we very much appreciate you committing time in what is what I know one of your very busiest seasons.

Thanks for being with us.

BILL COWLES: Thanks. And let's all get out and vote.

NARRATOR: You've been listening to "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" brought to you by Chief Judge Donald A. Myers, Jr., and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida. For more information about the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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