

Biography of Charlie Cofer

Charlie Cofer was born in Radford, Virginia on June 27, 1952. His father was a minister in the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church, and his mother was a high school chemistry teacher. He retired as a Duval County Court Judge on November 30, 2015, in order to run for Public Defender for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida.

He attended public school in Fairfax County, Virginia. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Duke University on May 12, 1974, with a Bachelor of Arts degrees in political science and zoology. He attended law school at the University of Virginia, and received his degree on May 22, 1977.

After graduation, Cofer joined the firm of Mahoney Hadlow & Adams in Jacksonville. He served as an associate in the civil litigation section of the firm, focusing his practice in the area of labor law. He left the firm in January, 1980, to accept a position as an Assistant Public Defender in Jacksonville, working for Public Defender Lou Frost.

Cofer worked as an Assistant Public Defender for 18+ years, 10 years of which was as a member of the office Homicide Team. Judge Cofer handled thousands of cases, and had more than 63 contested jury trials, including 26 homicide trials. During his tenure with the office, he served as a Felony Division Chief, Juvenile Division Chief, Chief of County Court and Chief of Circuit Court. As County Court Chief, he had the primary responsibility for the supervision and training of new attorneys.

Charlie Cofer lectured on the death penalty at the “Life Over Death” educational conferences sponsored by the Florida Public Defenders Association. He served on the Death Penalty Steering Committee of the Florida Public Defenders Association from January, 1992, until April, 1995.

Cofer was elected by the assistant public defenders throughout the State to serve as their representative on the Public Defenders Association Board from July, 1994, through July, 1996. Comprised of the elected Public Defenders from each of Florida’s 20 judicial circuits, the Public Defenders Association Board makes crucial decisions on policy and budgetary issues affecting the Public Defender system.

He was nominated by the Fourth Judicial Circuit Nominating Commission to fill the vacancy on the Duval County Court resulting from the death of Judge Al Washington. He was appointed by the Governor to fill that position in July, 1998. He was re-elected to that position without opposition in 2000, 2006, and 2012. During his time on the bench, Charlie Cofer handled over 100,000 cases, including over 78,000 criminal cases and over 27,000 civil actions.

Charlie Cofer’s service to the community has been recognized in the following ways:

- He was selected twice to serve as the Duval County Court Administrative Judge by his fellow judges. He served as the County Court Administrative Judge during the year of 2004, and from July, 2013 through November, 2015;
- He was selected by the Florida Supreme Court in 2001 to serve as a mentor to new judges, continuing in that role until his retirement;

- He served two terms as a Circuit Court Judge handling felony cases by special assignment from his Chief Judge. His first term on the felony bench occurred from March-September, 2011, when Division CR-B was vacant due to the death of Judge Jeff Morrow. His second term occurred from December, 2013-July 2014, when Division CR-H was vacant due to the illness and death of Judge Jean Johnson;
- He was recognized as the 2011 “Co-Jurist of the Year” by the Jacksonville Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates;
- He was a graduate of the Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2000; and
- He was a founding member of the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers—N.E. Florida Chapter in March, 1990.

Charlie Cofer has been active in the community. He served as President of the PTA Dad’s Club at Hendricks Avenue Elementary School; Chair of the Board of the Southside United Methodist Church Kindergarten; Sunday School teacher at Southside United Methodist Church; Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Pastoral Counseling Center in San Marco; Co-President of the San Jose County Club Swim Team, Co-President of the River City Swim League; and President of the Board of Governors of the San Jose County Club.

Charlie Cofer resigned his position as a Duval County Judge on November 30, 2015, in order to run for Public Defender for the Fourth Judicial Circuit against incumbent Matt Shirk. He won the Republican primary held on August 30th with 75% of the votes cast. He won the November general election against a write-in candidate with over 99.87% of the votes cast.