

# Opinion: 'Dedication to upholding the law'



Judge Nelson Brooks is up for re-election on June 7. Photo/Provided

***Publisher's note: Lake Tahoe News asked both candidates for El Dorado County Superior Court judge to write a guest column. To date the incumbent is the only one to do so. The election is June 7.***

**By Nelson Brooks**

I am honored and proud to be one of your judges here in El Dorado County. I graduated from the University of California's Hastings College of the Law, and have been on the bench now for approximately seven years after practicing as a trial attorney in Sacramento and El Dorado counties for over 25 years.

I was first appointed to the bench by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009, and retained by a vote of over 75 percent of our county's voters in 2010.

My opponent is a trial attorney with barely 10 years total experience as a licensed lawyer (the absolute minimum required before an attorney may even apply for a judicial position), who earned his law degree at night school. His primary area of practice has been DUI and marijuana defense cases.

I see my role as a sitting judge to be the tireless and unswerving dedication to upholding the law and applying it fairly, without prejudice or preference to all of our counties' citizens who come before me. I believe that our judicial system must provide a respectful, efficient, no-nonsense forum for the fair and equitable resolution of disputes, and that it is an honor and a privilege to have been selected to serve the people of El Dorado County in this capacity.

I am committed to justice and common sense. Being a judge in the El Dorado Superior Court is about experience, integrity and fairness. My opponent is a criminal defense attorney who does not have the knowledge or understanding of the rule of law to do this job. I am endorsed by District Attorney Vern Pierson, Presiding Judge Suzanne Kingsbury, Judge James Wagoner, Judge Ken Melikian, Judge Vicki Ashworth, Chief Public Defender Teri Monterosso, Presiding Appellate Justice Vance Raye and all of the associate justices of the Third District Court of Appeals, which is the appellate court that reviews any of my decisions that might go up on appeal.

I have also been endorsed by the South Lake Tahoe Police Officers Association, South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David, County Supervisor Sue Novasel, the Mountain Democrat newspaper and many others.

I believe that justice should be dispensed without bias and with fiscal efficiency. I have served in virtually every division of our Superior Court, presiding over both court and jury trials.

I was born in Columbus, Ohio, and traveled quite a bit growing up – my father served our country in the Air Force and was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. He continued in the Air Force after the war ended, rising to the rank of full colonel. Over his career our family lived in many places including Germany, the Philippine Islands, and tours at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., before his final assignment at Hamilton AFB in Marin County, where he retired.

Prior to becoming a judge, I practiced law for about 27 years in El Dorado and Sacramento counties. I graduated from UC Hastings College of the Law in 1982 after earning my undergraduate degree from Santa Clara University. I am fully committed to our community. My wife and I met and married here in El Dorado County in 1976. My wife, Tish Starr Brooks, graduated from UC Davis Veterinary School in 1988. She practiced in El Dorado County for many years. We have two adult children who were born and raised on the West Slope in the home in which we still live today.

As an attorney for approximately 27 years, I successfully litigated many thousands of business and personal injury matters, representing both plaintiffs and defendants, and earning one of the highest ratings available from Martindale-Hubbell. As your El Dorado County Superior Court judge I have handled virtually every case type and courtroom assignment. I have gained broad judicial experience in my time on the bench, having worked in every division of our county's court system, including civil and probate, family law, dependency-delinquency, traffic, and, for approximately the past six months, in the criminal arraignment department.

I have presided over jury and/or court trials in all of these areas, and have imposed one of the highest criminal sentences in our county's history in a multiple child abuse-molestation trial: 750 years to life. Handling this volume of cases requires swift but well thought-out determinations as to how these matters should proceed: all the way to trial in the

trial courts; or resolution at the arraignment stage, with the commiserate cost savings to the court and the county, but without compromising the defendant's constitutional rights to a full and fair hearing.

My decisions must be made quickly and efficiently in order to keep the never-ending flow of criminal cases moving smoothly. In the time that I have been in this assignment I have been able to establish a record of efficiency and timeliness in accomplishing these goals. During my over 30-year career as a lawyer and judge, I have worked as a civil litigator and tried cases in both federal court and in state courts throughout Northern California. In those 30-plus years of practice, both as a lawyer and as a judge, I have never been disciplined, sanctioned nor investigated for any alleged misconduct. In my private practice before coming on the bench, I have never had any complaints lodged against me by clients or adversaries for unethical or even questionable conduct.

I take pride in my commitment to this community. Tish and I fell in love with El Dorado County and knew that we wanted to raise our family here and give back everything we could to continue making this an incredible place to live. I served for nearly a decade on the Snowline Hospice Board of Directors, coached youth soccer and basketball, and am a past president of the El Dorado County Bar Association. I have previously served as a trustee for the County Law Library, been chairman of the Evelyn Horn Scholarship Selection Committee and continue to serve as a volunteer judge for the county's Teen Court Program.

Since taking office on the El Dorado County Superior Court, I have worked to improve operations by eliminating unnecessary, duplicative and expensive court appearances. I also helped implement a new, streamlined system for requesting necessary appearances directly. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue efficiently handling the great volume of cases that must be processed through this department.

In the time I have served on the bench I have assisted in implementing the following:

- We have an online request for oral argument process available online. I helped create that when I was assigned to civil.
- Our public website is more accessible, user friendly, and has more information for attorneys and the public.
- We now have transcripts available online, speeding the process and saving money on copying costs.
- Our court is very fiscally strong and even with the reduction of some of our workforce, we have been able to keep afloat operationally, with little noticeable difference to the public.
- The court now has its own telephone appearance system. This system generates revenue for the court and allows attorneys and parties to appear by phone for brief appearances.
- We now handle most search warrants electronically.
- We have created an online orientation for family law litigants prior to mediation. Prior to that time, the parties had to come to court for that purpose.
- We now provide interpreters for all case types.
- Other efficiencies include being able to pay traffic and criminal fines, fees and restitution online and via credit card. People now also have the ability to handle some aspects of their traffic tickets remotely.

It has been my honor to serve the people of El Dorado County as your Superior Court judge and I respectfully ask for your vote on June 7, 2016, so I can continue to serve our community in the future.