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**NEWS VIA EMAIL****Mickey Smith Working To Preserve Judiciary**

Mickey Smith

Longtime Wellington resident Mickey Smith has seen a lot in his 26 years of practicing civil trial law. Few things rattle him. The events of the latest legislative session in Tallahassee still leave him saddened, though.

"The legislative branch is trying to destroy another, co-equal branch — the judiciary," Smith said. "The legislature is attempting to gut our supreme court and deprive our trial courts of the funding they need to function properly."

Smith calls these attempts "sickening." But he and other prominent trial lawyers are fighting back. Smith is president of the Palm Beach Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA). ABOTA is a national, invitation-only organization of experienced jury trial lawyers who are peer reviewed

for not only their prowess in the courtroom but also their high standards for ethics and professionalism.

"ABOTA stands up for the judiciary" and is fighting these attacks "tooth and nail," Smith said. ABOTA's core values include protecting a fair judicial system and the right to trial by jury, as guaranteed by the Seventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Smith said those attacking the justice system have less lofty goals. "It is politics, pure and simple," he said. "Think of it this way. If one side to a sporting event tried to fire all the referees, do you think they would be doing so to ensure the game was played fairly? Of course not."

Smith is quick to add that ABOTA has no hidden agenda. Its members are equally composed of those who file civil cases and those who defend them. Smith calls the organization "balanced," unlike the politicians seeking to effectively dismantle the court system.

Smith began his legal career by representing insurance companies and large corporations. A partner at Lesser, Lesser, Landy & Smith, he has spent the past nine years of his career fighting exclusively for individuals and families in personal injury and wrongful death cases against the very interests he used to protect. To Smith, the point is simple.

"All of us need a balanced, fully funded judiciary," Smith said. "It is what sets our country apart."

According to Smith, the citizens of Palm Beach County have every reason to be proud of the local judiciary. "It is considered the finest in the state," he said.

Showing a touch of hometown pride, Smith points out that several local trial judges and a current Florida Supreme Court justice hail from Wellington. "We just need to make sure they are allowed to do their jobs. That's all," he said.