

Blair Payne, Public Defender of the Third Judicial Circuit



Blair Payne is the Public Defender for the Third Judicial Circuit. He is a native of Hamilton County where his family has resided for six generations. After graduating from Hamilton County High School, he received an A.A. degree from North Florida Junior College and a degree in Criminal Justice from Valdosta State College. After graduating from Valdosta State, he spent about a year working at Occidental Chemical Company's, now P.C.S., White Springs plant. While there, Blair applied to and was accepted into Stetson University College of Law where he was a member of the Stetson Law Review and graduated with honors and the class rank of "1". Upon passing the Florida Bar (Bar) Exam he was selected by the Florida Supreme Court to speak on behalf of the new Bar members at the Supreme Court swearing in ceremony.

Upon being admitted to the Bar, Blair began practicing in Lake City with the law firm of Darby, Peele, Page and Bowdoin, which evolved into Darby, Peele, Bowdoin and Payne, and he remained there for 27 years. In 2010, he came to work for Public Defender Dennis Roberts as the Chief Assistant in the Lake City office. In that position, he was responsible for general supervision of the Lake City office and handled a caseload consisting primarily homicides and other serious felonies.

Blair Payne was elected Public Defender in 2012 and took office in January 2013. He remains active in the courtroom in addition to his administrative responsibilities. Licensed to practice in all state courts of Florida, Blair is also a member of the Bar for the United States Supreme Court and is qualified to handle death penalty cases under rules promulgated by the Florida Supreme Court.

Blair served two terms on the Third Judicial Circuit Judicial Nomination Commission and two terms on the Third Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee, which he chaired for a period of time. He is currently on the Third Judicial Circuit Professional Committee and chairs the Constitutional Revision Committee for the Florida Public Defenders Association.