



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Hon. Barbara J. Pariente Receives Sandra Day O'Connor Jurist Award From The American College of Trial Lawyers**

*Florida Supreme Court Justice Is Third Recipient of Award*

NEWPORT BEACH, CA, MARCH 14, 2018 -- The American College of Trial Lawyers has presented its Sandra Day O'Connor Jurist Award to Florida Supreme Court Justice the Honorable Barbara J. Pariente. The award recognizes a judge for his or her exemplary judicial independence in the performance of his or her duties. Justice Pariente is only the third recipient of the award.

According to the award committee's nomination of Justice Pariente: "Over her distinguished career, she has participated in momentous decisions affecting individuals, the citizens of Florida and of America as well as the Florida State Legislature. In a 2012 retention election she and two other judges were the subject of a well-funded and organized "smear" campaign to unseat them. At the same time, these judges faced an unfounded disciplinary investigation directed by Florida's Governor and a civil lawsuit. Justice Pariente was re-elected with 68% support despite the strong organized opposition. Throughout that experience and since, she has been an active and vocal educator about the importance of judicial independence. She continues to render courageous decisions on controversial topics of public importance. She speaks publicly about the importance of judicial independence to many audiences through various media."

College President Samuel H. Franklin said, "As part of our mission, the College seeks to maintain the administration of justice and respect for the rule of law and for the courts. We strongly support the independence of the judiciary. Justice Pariente has been an exemplary officer of the court, and her work embodies the ideals set forth by the College."

U.S. Foundation Trustee Eugene K. Pettis said in his introduction of Justice Pariente: "You don't have to spend much time with Justice Pariente to see and feel her passion. You can still see the fire that was ignited as a child when through her eyes things just didn't seem fair. Despite her professional ascension, she never lost sight of the world in which everyone should be treated fairly. It was Bobby Kennedy who said, 'There are those that look at things the way they are and ask why? I dream of things that never were and ask why not?' Justice Pariente's career has embodied the pursuit of the, 'why not?.... most impressive is the manner in which she has upheld the integrity and impartiality of the court and still found a way to be an engine of change, change not through judicial activism in her opinions, but rather change outside and above her opinions. Change propelled by her relentless work on maintaining the protections of our judicial system so that the words judicial independence would be true to their meaning."

In her acceptance remarks, Judge Pariente said, "I want to thank not only friends, Fellows, and guests but particular thanks to the Florida Fellows. Not only is this award meaningful coming from this august body of the nation's premier trial lawyers but the fact that it has only been given twice before makes this honor even more meaningful. I met Justice O'Connor three times in my life. The first time I met her we shared stories of both being breast cancer survivors. Next, she visited the Supreme Court of Florida in conjunction with her trip to Tallahassee where she addressed the legislature and executive branches on the importance of civic education. The last time I met her was after my 2012 merit retention election, where she recognized threats to state supreme court justices from politically motivated interest groups and urged all of us to do more to defend judicial independence.

“I would like to urge all of you here to use your best skills as advocates to think of the judiciary as a client in need of defense. What would you do to defend that client with everything that you had? I urge not only each of you but this wonderful organization to use your collective resources in defense of our judiciary. In my view, nothing is more important than what is at stake—our democracy. Once again, I am honored and humbled by this award and I thank you from the bottom of my heart,” said Justice Pariente.

Justice Pariente’s legal and judicial career has spanned over forty-three years. She has been a Florida Supreme Court Justice since 1997 and served as Chief Justice from 2004 through 2006. She has been a Floridian since 1973, having been born in New York City in 1948 and attended public schools in New York and New Jersey. She graduated with highest honors from Boston University. She then attended George Washington University Law School, where she graduated fifth in her class in 1973, earning highest honors and membership in the Order of the Coif. She moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 1973 for a two year judicial clerkship with United States District Court Judge Norman C. Roettger, Jr., of the Southern District of Florida. In September 1993, Justice Pariente was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeal, where she served until her appointment as the seventy-seventh Justice of the Florida Supreme Court on December 10, 1997. During her time on the Supreme Court, she has worked to improve methods for handling cases involving families and children in the courts. Since 2010, she has served as the Chief Justice’s designee to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet.

The Sandra Day O’Connor Jurist Award was established in 2007 by the College. The Award is given from time to time to a judge in the United States or Canada, whether or not a Fellow of the College, who has demonstrated exemplary judicial independence in the performance of his or her duties, sometimes in especially difficult or even dangerous circumstances. The Award is not conferred every year and Justice Pariente will only be the third recipient, following Hon. George Greer in 2008 and Hon. Sam Sparks in 2010.

### **About The American College of Trial Lawyers**

The American College of Trial Lawyers is composed of preeminent members of the Trial Bar from the United States and Canada and is recognized as the leading trial lawyers organization in both countries. The College is dedicated to maintaining and seeking to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice. The College strongly supports the independence of the Judiciary and respect for the courts in the United States and Canada; that independence is fundamental to our democratic societies. For more information about the College, visit its website at [www.actl.com](http://www.actl.com).

### **Photo Available:**

photo of Justice Pariente with U.S. Foundation Trustee Eugene K. Pettis on the occasion of receiving the Sandra Day O’Connor Award is available from the American College of Trial Lawyers. Please contact Eliza Gano.

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