

Bio

Judge Tom Thornbrugh was appointed to the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals by Governor Mary Fallin in September 2011. Prior to his appointment to the appeals court, he served 15 years as a District Court Judge for the 14th Judicial District, where he presided over numerous jury and non-jury trials in both civil and criminal felony matters. While serving as district judge, he was elected by his fellow jurists as Presiding Judge of the District, as President of the Assembly of Presiding Judges, and as a member of the Oklahoma Judicial Conference Executive Committee. He was named Trial Judge of the Year in 2011 by the Oklahoma Association for Justice.

Judge Thornbrugh received his law degree in 1974 from the University of Tulsa, where he was on the Dean's Honor Roll and *Res Nova* law review. After law school he served on the staff of U.S. Senator Dewey F. Bartlett (R-Okla.), in Washington D.C., before returning to Oklahoma, where he practiced law for 20 years before being appointed to the district court bench by Governor Frank Keating in 1997.

Born in Garnett, Kansas, Thornbrugh graduated from Emporia State University at Emporia, Kansas, in 1968. He served in the U.S. Army as a commissioned officer following training at Ft. Benning, Ga., and completed one tour in South Vietnam before being honorably discharged in 1971. His honors include the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Award with Oak Leaf Cluster for service with the 1st Signal Brigade at Khe Sanh during the 1971 Laotian invasion.

In addition to his judicial duties, Judge Thornbrugh is an adjunct professor at Tulsa University and St. Gregory's University, where his wife, Dr. Jean Thornbrugh, is Dean of the College for Working Adults. The couple has five children and five grandchildren.

Responses

1) Why should voters retain you?

I have always believed that the privilege of citizenship carries with it certain obligations. I willingly served my country in Vietnam as an Officer of the United States Army, and I have spent virtually my entire professional life in service: to the legal profession, my clients, the judiciary, and my community. Those I have served and those who have served with me will confirm that I work hard, am productive, and am an effective leader. I am fortunate to have learned, through my life experience, the truth of Theodore Roosevelt's advice that "far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

As a trial judge and as Presiding Judge of my District Court, I managed civil and criminal felony dockets for 15 years. I presided over hundreds of jury trials and made thousands of

decisions affecting the lives of the parties appearing before me. Those parties and their attorneys recognized me for what I was: a “no nonsense” judge who was not afraid to make hard decisions in the timely manner required. The voters of my judicial district returned me to office three times without opposition and by more than 60% of the vote in the one contested challenge I faced. The Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission nominated me, and our Governor, Mary Fallin, appointed me as Judge of the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals. I have been a productive member of the Court since that time.

I also believe that judges have a duty to advance the common good by promoting respect for law and the courts. I do this by being involved in activities that promote community understanding of the legal system, and by sharing my experience with students at our local schools and universities.

2) How can you ensure a fair judiciary process for all parties involved?

The individuals who drafted our Constitution perfected a “roadmap” to fair and equal justice under the law. They gave us a framework that provides for divided government so that no one branch could overpower or infringe on the functions of the other. For me, the beginning point on that roadmap is the Judicial Department of government. The Courts, as “Guardians of the Constitution,” provide restraint on government intrusions into the individual affairs of citizens, and ensure due process of law to each of us by following the Rule of Law. An independent judiciary is indispensable to the health of the democratic society in which we live. In turn, the good health of a democratic society is dependent on equal justice under law for all of our citizens. As a member of the judiciary, I have taken an oath that I will follow the Rule of Law, equally and impartially, without exception in every case that I decide, and that is what I will continue to do. A judge has a duty to apply the law with rigorous intellectual analysis, logical consistency, and the highest ethical standards. Simply stated, I will seek to do justice by strictly interpreting our Constitution and our laws, independently and without regard to the pressures of the politics of special interests, political parties, or individual partisans. As Alexander Hamilton wrote: “Justice is the first duty of society.”