

Letters: Judge's ruling fair for youthful offender Woods

By **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR FOR THURSDAY, DEC. 16**

The American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) is composed of lawyers who represent plaintiffs and defendants. As part of its mission, ABOTA responds to unwarranted or unjust attacks on judges, who are ordinarily not allowed to answer charges made against them. The Dec. 9 editorial criticizing Palm Beach County Circuit Judge Amy Smith was unwarranted and unjust.

Judge Smith has a reputation as a fair and knowledgeable judge. She gave Stefanie Woods a legal sentence under the laws for youthful offenders. While the wide notoriety Ms. Woods' case has received is unusual, Judge Smith showed courage by not treating Ms. Woods differently from other youthful offenders would be treated for similar crimes.

It should be pointed out that Ms. Woods hardly "got off easy." Significantly, the victim requested that Ms. Woods not go to prison. Judge Smith previously denied requests for bond. Ms. Woods will have to go through a drug treatment program and be subjected to a lengthy probation. Any violation of probation will result in a 15-year prison sentence. Hopefully, the weekly drug testing Judge Smith ordered will help Ms. Woods get her life on track.

The outrageous suggestion that Ms. Woods' sentence was affected by such irrelevant factors as her hair color is, respectfully, absurd. The victim, who did not want her sent to prison, undoubtedly did not care that Ms. Woods is a blonde.

Doing the right thing - even when it is unpopular - is the hallmark of a good judge. Our community is fortunate to have Judge Amy Smith.

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Editor's note: Mickey Smith is a member of The American Board of Trial Advocates, Palm Beach Chapter. He is no relation to Judge Smith.