2007-2008

Florida State Courts

Annual Report

The Supreme Court of Florida

Annual Report, July 2007-June 2008

R. Fred Lewis
Chief Justice

Charles T. Wells
Harry Lee Anstead
Barbara J. Pariente
Peggy A. Quince
Raoul G. Cantero, III
Kenneth B. Bell
Justices

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State Courts Administrator

This Egyptian Revival statue has adorned the current Florida Supreme Court building since it was first occupied in early 1949.

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Mission

The mission of the judicial branch is to protect rights and liberties,
uphold and interpret the law,
and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Vision

Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable.

To be accessible, the Florida justice system will be convenient, understandable, timely, and affordable to everyone.

To be **fair,** it will respect the dignity of every person, regardless of race, class, gender or other characteristic; apply the law appropriately to the circumstances of individual cases, and include judges and court staff that reflect the community's diversity.

To be **effective,** it will uphold the law and apply rules and procedures consistently and in a timely manner, resolve cases with finality, and provide enforceable decisions.

To be **responsive,** it will anticipate and respond to the needs of all members of society, and provide a variety of dispute resolution methods.

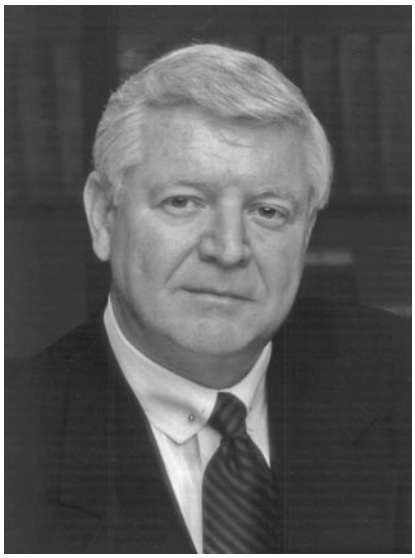
To be **accountable,** the Florida justice system will use public resources efficiently, and in a way that the public can understand.

Message from the Chief Justice

Did you know that most people have a positive opinion of Florida State Courts? It is true. More than 2,000 people were surveyed this winter and that is one of the results. It is not just wishful thinking by someone in a black robe.

We conducted the survey to obtain public views as we undertake the important job of updating the long-term strategic plan we prepared a decade ago. You can learn more details about the development of the strategic plan in this annual report, which covers the 2007-08 fiscal year, but I'll give you a few interesting results:

- More than half of those surveyed—56 percent—had an overall positive opinion of Florida courts that ranged from good to excellent.
- 25 percent of those surveyed said they had a fair opinion of the courts.
- 13 percent had a poor opinion of the courts, and 7 percent were not sure what their opinion was or refused to answer.



The strategic planning process is one of several new and ongoing initiatives described in this annual report, which also includes information concerning the structure of the Florida judiciary and statistics with regard to our judges and cases. I cannot, in this letter, preview all projects covered in the report—but I can emphasize that they all are designed to continually improve the delivery of justice in Florida.

Also, every project reflects highly on the remarkable dedication, energy and talent of the men and women who work hard every day to carry out the mission of this branch of government: "to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes." I have been particularly proud to serve as the leader of these wonderful individuals this year, as the government of Florida experienced three difficult rounds of budget cuts. Faced with the potential danger of cuts that could have crippled the courts, we worked closely with state lawmakers to identify ways to preserve our ability to fulfill our mission. We did make cuts. They were painful. But we survived and we will continue to survive to serve the people of this great state.

As this report chronicles, the austerity of the budget situation did not deter the men and women of the Florida judiciary from forging ahead on initiatives and programs designed to improve the delivery of justice in Florida. The progress they made this year is even more impressive because it was achieved in spite of the severe funding challenges. We can all be so proud and grateful to count ourselves among the men and women of this branch of government. I know their commitment is based on the understanding that our courts are essential not only to the hundreds of thousands of Floridians who seek judicial intervention but also to the very life of our democracy.

It is also crucial that this understanding be shared. To that end, we began our second year of Justice Teaching in the fall of 2007. This innovative program was created to recruit and train judges and attorneys to serve as resources for our teachers and students as they deepen their understanding of our democratic structure of government and the fundamental importance of the rule of law. I am immensely grateful and proud to

report that a Justice Teaching volunteer has been assigned to virtually every public school in our state. I am convinced that this civic initiative will bear much fruit for years and years to come—not just for the courts but for our entire democracy.

I am equally proud and grateful to report wonderful progress on issues including the treatment of the mentally ill, access to the courts for people with disabilities and the broad issue of fairness and diversity. Much work has been directed over the entire year to the problems of those having mental illness facing issues in the courts. The Supreme Court hosted a Mental Health Summit in November 2007 attended by Gov. Charlie Crist and the heads of the Department of Children & Families and the Department of Corrections, private experts and advocates, judges and court staff, including members of this Court. The hallmark of this work has been cooperation among the different branches of government and private stakeholders, a collaboration that is absolutely essential if we are to make concrete improvements.

We have also devoted much energy this year to improving access to the courts for those with disabilities. Every court building in the state has been surveyed in an effort to remove any barriers. Additionally, webmasters have worked diligently to design our web pages so that they are accessible to people who must use technology devices like screen readers to access information online.

A fundamentally important report was released by the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity in March 2008: "Perceptions of Fairness in the Florida Court System." This report was based on three years of work, which included several public hearings around the state as well as surveys of thousands of people who pass through the courts, use the courts regularly and work in the courts. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. Fairness is the foundation of the public's trust and confidence in their court system. Courts that operate fairly and treat all participants with respect are perceived to be places where justice is accomplished. We have worked diligently this year to make sure that every court in the state provided diversity and sensitivity training programs and will continue to do so.

It is also important to note that in late June 2008, the Florida State Courts System—and the state—witnessed a historic moment when Chief Justice Peggy Quince was sworn in for a two-year term as the chief officer of Florida's judicial branch of government. As a distinguished and dedicated jurist, Chief Justice Quince will provide outstanding leadership to the judiciary.

It is impossible to outline in this letter all that is detailed within this annual report, which I hope you find informative and reassuring. When you read these details, I believe you will agree with me that our court system continues to move forward with effective and innovative plans to fulfill our precious duty: providing justice to the people of Florida.

R. Fred Lewis
Chief Justice

Justice Lewis is the fifty-second chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court. He was appointed to the Court in December 1998, and he advanced to chief justice on June 30, 2006.

Born in West Virginia, Justice Lewis made Florida his home in 1965, when he arrived here to attend college in Lakeland. He remained in Florida for law school, and, after graduating, he attended and graduated from the United States Army A.G. School. After his discharge from the military, he entered private practice in Miami, where he specialized in civil trial and appellate litigation until his appointment to the Florida Supreme Court.

In his professional life, Justice Lewis has been deeply involved in children's issues and was selected as Florida's Citizen of the Year in 2001 by the Florida Council. While in private practice, he was actively committed to providing counseling to families with children with disabilities, and he offered pro bono legal services and counseling for cancer patients seeking proper treatment for multiple conditions. While on the Court, he has been a volunteer in the Florida Law Related Education Association, for which he works with teachers and students throughout the state to promote a better understanding of government institutions and to provide to the public open access to judicial officers.

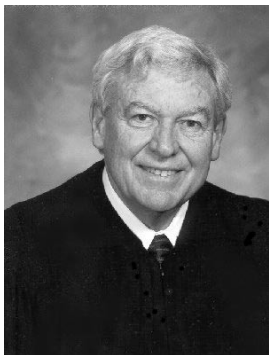
Justice Lewis and his wife Judith have two children, Elle and Lindsay.

Charles Talley Wells
Justice

Justice Wells joined the Supreme Court in June 1994; he served as the Court's forty-ninth chief justice from July 1, 2000, to July 1, 2002. He was chief justice during the Court's proceedings in the 2000 presidential election cases.

A native Floridian, Justice Wells was born in Orlando. Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court, he spent 28 years in private practice in Orlando as an active civil trial lawyer engaged in commercial, insurance, and personal injury litigation. He also served for one year as a trial attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

While in Orlando, Justice Wells was vigorously involved in the Orange County Legal Aid Society as well as in the Guardian Ad Litem Program, representing dependent and abused children in juvenile and domestic court proceedings. The Legal Aid Society presented him with its Award of Excellence in 1989 in recognition of his outstanding pro bono service.

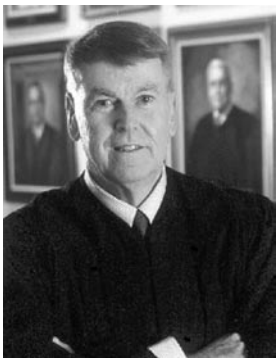


Justice Wells is married to Linda Fisher Wells, a lawyer, and they have three children, Charley, Shelley, and Ashley.

Harry Lee Anstead
Justice

Justice Anstead was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in 1994. He advanced to the highest judicial office in state government on July 1, 2002, when he became Florida's fiftieth chief justice, serving in that capacity until June 30, 2004.

Justice Anstead is a native Floridian, born in Jacksonville. He was a trial and appellate lawyer in South Florida until 1977, when he was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeal; there, he served as chief judge and from time to time as a circuit and county judge throughout the district.



As a citizen, lawyer, and judge, Justice Anstead has served his community and profession in a host of ways, including service to charities, government, church, schools, and children. While on the Court, he initiated a comprehensive statewide program to improve professionalism among judges, lawyers, and law schools in the state. He has also been committed to improving the lot of children whose lives are affected by the courts. The major priority of his administration as chief justice was maintaining the excellence of Florida's trial courts during a time of transition, when funding for the trial courts shifted from the local budgets to the state budget on July 1, 2004.

Justice Anstead and his wife Sue, a lawyer and child advocate herself, have five children: Chris, Jim, Laura, Amy, and Michael.

Barbara J. Pariente
Justice

Justice Pariente was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in 1997, and she advanced to chief justice on July 1, 2004. She was the Court's fifty-first chief justice and the second woman to serve in that role.

Justice Pariente was born and raised in New York City, but Florida has been her home for more than 30 years. Before her elevation to the Supreme Court, she spent 18 years in private practice in West Palm Beach, specializing in civil trial litigation. Then, in September 1993, she was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeal, where she served until her appointment to the Supreme Court.

During her time on the Supreme Court, she has actively supported programs that promote successful alternatives to incarceration such as Florida's drug courts. She has also worked to improve methods for handling cases involving families and children in the courts. Based on her longstanding commitment to children, Justice Pariente continues to be a mentor to school-age children and has encouraged Court employees to participate in the Court's mentoring program, which has two partner schools in Tallahassee; the Florida Supreme Court has won a national award for these mentoring initiatives.

Justice Pariente is married to The Honorable Frederick A. Hazouri, judge of the Fourth District Court of Appeal, and together they have three grown children and six grandchildren.

Peggy A. Quince
Justice

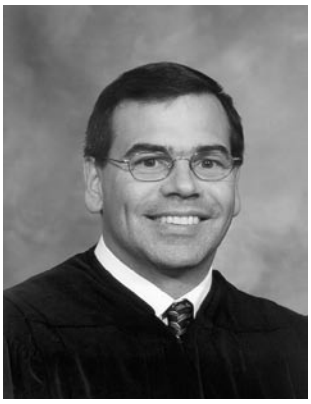
Justice Quince was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in December 1998; she has the distinction of being the first African-American woman on the Court. She will advance to chief justice on June 27, 2008.

Born in Virginia, Justice Quince began her legal career in 1975 in Washington, D.C., as a hearing officer with the Rental Accommodations Office administering the city's new rent control law. She entered private practice in Virginia in 1977, specializing in real estate and domestic relations, and then moved to Bradenton, Florida, in 1978 to open a law office, where she practiced general civil law until 1980. From there, she joined the Attorney General's Office, Criminal Division, serving for nearly 14 years. In 1994, she was appointed to the Second District Court of Appeal, where she served until her appointment to the Supreme Court.

Justice Quince has been active in civic and community organizations, including Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Jack and Jill of America, the Urban League, the NAACP, and the Tampa Organization for Black Affairs. She has also received numerous awards, especially for her work on behalf of girls, women, minorities, civil rights issues, and various school programs.

Justice Quince and her husband Fred L. Buckine, an administrative law judge, have two daughters, Peggy LaVerne and Laura LaVerne.

Raoul G. Cantero, III
Justice



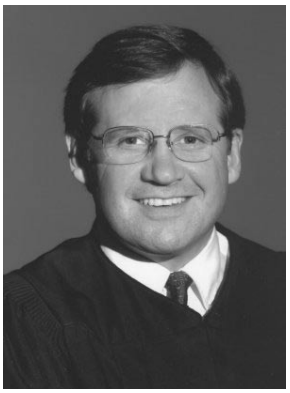
Justice Cantero was appointed to the Supreme Court of Florida in July 2002. He has the distinction of being the first Hispanic to sit on the Court.

Born in Madrid, Spain, to Cuban parents who had fled the communist regime in Cuba, Justice Cantero was a Fulbright Scholar who got his Bachelor of Arts from Florida State University and his law degree from Harvard Law School. Before his appointment to the Supreme Court, he was a shareholder and head of the appellate division of a Miami law firm, where he specialized in civil and criminal appeals at all levels, handling appeals in all five District Courts of Appeal and the Florida Supreme Court as well as in the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal and the U.S. Supreme Court. He also specialized in commercial litigation.

Justice Cantero is ardently interested in issues of professionalism in the practice of law, and he has spoken on this topic to both lawyers and law students. In addition, not only has he authored many articles for law journals, but he is also an accomplished fiction writer and has published several short stories. Moreover, he has also been active in the Miami community, serving as a member of the board of Legal Services of Greater Miami, a member of the Planning and Zoning Board of the City of Coral Gables, and a member of the Pastoral Council at St. Augustine Church in Coral Gables.

Justice Cantero and his wife Ana Maria have three children: Christian, Michael, and Elisa.

Kenneth B. Bell
Justice



Justice Bell was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in December 2002.

A native Floridian, Justice Bell is in fact a seventh-generation Pensacolian whose paternal ancestors immigrated to the Pensacola area around 1819, when Florida was still a Spanish colony. Upon graduation from law school, Justice Bell entered private practice in Pensacola, focusing primarily on commercial and residential real estate. He continued his private practice until 1991, when he was appointed to the First Judicial Circuit of Florida, becoming the youngest circuit judge in the history of that circuit.

As a trial judge on the circuit bench for 12 years, he served on a variety of committees and boards that have actively sought to improve the judicial process. He has also dedicated himself to improving the justice process as it impacts children, opening the first "child witness room" in the First Circuit, for instance, and promoting the establishment of the only PACE Center for Girls in that circuit. In addition, he worked with officials to develop system-wide school violence prevention programs. He has also been active in community affairs, serving on the board of many civic organizations.

Justice Bell and his wife have four children.

Florida Supreme Court Justices: (seated, l-r): Justice Wells, Chief Justice Lewis, and Justice Anstead; (standing, l-r) Justice Cantero, Justice Pariente, Justice Quince, and Justice Bell.

2007-2008: The Year in Review

Under Florida's constitution, all state government entities in Florida—including the judicial branch—have been required to develop, and to guide themselves in accordance with, a strategic plan. In 1998, the branch produced its first strategic plan, *Taking Bearings, Setting Course*—the fruits of a three-year effort that included extensive outreach to people who work in and around the courts, users of the courts, and members of the general public.

Designed to prepare the court system to meet the challenges and trends that lie 15-20 years into the future, this comprehensive document articulates the branch's vision and mission. It also specifies and describes five broad, long-range issues that are of fundamental importance to the branch's ability to fulfill its mission and aspire toward its vision: Clarifying the Role of the Judicial Branch; Improving the Administration of Justice; Supporting Competence and Quality; Enhancing Public Access and Service; and Building Public Trust and Confidence. Finally, it identifies specific goals and strategies for addressing each of these five issues.

The judicial branch is currently revising its strategic plan. Toward that end, in May 2006, it conducted a two-day planning forum, inviting 100 key justice system stakeholders to ponder and discuss the ways in which the courts may, over the next decade, be affected by social, economic, and political trends and to offer suggestions for refreshing the plan. In addition, participants considered, and ultimately validated, the viability of the five long-range issues that shape the initial strategic plan, thereby reinforcing the enduring significance of the areas on which the judicial branch has deliberately and self-consciously been focusing these last ten years.

Long-range issues are defined as high priority strategic areas that frame the basic direction of an organization over the long term and that embody the conditions and challenges an organization must address in order to move toward its vision and fulfill its mission. Thus these issues serve as the most compelling criteria for categorizing and considering the judicial branch's accomplishments in the *Year in Review* section of the annual report. By presenting the branch's attainments specifically in relation to its endeavors to clarify its role, improve the administration of justice, support competence and quality, enhance public access and service, and build public trust and confidence, this annual report aims to showcase the progress that Florida's court system has made toward achieving its mission and vision.

Long-Range Issue #1: Clarifying the Role of the Judicial Branch

Issue Description: Florida's courts are being called on to provide an increasingly broad range of services in response to the needs of citizens and the inability of other societal institutions to meet those needs. Many of these expanded services go beyond the historic roles and responsibilities of courts. A consensus over the roles and responsibilities the courts should fulfill would give the judicial branch a clear mandate around which to organize its energies and resources and would reinforce the principle of an independent judiciary.

Judicial Management Council and Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning

To address Long-Range Issue #1: Clarifying the Role of the Judicial Branch, the strategic plan recommends that the court system work introspectively—the branch should focus on building consensus regarding its appropriate roles and responsibilities—as well as extrospectively—the branch should also concentrate on communicating its roles and responsibilities to other government and community agencies and to the public. The Judicial Management Council is uniquely positioned to direct its attention to this long-range issue because it was created to address both internal and external matters of relevance to the branch: it was charged with considering issues affecting court operations and the administration of justice as well as with establishing effective, two-way communication about the justice system between the branch and the public it serves.

The Judicial Management Council was constituted in 1995 to offer suggestions and guidance to the supreme court on issues affecting the entire justice system; it was given responsibility for "the comprehensive study and formulation of recommendations on issues related to the efficient and effective administration of justice that have statewide impact, affect multiple levels of the court system, or affect multiple constituencies in the court and justice community" (Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.225—formerly Rule 2.125).

In 2002, the Judicial Management Council became dormant when the branch began focusing intently on preparing itself for the 2004 implementation of Revision 7, which shifted the primary funding responsibility for the trial courts from the counties to the state. But in October

2006, Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis, by administrative order, reconstituted this advisory council, calling upon Chief Judge Joseph P. Farina, Eleventh Circuit, to chair it.

Chief Judge Joseph P. Farina, Eleventh Circuit, chairs a strategic planning meeting (via videoconference) for the Judicial Management Council and the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning; on the screen in the background are meeting attendees from the Fifth Circuit.

The council's wide-ranging membership brings together "the collective knowledge and experience of State Court System leadership with members of the public," thereby providing the branch with "a broad perspective on the myriad of administrative challenges facing the Florida courts."

An entity's ability to clarify its role is essential to its development of a sound strategic plan; simultaneously, the act of fashioning a strategic plan enables an entity to further define and refine its role. Thus the council was also made responsible for providing input to the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning as it updates the branch's strategic plan. Chaired by Chief Judge Farina as well, the task force initiated this effort in May 2006, when it coordinated a two-day planning workshop for 100 invited participants, including judges, government and private attorneys, members of executive agencies and the legislative branch, and representatives from the education, business, and non-profit advocacy communities. Convening to attend sessions about significant social, economic, and political trends in Florida, to speculate about the impact these trends are likely to have on the justice system, and to re-evaluate the five initial long-range issues, the participants laid the groundwork for re-addressing the strategic plan.

This year, the task force spearheaded the second stage, the information-gathering phase, of the planning process, which involves a prodigious outreach effort: a public opinion telephone survey of over 2,000 randomly-selected state residents has already been completed; currently underway are surveys of court users (parties/litigants and jurors, criminal defendants, victims, witnesses, and private mediators); attorneys; and judges, court staff, and clerks of court. Then, at nine public meetings, citizens and local officials from around the state will share their thoughts about trends and conditions that they believe will impact the judicial branch's ability to carry out its mission over the next 20 years. Soon thereafter, task force and council members will meet with justice system partners to glean their perspectives on Florida's court system and the areas in need of change and collaboration.

After the above information is parsed and synthesized into a summary report of findings, focus groups will assist the task force and council in recommending the goals and strategies that the strategic plan will need to address. The task force will then draft the strategic plan, presenting it to the supreme court by June 2009 for its final review and approval. The information gathered not only will become the cornerstone of the branch's second strategic plan, but it will also be used to design specific improvement initiatives.

Because the planning process as a whole benefits from a systemic approach, the task force has supported recent efforts by several circuits to institute their own long-range plans—plans that simultaneously reflect local realities and needs as well as interface with the state court system's strategic plan. As a result, in addition to taking a "top down" approach, the planning process has been benefitting from a "bottom up" approach, which is galvanizing statewide involvement in the process as well as a broad-based commitment to accountability.

The information gathered not only will become the cornerstone of the branch's second strategic plan, but it will also be used to design specific improvement initiatives.

Long-Range Issue #2: Improving the Administration of Justice

Issue Description: The effective administration of justice requires deliberate attention to the core processes of the judicial branch. Increasing workloads which arise from greater demand for adjudication, alternative dispute resolution, other core processes, and core court functions which support court processes will continue to put pressure on the Florida court system's ability to fulfill its responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

Technology

Advances in technology continue to impact dramatically the ways in which the courts conduct business. The judicial branch is especially focused on fortifying its ability to electronically transmit, store, retrieve, share, and protect court information, thereby enhancing the quality, timeliness, and efficiency of decision-making and improving the administration of justice, the focus of Long-Range Issue #2.

Florida Courts Technology Commission

Seeking advice about issues associated with the use of technology in the judicial branch, Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis reconstituted the Florida Courts Technology Commission in November 2007. The commission is charged with coordinating and reviewing recommendations reflecting all court policy matters that have to do with the use of technology, and it is responsible for setting the technology policies and standards to which all court committees and workgroups are expected to adhere.

Chaired by Judge Judith L. Kreeger, Eleventh Circuit, the commission is also responsible for developing a comprehensive framework for the implementation of technology within the court system. Moreover, it has been tasked with a series of projects that grew out of the 2005 report and recommendations of the Committee on Privacy and Court Records—projects associated with remote access to court records in electronic form, the Manatee County pilot project, automated search technologies, and user access fees. In addition, it is overseeing the development of an electronic filing portal that will provide a common entry point for all court electronic filings in the state. Finally, the commission is responsible for ensuring that the technology employed at every level of the state court system is capable of full integration (i.e., computers from across all jurisdictions must be networked and able to communicate with one another); for integrating appropriate security policies for all projects; and for making certain that all court technology projects meet the requirements of federal and state laws regarding access to technology for people with disabilities.

Judicial Inquiry System

Through a single point of entry, the web-based Judicial Inquiry System provides the judiciary and other criminal justice entities with access to records and information from a range of local, state, and federal agencies, including Appriss, the Court Clerks Comprehensive Case Information System, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Law Enforcement, the Florida Crime Information Center, and the National Crime Information Center. Immediately revealing a person's status as a high risk sex offender or a violent felony offender of special concern—

Judge Judith L. Kreeger, Eleventh Circuit, chairs the Florida Courts Technology Commission.

as well as any injunctions, risk statuses, warrants, open cases, immigration violations, federal arrests, and active concealed weapons permits—this technology initiative enables judges to make time-critical decisions quickly and easily, thus enhancing public safety.

The Judicial Inquiry System comprises two different applications: with the JIS Search, users are able to perform individual queries on arrestees; with the Automated First Appearance Calendar, users can access an electronic docket of merged data source responses for arrestees in each county every day. Currently, the system has over 5,000 users statewide.

Recently, Information Systems Services of the Office of the State Courts Administrator was awarded a federal grant for enhancements to the Judicial Inquiry System. This

funding will be used for several purposes: among them, the system's dashboard will be modified for greater ease in determining the disposition and status of uniform cases in Florida's 67 counties; improvements will expedite the ability of users to uncover injunctions as well as accompanying federal Brady Indicators (which reveal a person's qualifications to purchase or possess firearms); and modifications will further expand risk classifications (e.g., possible terrorist alerts and temporary felons). The funding will also be used to conduct user-training on the system.

Disaster Recovery Review

For fiscal year 2007-08, the supreme court received legislative funding to hire a consultant to analyze the supreme court building's current technology recovery capabilities and to make recommendations for a complete, comprehensive disaster recovery plan. The consultant conducted a business impact analysis and an information availability strategy analysis, enabling operational managers with Information Systems Services to accurately evaluate the court's current technology environment and to develop a disaster plan and procedures. In place now are arrangements for the use of alternative facilities both within and outside of Tallahassee as well as for access to data center space that has instant backup capabilities.

Performance and Accountability

"By providing full accountability, the judicial branch can maintain the integrity and independence of the courts," Long-Range Issue #2 emphasizes. Thus in the late 90s, the Judicial Management Council created two committees to develop judicial performance measures and improve accountability: the District Court of Appeal Performance and Accountability Committee and the Trial Court Performance and Accountability Committee. Due to the extensiveness of their workloads, in 2002, these committees were separated from the council and reconstituted as distinct commissions: the Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability, chaired by Judge Martha C. Warner, Fourth DCA, and the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability, chaired by Judge Alice Blackwell, Ninth Circuit. The following reflects the branch's commitment to developing standards that measure court performance and support continuous improvement efforts.

Judge Alice Blackwell, Ninth Circuit, chairs the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability.

Court Statistics and Workload Committee

In order for the court system to operate seamlessly and accountably, it must have access to high-quality, unimpeachable, timely data. To oversee the collection and analysis of all trial court-related data, the supreme court recently reconstituted the Court Statistics and Workload Committee (under the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability). In conjunction with the Florida Courts Technology Commission, this standing committee will also be responsible for exploring the feasibility of developing new trial court information structures necessary to support court managers, court administration, and the gamut of supreme court commissions and committees. The committee will also address the remaining tasks delineated in the 2007 *Judicial Resource Study Final Report: Measuring the Workload of Trial Court Judges, General Magistrates and Hearing Officers*; in addition, it will consider the inclusion of senior judge resources as a permanent component of the judicial weighted workload model.

Digital Court Reporting Services

In October 2007, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability submitted the report *Recommendations for the Provision of Court Reporting Services in Florida's Trial Courts* to the supreme court. The report offers suggestions for improving the uniformity, effectiveness, and efficiency of court reporting services while allowing for a measure of operational flexibility in the circuits. Among the topics covered are standards of operation and best practices associated with the proper use of digital technology; staffing and service delivery models; transcript production; and the cost-sharing arrangement with the public defenders, state attorneys, and Justice Administrative Commission. The report also advances several rule revisions predicated on three fundamental conclusions: a transcript is considered the official record of a court proceeding; the court owns the record of a judicial proceeding and has the authority and responsibility to control the record; and transcripts (including those created from digital recordings) may only be prepared by court reporters or transcriptionists approved by the court.

Self-Represented Litigants

If self-represented litigants are unfamiliar with the protocols and procedures of the court system and thus fail to file the necessary or

The Year in Review

Judge Martha C. Warner, Fourth DCA, chairs the Commission on District Court of Appeal Performance and Accountability.

correct papers, for instance, the resolution of their case will likely be delayed, creating three concerns: litigants will be frustrated; court dockets will be clogged; and the administration of justice will be impeded. Therefore, since 1995, the court system has spearheaded various court initiatives to help self-represented litigants achieve meaningful access to the courts. Most recently, in April of this year, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability prepared the report *Ensuring Access to Justice: Serving Florida's Self-Represented Litigants* for the supreme court. The commission's primary goal was to describe a comprehensive, court-based service framework that identifies and meets the access needs of self-represented litigants in civil cases; in keeping with this goal, the report elaborates on twelve threshold services that should be components of the self-help program. The report also affirms the basic principles and assumptions relating to court-based programs for self-represented litigants, and it defines and clarifies the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the private bar, legal service providers, trial courts, and clerks of court (to read the report, follow this link). Acknowledging that this report is "only a first step to achieve successful implementation of the self-help program," the commission recognizes the need still to define the scope of ministerial assistance and determine the program's potential fiscal impact.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

When litigants can successfully settle conflicts with the help of mediators rather than the intercession of judges, the advantages are considerable: because they take an active role in solving their disputes and thus personally tailor the solution to their needs and concerns, litigants benefit; because the courts provide a vehicle for addressing cases that can be resolved more expediently outside the courtroom, the judicial branch benefits; and because mediation costs less than a protracted lawsuit, the taxpayer benefits. Clearly, alternative dispute mechanisms enable the judicial branch to dispose of cases effectively and efficiently; thus they play an important role in improving the administration of justice.

Florida has demonstrated a vibrant commitment to alternative dispute resolution since 1975, when the state's first citizen dispute settlement center was established in Miami-Dade County. For its first 12 or so years, alternative dispute resolution was nurtured chiefly by grassroots efforts, but, all along, it had some staunch supporters who believed that it should play a role in the courts themselves since the court is the primary dispute resolution mechanism. Joining forces with the judiciary and legislature to bring alternative dispute resolution under the auspices of the court system, these advocates worked tirelessly for legislation that would give civil trial judges the statutory authority to refer cases to mediation or arbitration. In 1988, this watershed legislation passed, and since then, Florida's judicial branch has developed one of the most comprehensive court-connected mediation programs in the U.S.

Pictured here are Sharon Press, director of the Florida Dispute Resolution Center, and Mike Bridenback, trial court administrator for the Thirteenth Circuit and chair of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Performance and Accountability Workgroup.

Funding Shift

From 1988 through June 2004, each county was responsible for funding the development and the staffing of mediation services for its court-connected mediation programs, resulting in great disparities in the availability and accessibility of mediation services across the state. Then in July 2004, when Revision 7 was implemented and the funding responsibility for the trial courts was transferred from the counties to the state, the legislature took over this funding obligation. Since one of the weightiest purposes of Revision 7 was to ensure equity in court funding across each county in the state, the hope was that these disparities in mediation services would be rectified.

In October 2007, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability established the Alternative Dispute Resolution Performance and Accountability Workgroup, chaired by Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Trial Court Administrator Mike Bridenback, and charged it with proposing standards of operation and best practices for mediation services. The workgroup's goal was to make recommendations for achieving equity and uniformity in court-connected mediation programs across Florida while respecting the significant part that local differences play in such a large, heterogeneous state.

The court system remains focused on protecting children, supporting families, and aiding other vulnerable Floridians, striving to resolve the disputes that touch them in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective way.

However, when the fiscal year 2007-08 budget crisis intervened, the court system's mediation programs were threatened with extinction. Fortuitously, since the workgroup was in place, it vigorously directed some of its attention to developing a sustainable method for funding the branch's alternative dispute resolution programs. Therefore, in addition to making recommendations about standards of operation and best practices, the workgroup, working in conjunction with judicial branch leaders and the legislature, was able to facilitate the transfer of the alternative dispute resolution programs from general revenue funding to trust funding. With this significant funding-shift, alternative dispute resolution programs across the state have been preserved and assured their continuing place in the court system.

Mediator Certification Qualifications

On November 15, the supreme court approved a rule change to the Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators, eliminating the requirement that certified circuit court mediators be lawyers. (If the parties are unable to agree about the selection of a mediator, however, either may still request that the court appoint a mediator who is a member of The Florida Bar.) As the supreme court noted, circuit court mediators in most other states do not need law degrees, and it acknowledged that "the general consensus in the alternative dispute resolution field is that possession of academic degrees, including law degrees, does not necessarily predict an individual's ability to be a good mediator." This requirement has been replaced by a point-based system for mediation certification (for more on the point-based system, follow this link).

Dispute Resolution Center Conference

"Insight and Inspiration," the Florida Dispute Resolution Center's sixteenth annual conference for mediators and arbitrators, drew a record-breaking crowd of over 1,200 to Orlando in August 2007. The day-and-a-half long conference, co-sponsored by the Dispute Resolution Center and the Florida Academy of Professional Mediators, followed a one-day training session for court-appointed arbitrators. Mediators are required to complete at least 16 hours of continuing mediation education every two years; as of August 1, 2007, as part of their 16 hours, all mediators must take one hour of diversity/cultural awareness education, and all county court and circuit court mediators must take two hours of domestic violence education. Offering a balance of high-quality plenary sessions and small, interactive workshops, the conference treated attendees to an abundance of engaging opportunities to meet their education requirements.

Court Improvement Initiatives

Often, complex and intimate issues that concern family breakdown, family violence, substance abuse, and mental illness end up being decided in the courts. Since 1991, the judicial branch has worked toward developing an integrated, comprehensive approach to handling these sensitive cases through innovative court operational practices and collaboration with court partners. The court system remains focused on protecting children, supporting families, and aiding other vulnerable Floridians, striving to resolve the disputes that touch them in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective way.

Family Court

The supreme court's Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court and the Office of Court Improvement (in the Office of the State Courts Administrator) are responsible for coordinating most of the branch's initiatives addressing families, children, and other at-risk parties. This year, in its report to the supreme court, the steering committee, chaired by Second Judicial Circuit Judge Nikki Ann Clark, detailed a series of recommendations spanning a wide range of family-related areas: the challenges of children who "age out" of the foster care system; the challenges of litigants with

mental illness; the sealing of certain records in family court cases; the standardization of child support orders; the collection of meaningful data for improving the judicial case management of civil domestic violence cases; and the rules that affect the implementation of unified family court and the improvement of its operation.

The steering committee also spearheaded the production of *A Family Guide to Dependency Court*, a video created primarily for parents who are entering the early phase of the proceedings. Available online, the video clarifies the scope and role of dependency court and addresses the kinds of questions parents are likely to have. Throughout, the video emphasizes that the preferred goal of dependency court is to reunite parents with their children; to realize this goal, parents are urged to do their case plans.

Judge Nikki Ann Clark, Second Circuit, chairs the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court.

The Office of Court Improvement's dependency initiatives are typically funded by federal dependency court improvement grants. This year, Court Improvement staff drafted the *Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Assessment*: a requirement of all recipients of court improvement program grants. For this project, staff did a rigorous assessment of the court system's roles, responsibilities, and effectiveness in the interstate placement of children. Under the guidance of a multidisciplinary panel, staff conducted a legal review of, and a review of the national literature on, the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children; worked closely with the Department of Children and Families to explore policy improvements the agency had made to expedite placements; reviewed case files to analyze timeframes; constructed a survey instrument, which they distributed to respondents across the state; and convened a focus group to analyze the data findings and draft recommendations, which were finalized by the panel. As a result of this assessment, the court system and the Department of Children and Families have collaborated to improve, and thereby to speed up, the process by which foster children can be placed in homes across state lines.

In addition, Court Improvement staff developed a model for establishing child support in dependency cases. In the past, the court system lacked a uniform process for determining and setting up child support in these cases—or for making sure that the child support was directed toward the right person. Working closely with Department of Children and Families and the Department of Revenue, staff constructed a best practices model. Since January, the model has been successfully piloted in four courtrooms (and three circuits), and it will soon be rolled out statewide. Training will be provided at this year's Statewide Dependency Summit, judicial conferences, and locally.

Also in conjunction with the Department of Children and Families, Court Improvement staff developed a model for concurrent case planning with the goal of increasing placement stability and expediting permanency for children who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected. Under this model, dependency judges will ensure that, in certain circumstances, family cases have two case plan goals: one goal is aimed at reunification; the other, at termination of parental rights/adoption. The Eighth Judicial Circuit, with the support of the Department of Children and Families and local community-based care providers, will soon be piloting this model.

This fiscal year, Court Improvement staff also authored a number of publications to support the work of judges, court personnel, and court partners. With the dedicated input of 30 noted leaders in the field of domestic violence, staff drafted *Putting the Pieces Together: The Domestic Violence Strategic Plan*, which addresses some of the most pressing domestic violence-related issues facing Florida's courts and will be used to provide guidance for future court projects. The *Compendium of 2007 Family Court Practices* expounds the circuits' self-identified best practices for family law cases as well as the Family Law Advisory Groups' accomplishments and topics of discussion. *Legislation/Family Court Case Law Updates* were published monthly on the Office of Court Improvement website. And the *Florida Statutes, Chapter 39: Proceedings Related to Children* update has also been prepared; in conjunction with the update, staff coordinated seven conference calls, by region, to tell judges, magistrates, and family court managers about legislative changes that would be taking effect on July 1, 2008—a strategy that proved to be effective for disseminating this critical, end-of-session information. Finally, staff are working with the American Bar Association to produce a *Teen Guide to Understanding Dependency Court* and are also preparing a *Caregivers Guide to Understanding Dependency Court* for foster parents, relatives, and pre-adoptive parents.

Court Improvement has also worked on coordinating a series of training events that will use grant funding to provide funding and technical assistance to individual or neighboring circuits for local-based training for judges, court personnel, and key community stakeholders. The trainings will focus on family violence, dependency issues, and other topics relevant to family court and will vary in content and duration. Circuits will have the flexibility to customize this multidisciplinary training. Court Improvement staff are currently composing a "how-to" guide offering suggestions for coordinating local, multidisciplinary training events.

Through the collaboration of all three branches of government and the private sector, drug courts have become prudent investments that reduce crime, reduce recidivism, restore families, save money, and save lives.

Drug Court

The twentieth anniversary of drug court is fast approaching. Back in the late 80s, Miami-Dade County judges contemplated strategies for more effectively processing the high number of drug offenders who were revolving in and out of the court system; in 1989, the drug court concept, and the world's first drug court, were born. Currently, the U.S. has over 2,140 operational drug courts, according to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Florida is home to 113 drug courts: 49 adult criminal, 31 juvenile, 24 family dependency, three misdemeanor, two DUI, and one juvenile re-entry (in the planning stages are three more juvenile re-entry and one more adult criminal). Through the collaboration of all three branches of government and the private sector, drug courts have become prudent investments that reduce crime, reduce recidivism, restore families, save money, and save lives.

Judge Terry Terrell, First Circuit, who chairs the Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts, looks over some documents with Jennifer Grandal, court operations consultant with OSCA and statewide drug court coordinator.

The supreme court's Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts, chaired by First Judicial Circuit Judge Terry Terrell, is responsible for making recommendations about the legal, policy, and procedural issues that drug courts encounter; it also evaluates the extent to which drug courts can provide a practical and lasting solution to the treacherous effects of substance abuse on our society. For fiscal year 2007-08, the task force prepared a report on the long-term sustainability of drug courts, and it identified five elements that are key to strengthening and maintaining drug courts: court leadership; a stable and secure funding stream; drug court coordinators/case managers; training and education for all drug court team members; and the ability to collect and evaluate data effectively and reliably—procedures that are essential for getting adequate funding.

The task force was also directed to consider and make recommendations about the scope of confidentiality in drug court cases. After performing a careful review of state and federal law, the task force concluded that, although both state and federal law is vague about non-treatment information, it is clear about the confidentiality of treatment records. Therefore, it recommended that confidentiality of drug court files should currently be limited in scope to treatment information.

The task force also developed a detailed proposal for continuing education and training of drug court team members and related justice system personnel on substance abuse issues and on applying problem-solving court methods to address those issues. In addition, with support from the National Center for State Courts' Statewide Drug Court Technical Assistance Project, the task force designed a proposal for a statewide drug court evaluation and investigated funding sources for this evaluation. The task force determined that the evaluation process should be prioritized by drug court type, focusing first on adult drug court and following that with juvenile, family dependency, and misdemeanor/DUI drug courts; it also identified a range of prospective funding sources, including federal and foundation grants as well as state funding possibilities.

Two other drug court attainments deserve mention. First, OSCA's Office of Court Improvement received a Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (from the Department of Juvenile Justice) to provide juvenile drug court training as well as general substance abuse/mental health training

for judges and other court personnel; circuits that are interested in local training are being encouraged to contact Court Improvement. Also, in May, in honor of National Drug Court Month, OSCA helped to coordinate Florida's Ninth Annual Statewide Drug Court Graduation, which was hosted by the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit; videoconferencing technology enabled 270 graduates, from 15 circuits, to commemorate the event together. Next year, a special statewide graduation ceremony will be planned to honor the twentieth anniversary of drug court.

Mental Health Initiatives

Each year, approximately 125,000 people with serious mental illness are booked into Florida's jails. In the past nine years, the population of prison inmates with mental illness has grown from 8,000 to about 17,000, and it is projected to reach 32,000 in the next nine years (the state would have to begin building, on average, one new prison annually to handle this anticipated increase). Last year alone, to treat the 2,600 people under forensic commitment, taxpayers spent almost 250 million dollars—a cost that will continue to spiral uncontrollably unless alternative strategies are adopted. Clearly, a problem of this breadth cannot be solved by a single agency or a single branch of government. It would require a creative, collaborative approach involving the judicial branch and others who work in the criminal justice system, the range of state agencies affected by this issue, the legislature, mental health specialists, substance abuse professionals, and social service providers.

Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, who is Chief Justice Lewis' special advisor on criminal justice and mental health, talks with Linda McNeill, court operations consultant with OSCA, before a Mental Health Subcommittee meeting.

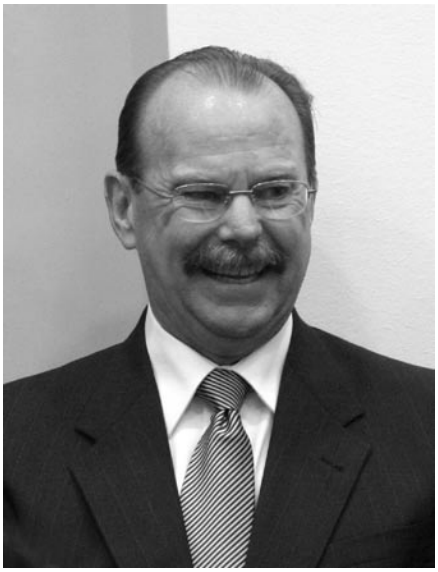
Therefore, it was no surprise that a throng of visitors to the courtroom could find standing-room only on November 14, 2007, when the supreme court hosted its prominent, long-anticipated mental health summit, Transforming Florida's Mental Health System. Among those who marked this important, inter-branch occasion were Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis (who launched this initiative) and the other supreme court justices, Governor Charlie Crist, the heads of various executive agencies (e.g., Department of Children and Families, Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Corrections), and numerous judges and mental health experts from across the state. The summit was organized to herald, and generate a broad and nonpartisan base of support for, the recently-completed report, *Constructing a Comprehensive and Competent Criminal Justice/Mental Health/Substance Abuse Treatment System: Strategies for Planning, Leadership, Financing, and Service Development*—a product of the supreme court's Mental Health Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, who is also the chief justice's special advisor on criminal justice and mental health, and staffed by professionals with expertise in the mental health field.

After offering an historical overview of the treatment of the mentally ill in the U.S. and in Florida, Judge Leifman introduced the audience to the subcommittee's comprehensive plan for creating a system of care for those with serious mental illness who are involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the criminal justice system. The plan would take six years to phase in, and among its key features are the creation of a three-tier classification system to distinguish among levels of mental illness so as to determine appropriate levels of care; the adoption of a series of innovative financing strategies that would create incentives to prevent individuals from inappropriately entering the justice system; the formation of Integrated Specialty Care Networks to maximize state and federal funding that serves those with serious mental illness; the establishment of inter-agency partnerships to maximize funding streams for mentally ill individuals who are covered under public entitlement benefits; and the establishment of a statewide leadership group to help communities become eligible for federal funding to serve those with mental illness by supporting their development of an infrastructure for competent, community-based mental health systems. Not only would this plan lead to a substantial savings in taxpayer dollars, Judge Leifman emphasized, but it would also help countless Floridians, offering them "a true opportunity for the recovery of hope."

To start the plan, the judicial branch sought an eight million dollar commitment from the legislature. However, given the state's current and unabating budget crisis—and despite considerable legislative support of the plan—the bill failed on the last day of session. Nonetheless, Judge Leifman is optimistic that the bill will be reanimated next year.

Case Management

When intricate cases end up being drawn out over a long period of time, they can deplete the resources and time of the court system and the parties. Effective case management enables the efficient and effective disposition of cases, thus improving the administration of justice.



Judge Thomas H. Bateman, III, Second Circuit, chairs the Task Force on Management of Cases Involving Complex Litigation.

In his passing of the gavel address in June 2006, Chief Justice Lewis identified the management of complex cases as one of the issues he was committed to improving. Within three months, he established the Task Force on Management of Cases Involving Complex Litigation, charging it with analyzing and evaluating the management of complex cases and with recommending methods for processing them more fluently and rapidly, making the best use of judicial resources. He also gave the task force the authority to propose amendments to the Florida Rules of Court Procedure that would expedite the management of these cases. Members of the task force included a cross-state selection of judges and attorneys who typically deal with complex cases; chairing the task force was Judge Thomas H. Bateman, III, Second Judicial Circuit.

The task force began by studying the court system holistically and ruminating on some of the challenges it faces. It also sought input from judges who preside over complex civil divisions in California, Arizona, and New York; organized a panel discussion and public forum; and solicited suggestions from circuits that have complex litigation or business courts. This April, the task force submitted its report—including 23 recommendations regarding technology, administrative matters, and the rule process—to the supreme court.

Among its technology recommendations, the task force urges the branch to utilize electronic discovery, electronic access to data and information, and e-filing to help resolve cases more quickly; it also supports the continued effort to develop a unified, statewide case management system for the trial courts; and it encourages the courts to maximize use of videoconferencing to facilitate a speedier resolution of cases and to save time and money for the courts, attorneys, and their clients. The task force's administrative recommendations include adopting time standards for complex cases and developing the ability to track complex cases, business cases, and length-of-trial data; the task force also recommends the creation of educational programming and benchguides for judges who handle complex cases and the compilation of a "best practices" for complex civil litigation divisions and business courts.

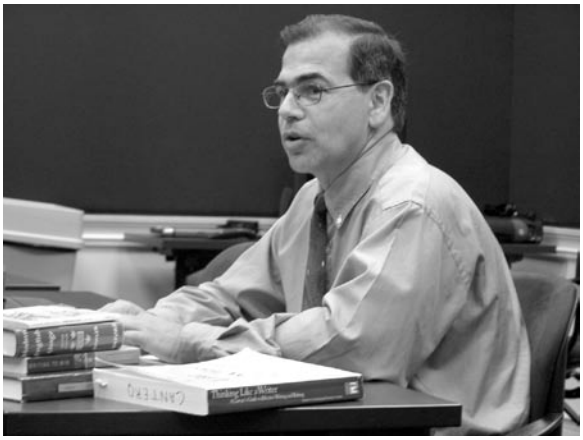
In addition, the task force drafted a new rule of civil procedure for complex cases, and the adoption of this rule is the major recommendation, according to Judge Bateman. This rule defines what a complex case is ("one that is likely to involve complicated legal or case management issues and that may require extensive judicial management to expedite the case, keep costs reasonable, or promote judicial efficiency"), and it provides case management guidelines, outlining the procedural steps that should be followed once a complex case is filed. A majority of the task force members believe that if these recommendations are implemented, the branch will advance the disposition of complex civil cases and improve the administration of justice.

Long-Range Issue #3: Supporting Competence and Quality

Issue Description: Justice depends on the quality and competence of those who work within the court system. Floridians deserve a court system staffed with highly competent, skilled judges and administrators. Those who work in Florida's court system deserve a high level of support to prepare them in their work.

Instructional Opportunities for Judges and Court Personnel

Florida is now home to over 18 million people. As the population grows, the law becomes more complex, and administering justice requires a larger and increasingly more sophisticated organization. "To meet the demands of justice in the 21st century," Long-Range Issue #3 notes, "judges and court personnel must be equipped with



Justice Raoul G. Cantero, III, teaches a seminar on legal writing for law clerks and staff attorneys; 246 attendees from more than 30 locations participate via videoconference.

the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to administer the justice system fairly, effectively, and in a manner that fosters public confidence. To achieve this, they must be afforded comprehensive education and training opportunities that promote personal and professional development and permit them to perform at their best." The supreme court created the Florida Court Education Council in 1978 to coordinate and develop instructional programs for judges and court personnel and to administer the budget that supports these endeavors.

Between the richly-textured live programs and the range of supplementary instructional opportunities promulgated through distance learning mechanisms, judges and other court personnel have access to a host of compelling educational resources throughout the year.

For fiscal year 2007-2008, the Florida Court Education Council, with the support of OSCA's Court Education Section, offered the annual cycle of instructional programming for judges and other court personnel: the district court of appeal conference program, the circuit conference programs, the county court conference programs, the trial court administrators program, the two phases of the Florida Judicial College for new judges, faculty training, and the DUI adjudication program (the Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies was not held due to travel restrictions resulting from the statewide budget crisis).

In addition, the council established a Universal Planning Committee to help it coordinate the delivery and subject matter of educational programs, evaluate existing educational opportunities, and consider and recommend new courses, venues, or further educational opportunities for judges and other court personnel. The council also created an Other Court Personnel Committee to help it engineer a framework for addressing the educational requests of magistrates and hearing officers, trial court staff attorneys and general counsel, judicial assistants, administrative services personnel, family court personnel, and case managers; this committee assists in evaluating these requests and recommending resources for meeting them.

One of the highlights of the initiative to offer more education opportunities for other court personnel was this year's five-day pilot program for new general magistrates and child support hearing officers. Held in conjunction with phase one of the Florida Judicial College in January, this program gave 20 magistrates and hearing officers the chance to learn from some of the state's most distinguished judicial educators and to meet and study with other new colleagues on the bench. The first half of the pilot program was designed to fit the needs of magistrates and hearing officers who are still somewhat new to their positions; the second half of the program gave them an opportunity to participate in joint sessions with the new trial court judges.

In addition to offering live programming, the council and Court Education staff are also working on various strategies for delivering educational information electronically, including course materials and educational publications. Given staffing shortages and budget restrictions, they lack the resources to create many "from scratch" programs; however, they are able to modify resources made available through traditional, live programs for judges (e.g., trained faculty, prepared presentations, and course materials and other written resources) to offer information on-demand both for judges and other court personnel.

Moreover, the Florida Court Education Council and Court Education staff have been capitalizing on the court system's technology infrastructure already in place to expand distance learning offerings, especially through videoconferencing. Florida's court system can currently host up to 36 "endpoints" (any location with a video system that allows for interactivity); the network can connect with all five DCAs and 20 circuits, and the

technology also supports connections between the court system and outside entities (using ISDN and IP). Soon, the technology will be expanded to host up to 72 video endpoints and 144 phone call-ins simultaneously.

Thanks to this technology, 120 appellate law clerks and staff attorneys were treated to a two-hour "U.S. Constitutional Law Update" videoconference with Erwin Chemerinsky, Duke University School of Law, in April. In May, appellate law clerks and staff attorneys participated in a videoconference on "Jurisdiction and Scope of Review" with Judge Larry A. Klein, Fourth DCA, and Judge Chris Altenbernd, Second DCA; also in May was "Invoking Supreme Court Jurisdiction" with Judge Altenbernd and Thomas D. Hall, clerk of the supreme court. The next videoconference had a more ambitious reach: for this one, Justice Raoul Cantero taught "Legal Writing" for law clerks and staff attorneys, drawing 246 attendees from more than 30 locations. Soon thereafter, Judge Kevin Emas, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, did a "Criminal Legislation Update" videoconference that also connected over 30 locations and included in its audience judges, magistrates, staff attorneys, case managers, judicial assistants, and others.

Between the richly-textured live programs and the range of supplemental instructional opportunities promulgated through distance learning mechanisms, judges and other court personnel have access to a host of compelling educational resources throughout the year.

Fairness and Diversity

To support competence and quality, Long-Range Issue #3 also urges the judicial branch to "incorporate the diversity of Florida into its operations," declaring that "The composition of the judiciary, court staff, the legal community, and providers of court services should resemble the composition of the population of Florida." This goal is also included in the branch's vision statement: "To be fair," it states, the courts "will respect the dignity of every person, regardless of race, class, gender or other characteristic; apply the law appropriately to the circumstances of individual cases, and include judges and court staff that reflect the community's diversity."

Florida's court system has long been committed to fairness and diversity: the supreme court established the Gender Bias Study Commission in 1987, the Racial and Ethnic Bias Study Commission in 1989, the Committee on the Court-Related Needs of Elders and Persons with Disabilities in the early 90s, and the Commission on Fairness in 1997; over the years, the judicial branch implemented many of the committee recommendations that fell within its jurisdiction.

Chief Justice Lewis urged all judges, court personnel, and justice system partners to give serious attention to the issues raised in the report Perceptions of Fairness in the Florida Court System and, within their capacity, to make every effort to assure that fairness and diversity remain among the justice system's core values.

Most recently, in 2004, former Chief Justice Barbara Pariente established the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity, which was renewed in 2006 by Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis. In its first two years, the committee, chaired by Eleventh Judicial Circuit Judge Gill Freeman, created an online court diversity information resource center; compiled a bibliography of resources on diversity and fairness in the justice system; prepared the report *Promoting and Ensuring the Diversity of Judicial Staff Attorneys and Law Clerks Within the Florida State Courts System*; and began a sweeping outreach project on perceptions of fairness in Florida's courts. Under Chief Justice Lewis for the last two years, the committee was charged with implementing the recommendations of the report and completing its outreach project. The committee was also directed to develop local court diversity and sensitivity awareness programs for judges and court staff and to establish a mechanism for surveying and re-evaluating access to the courts for people with disabilities (for

Judge Gill Freeman, Eleventh Circuit, chairs the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity.

information about the latter charge, please see "Court Access for People with Disabilities" on page 20).

In its report *Promoting and Ensuring the Diversity of Judicial Staff Attorneys and Law Clerks*, the committee recommended that the court engage in outreach efforts to minority law students and practicing attorneys to increase their awareness of and participation in judicial clerkship opportunities; the report also recommended the development of a streamlined electronic mechanism that would simplify the application process for candidates interested in staff attorney and law clerk positions. In response to these recommendations, the committee, in conjunction with the Office of the State Courts Administrator, developed the Law Clerk Resume Repository, implemented last December. This online repository not only expedites the application process, but it also enables judges and court managers to conduct a targeted search for qualified law clerk and staff attorney applicants, review resumes electronically, and contact the candidates they are interested in interviewing.

For the outreach project, the committee was directed to "conduct outreach and obtain input from judges, court staff, attorneys, jurors, litigants, and/or the public on their perceptions of disparate treatment in Florida courts" and then to submit a report detailing its findings. The committee collected survey responses (multiple choice and narrative) from over 5,000 people in the above categories and also held public meetings in Miami, Tallahassee, Orlando, and Jacksonville. *Perceptions of Fairness in the Florida Court System*, submitted in April, represents the culmination of the committee's diligent work (read report online). The report is organized around the specific biases reported by survey respondents and meeting attendees: racial and ethnic; socioeconomic; gender; age; disability; English language; and other (sexual orientation, gender identity, cronyism, and political affiliation). After describing and contextualizing each bias, the report offers an overview of the anecdotal information that people shared and then provides a synopsis of the survey data, accompanied by tables that show the breakdown of responses to each survey question. Chief Justice Lewis urged all judges, court personnel, and justice system partners to give serious attention to the issues raised in the report and, within their capacity, to make every effort to ensure that fairness and diversity remain among the justice system's core values.

Finally, the committee was instructed to develop local court diversity and sensitivity awareness programs and to complete at least one training session in every trial and appellate court by December 2007. Under the leadership of Judge Scott Bernstein, Eleventh Circuit, the committee began by creating 26 local diversity teams—one for every circuit and appellate court, and one for the supreme court and the Office of the State Courts Administrator—each comprising at least one judge and one staff member. Meanwhile, in conjunction with the Florida Court Education Council, the committee developed statewide goals and learning objectives for the training sessions. At that point, team members were ready to begin planning and promoting the training events in their courts. By the end of 2007, not only had every trial and appellate court, as well as the supreme court/OSCA, orchestrated at least one training session, but some courts actually trained all their judges and court personnel—a success due, in large part, to each court's personal commitment to and involvement in the process. But this is just the beginning: the training is intended to be ongoing, and diversity team members have already begun to discuss strategies for sustaining the momentum.

Long-Range Issue #4: Enhancing Public Access and Services

Issue Description: Justice requires the ability to petition for the redress of injuries, and the right to equal access to the legal system. Barriers to meaningful access to the legal system can result in unequal treatment which can give rise to injustice.

Emergency Management

The supreme court's Court Emergency Management Group (CEMG) works to secure public access to the courts in the most fundamental of ways: it is this group's responsibility to "deal with crises in a way that protects the health and safety of everyone in the court facilities" and to "keep the courts open to ensure justice for the people," as former Chief Justice Charles Wells declared when, in response to the 9/11 attacks, he institutionalized policies and procedures for managing court emergencies. Since then, each Florida court has identified its mission-essential functions; each has a court emergency preparedness plan that includes both emergency and administrative procedures as well as a continuity of operations plan; and each has designated an emergency coordination officer, a public information officer, and a court emergency management team. In addition, on the Florida State Courts website, the CEMG offers emergency planning templates, helpful reports and articles, checklists, a

Acting Marshal Kevin White (r) and Clerk of the Supreme Court Tom Hall (l), along with other members of the Court Emergency Management Group, meet at the designated alternate facility to plan and mobilize a response to the recent emergency preparedness exercise.

family disaster plan, and other useful documents. And the CEMG has also coordinated training programs that prepare judges and court personnel to respond to threats of all kind, from generally short-lived emergencies like hurricanes, tropical storms, tornadoes, and floods to potentially long-lived crises like biohazards, terrorism, and pandemics.

In response to last year's table top exercise that tested the supreme court's continuity of operations plan, the CEMG designed an emergency administrative order template to expedite the creation of whatever emergency orders might be necessary in an emergency situation—orders regarding the cross-assignment of judges or the movement of cases from one county to another, for example. The template, which resembles a menu of sorts, consists of one general format and includes multiple provisions that address different kinds of emergency needs.

In addition, CEMG members participated in their first full-fledged emergency preparedness exercise. One languid summer morning, members received an email—clearly labeled "Drill Drill Drill"—saying that there had been an explosion in the mailroom at the Florida Supreme Court and the building had been evacuated. The email went on to say that the police and fire departments arrived soon thereafter, and first responders found the mailroom devastated but not on fire. Moderate levels of radiation were identified, and the police department ordered an evacuation of all buildings within a two-block radius. CEMG members were instructed by Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis to convene immediately and to take appropriate action.

Soon thereafter, CEMG members met at the designated alternate facility to plan and mobilize their response. Drill coordinators had worked carefully with Florida Division of Emergency Management staff to make this event as "real-life" as possible—and CEMG members responded in kind, communicating with the justices about the issues that immediately concerned them; giving Chief Justice Lewis status reports; putting messages on the emergency hotline to provide employees with updates; and even contacting the governor's office and the press to notify them of the situation. Once the continuity of operations plan was officially activated, the alternate facility was readied for operations: office space and security were arranged for the justices; a plan was enacted to notify the families of employees about the health and safety of loved ones; court emergency management team members were contacted and given instruction (CEMG is the planning group; the court emergency management team is responsible for maintaining court operations); the technology staff set up computers and landlines at the alternate site and ensured that legal research could be conducted. In short, CEMG members addressed the details necessary for carrying out the essential work of the supreme court at the alternate facility.

Complicating factors—such as having to address an emergency motion for a stay of execution (a fictional execution was scheduled for that evening) and dealing with the pervasive radiation throughout the building that would require millions of dollars for decontamination efforts—truly tested CEMG members' ability to handle this multi-layered crisis, but, on the whole, drill coordinators and Emergency Management staff gave the CEMG high grades. Participants recognized the acute usefulness of the exercise, appreciating the importance of discovering both their own, and the continuity of operation plan's, strengths and weaknesses. "You play like you practice," the drill coordinators iterated, reminding everyone why exercises like these, and catastrophic planning generally, are so invaluable.

Court Interpreter Certification

Long-Range Issue #4 identifies some of the barriers to equal access and service in the courts; communication barriers figure prominently because "Non-English speaking users often experience a great deal of difficulty in understanding the judicial process, and are often unable to interact with the procedures, forms, documents, instructions, and judicial actions that constitute the court process." To participate effectively in the court process, people with limited English proficiency must have access to qualified/certified court interpreters; otherwise, both they, and the court system, can suffer. In Florida, where 16.7 percent of the residents

Judge Ronald Ficarrotta, Thirteenth Circuit, chairs the Court Interpreter Certification Board.

are foreign born and 23.1 percent speak a language other than English at home, having qualified court interpreters is essential.

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Although the Office of the State Courts Administrator has had a court interpreter training and testing program in place since 1998, participation in the program has been voluntary, which means that the courts haven't been able to strictly regulate the quality of the interpreters. After the legislature authorized the court to "establish minimum standards and procedures for qualifications, certification, professional conduct, discipline, and training" in 2006, the supreme court created the Court Interpreter Certification Board, making it responsible for the certification, regulation, and discipline of court interpreters as well as for the suspension and revocation of certification. Thanks to the hard work of the board, chaired by Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Judge Ronald Ficarrotta, a formal court interpreter certification process is now in place, and since July 1, 2008, trial judges are required, whenever possible, to appoint certified or duly qualified court interpreters.

In Florida, interpreters can become certified in Arabic, Cantonese, French, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Currently, approximately 250 court interpreters are poised for certification.

The Court Interpreter Certification Board, which has now turned its attention to the formalization of continuing education requirements, continues to work assiduously to fulfill its mission: "to afford all Floridians equal access to the justice forum by removing linguistic barriers and increasing the availability and effectiveness of qualified foreign language interpreters."

Court Access for People with Disabilities

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2000 and 2030, the number of Floridians 65 and older is projected to grow from 2.8 million to nearly 7.8 million—that is, from 17.6 percent to 27 percent of Sunshine State residents. People 65 and older are more than twice as likely to have a disability as those who are 16 to 65. If the Census Bureau projection proves true, the number of Floridians with disabilities (currently, over three million) will escalate dramatically in the next few decades. As Long-Range Issue #4 points out, people with disabilities often encounter barriers to equal access and service in the courts. Thus Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis has been exhorting Florida's courts to address the needs of people with disabilities and to focus both on architectural and electronic access.

In September 2006, Chief Justice Lewis charged the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity to establish a Court Accessibility Subcommittee to coordinate the surveying of all 140 court facilities in the state for architectural accessibility and to support the development and implementation of transition plans. He also asked the chief judge of each circuit and DCA to appoint a broad-based Court Accessibility Team to manage the project locally. Meanwhile, the subcommittee, chaired by Tenth

Court Access Team members Steve Howells, of the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, and Mike Fitch measure the height, depth, width, and knee clearance of the lectern in the supreme court courtroom to make sure it complies with ADA guidelines.

Judicial Circuit Trial Court Administrator Nick Sudzina, designed a comprehensive, courts-specific survey instrument and organized regional training sessions for the members of the Court Accessibility Teams. Last fall, courts sent their completed surveys to the subcommittee, and they became the basis for its final report, submitted to the chief justice in May.

Access to the Florida Courts: Identifying and Eliminating Architectural Barriers describes the preparation for and process of surveying the court facilities and also provides an overview of the survey results, including an itemization of improvements that have been made and of areas that still need attention. The report also offers recommendations to help the court system in its ongoing endeavors to eliminate architectural barriers to access.

Subcommittee members were especially invigorated by the level of collaboration achieved in addressing this initiative: chief judges, appellate court marshals, court administrators, court ADA coordinators, disability organizations, county commissioners, county administrators, and county facility staff offered their support, time, and assistance for this effort. Also noteworthy is that the survey process itself inspired many courts to undertake immediate improvements.

These initiatives, and the improvements they spawn, will benefit a great many Floridians—not only parties, victims, witnesses, and jurors, but also attorneys, mediators, court interpreters, court reporters, and all others who seek access to the courts, whether physically or electronically.

But architectural access represents only one aspect of accessibility. In the Digital Age, accessibility means that electronic information and information technology must also be accessible to people with disabilities—and, since July 2006, Florida law requires that all state government entities make electronic accessibility a reality. Therefore, Florida's courts have been taking steps to ensure the accessibility of all electronic-based communications, among them, email, word-processed documents, PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, spreadsheets, web pages, videos, and audio files.

For all its court technology projects, for instance, the Florida Courts Technology Commission has been tasked with considering and applying the requirements of all germane state and federal disability laws; thus, eventually, all technology-based policy decisions will be conceptualized with the goal of electronic access in mind. Also, the Office of the State Courts Administrator has established a mechanism for addressing inquiries from judges and court staff about the accessibility of court electronic information and information technologies; inquiries can be emailed to a team consisting of court staff with legal, technical, web development, and disability expertise, which develops a collective response.

In addition, many courts have undertaken local initiatives. The supreme court and the Office of the State Courts Administrator, for example, established the 508 Workgroup (named after section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, after which the Florida law is modeled), whose purpose is to provide guidance about implementing the Florida Statutes that relate to the accessibility of electronic information and information technology for persons with disabilities. Moreover, many courts have hosted training sessions that focus on what accessibility means; what Florida law requires; how the law affects judges and court staff and their work products; and how to create accessible office documents.

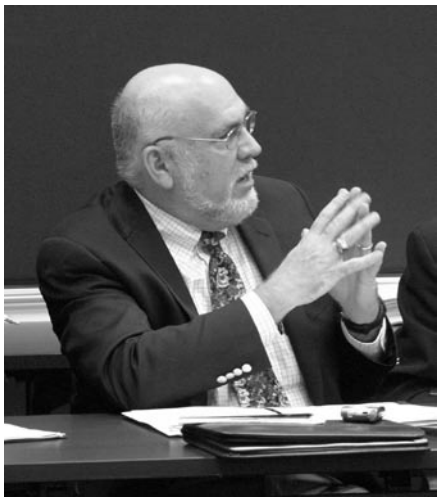
These initiatives, and the improvements they spawn, will benefit a great many Floridians—not only parties, victims, witnesses, and jurors, but also attorneys, mediators, court interpreters, court reporters, and all others who seek access to the courts, whether physically or electronically.

Electronic Access to Court Records and Electronic Filing

Judicial branch leaders have long recognized that new technologies can significantly enhance people's access to the courts; thus, along with recommending that the court system continue improving access and services through traditional means, Long-Range Issue #4 urges the branch to improve them through electronic means as well. The Committee on Access to Court Records and the Electronic Filing Committee are keenly committed to this goal.

The Committee on Access to Court Records, chaired by Eleventh Judicial Circuit Judge Judith L. Kreeger, has been focusing most intently on reviewing and amending the scope of Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.420 (formerly, Rule 2.051), which governs public access to the records of the judicial branch. In its current form, the rule appears to incorporate all statutory exemptions, of which more than 1,000 exist. This incorporation makes the rule largely unworkable in a digital context because Florida's courts receive approximately 19 million documents annually, so the task of fully applying all statutory exemptions to all court records would substantially impede the eventual implementation of public online access to court records.

After the supreme court acknowledged that revising this rule is a necessary precondition of electronic access, the committee was directed to narrow the rule's application to a limited set of exemptions that are both appropriate in the court context as well as readily identifiable. In revising the rule, the committee seeks to give clear guidance—by way of a list of specific items—to the clerks of court about what



Chief Judge Manuel Menendez, Jr., Thirteenth Circuit, chairs the Electronic Filing Committee.

information must be kept confidential. The revised rule also allows filers to assert confidentiality under other statutory exemptions that are not on that list. In short, if adopted by the supreme court, the rule change will amend the ways in which the courts protect confidential information, and it will place obligations on court users, clerks, and the courts themselves regarding what information should be kept confidential.

In addition to supporting electronic access to court records, the supreme court has encouraged Florida's courts to develop electronic filing initiatives. Electronic filing enhances public access and services by enabling safe and secure electronic transactions, expediting the filing of court documents, reducing unnecessary data entry and decreasing the likelihood of errors, allowing parties to review documents online, and reducing costs related to paper, postage, and storage. The clerks of court submit e-filing plans to the Electronic Filing Committee, which is under the aegis of the Florida Courts Technology Commission and is chaired by Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Manuel Menendez, Jr.; the committee reviews, evaluates, and accepts or rejects the plans.

Over the last eight years, 14 Florida counties have received approval for 30 different electronic filing initiatives. The level of complexity of these initiatives varies considerably, as does their scope, and these initiatives were designed for implementation in a range of venue types (among them, business court, probate and guardianship, dependency, small claims, county civil, circuit civil, criminal, family, and traffic).

For fiscal year 2007-2008, the supreme court approved six electronic filing initiatives: Alachua County received approval to implement the electronic delivery of dependency orders; Clay County, to discontinue follow-up paper filing requirements in civil cases; Hillsborough County, to implement an e-filing system in general civil and complex civil litigation; Leon County, to implement an electronic citation system to support the electronic transmission of traffic citations for the civil division; Miami-Dade County, to implement the CourtNOTIFY system for electronic noticing of law enforcement officers for case-related matters; and Orange County, to expand the complex business litigation e-filing system to include the remainder of the circuit civil division.

Florida's courts are continuing to embrace innovative technological processes that increase accessibility and responsiveness to the public, promote more efficient day-to-day operations, and reduce significantly the costs associated with the filing and storing of paper documents while remaining heedful of the privacy rights of Florida residents.

Long-Range Issue #5: Building Public Trust and Confidence

Issue Description: The independence and legal authority of the courts is a grant by the people. The erosion of public trust and confidence in the courts undermines judicial independence, diminishes the effectiveness of court actions, and reduces the ability of the courts to fulfill their function.

Education and Outreach

In order for the justice system to be effective and for the judicial branch to fulfill its constitutional mandate, it is essential that the people trust and feel confidence in the courts. Therefore, endeavors to strengthen public trust and confidence underpin everything the court system does and are priorities that it pursues energetically. For instance, as this annual report describes, the judicial branch strives to be accountable to the public (see Long-Range Issue #2), to be fair (see Long-Range Issue #3), to be accessible (see Long-Range Issue #4), to be responsive to the public's expectations (See Long-Range issues #1 and #3), and to administer justice effectively by ensuring that judges and court personnel are skilled and highly competent (see Long-Range Issue #3).

To fortify public trust and confidence, the branch also aims to keep the public informed about the role, structure, and functions of the courts. As studies have demonstrated, people's respect for judicial decisions and processes deepens when they understand the unique role of the

Currently, Justice Teaching has over 3,400 volunteers at schools throughout the state—and over 98 percent of the schools in Florida now have a Justice Teaching volunteer assigned to them.

courts. Therefore, "Public knowledge about the courts is critical," Chief Justice Lewis emphasizes: when people understand how the courts function, when they come to appreciate Florida's justice system and laws, they are more likely to feel trust and confidence in the courts and, in turn, to support a strong and independent judiciary. This section highlights some of the supreme court's endeavors to foster public trust and confidence through initiatives to educate and inform court users and the public about the Third Branch and about constitutional and legal principles.

After several days of intense learning and researching, teachers participating in the Justice Teaching Institute engage in a mock oral argument; pictured here are the teachers whose mock OA took place in the supreme court courtroom.

The Justice Teaching Initiative

Spurred by surveys indicating that Americans tend to know little about the operation of the American justice system and that they do not grasp the basic principles underlying this nation's constitutional institutions and structures, Chief Justice Lewis established the Justice Teaching Initiative soon after the gavel passed to him in June 2006. By partnering a legal professional with every elementary, middle, and high school in Florida, this initiative seeks to promote an understanding of Florida's justice system and laws, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and demonstrate the effective interaction of Florida's courts within the constitutional structure.

With generous funding support from The Florida Bar Foundation, Justice Teaching is governed by a select committee, whose members include a judge from each of Florida's 20 judicial circuits and five appellate districts as well as representatives of The Florida Bar, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, and the Florida Law Related Education Association. Through Justice Teaching, Chief Justice Lewis strives "to form the most comprehensive approach to support civic education that's ever been attempted."

Currently, Justice Teaching has over 3,400 volunteers at schools throughout the state—and over 98 percent of the schools in Florida now have a Justice Teaching volunteer assigned to them. Teachers' and students' enthusiasm about this valuable—and free—resource has been palpable, and equally encouraging has been the spirited feedback from the lawyers and judges who are volunteering their time to go into their local schools to facilitate interactive, hands-on lessons (available on the Justice Teaching website) about the inner workings of the government and the justice system.

The Justice Teaching Institute

First offered in 1997, when former Chief Justice Gerald Kogan conceived it as part of the Florida Supreme Court's Sesquicentennial Celebration, the annual Justice Teaching Institute offers 25 secondary school teachers from across the state a chance to explore, over a five-day period, the interior operations of the judicial branch. Sponsored by the supreme court, underwritten by The Florida Bar Foundation, and coordinated by the Florida Law Related Education Association, the Justice Teaching Institute is a highly intensive, interactive program, and, to be chosen, teachers must undergo a competitive selection process. Those who are selected are taught by some of the best instructors the branch has to offer: this year, all seven justices, Eleventh Judicial Circuit Judge Michael Genden, Third Judicial Circuit Judge Leandra Johnson, and Florida Law Related Education Association Executive Director Annette Boyd Pitts were among the faculty.

Teachers learn about the structure and function of the state court system, the criminal court process, the significance of an independent judiciary, the Florida Constitution, the case study method, subtleties of the oral argument, alternative dispute resolution methods, accessing legal resources from the library and the Internet, and the constitutional issues undergirding an actual case that is about to go before the court. All this training prepares them for the culminating experience: the teachers' mock

oral argument on the very case for which the justices themselves are preparing.

This year's teachers came from all across the state, representing 15 judicial circuits. A good balance of new and veteran teachers and of middle and high school teachers, this year's class was unusual in that teaching is a second career for many of them: for instance, five are former practicing attorneys, and two are former law enforcement officers. Once they go back to their schools, Justice Teaching Institute fellows are eager to facilitate training programs for other teachers in their school and to develop a courts unit for classroom use.

The Florida Supreme Court Library recently underwent some major renovation, which gave staff an opportunity to make library stacks and materials more accessible to all users, including people with disabilities.

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At the end of the five days, teachers rhapsodized about the program, calling it "one of the highlights of my life" and "a once-in-a-lifetime experience" that "will definitely help me take my craft to the next level." One teacher lamented that "So few teachers are able to take advantage of this opportunity each year," but, she then added, "Twenty-five teachers times 150 students does add up!" And this exponential effect is one of the many strengths of this program: over time, through the efforts of these dedicated and inspiring teachers, thousands of students are likely to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the role and functions of the judicial branch.

The Florida Supreme Court Tour Program

Tallahassee visitors who are keen to learn about the history and function of the state's highest court can choose from among three different kinds of supreme court tours: with the help of brochures, they can do the self-guided tour of the public areas of the building (the courtroom, library, rare book room, upper and lower rotunda, clerk's office, portrait gallery, and lawyer's lounge); they can take the historical tour, learning about the building's points of interest from one of the tour program guides; or they can participate in the "mock oral argument experience," which is facilitated by a tour program guide and involves preparing for and engaging in a simulated oral argument (participants role-play the parts of lawyers and justices in arguing and deciding a case). The mock oral argument experience is especially popular among school groups, which can choose to argue one of 15 different age-appropriate cases. During fiscal year 2007-2008, well over 6,000 visitors came to the supreme court, and tour program guides, who are all volunteers, led a total of 146 historical tours and mock oral argument experiences.

The Supreme Court Tour Program was established in 1994 by Mrs. Irene Kogan, wife of former Chief Justice Kogan (on the bench from 1987-1998), to help student visitors learn more about the workings of Florida's judicial branch. The history of the court comes alive for these visitors, who learn intriguing facts about the court system, the supreme court building, and the personalities that have shaped the court, and Florida's judicial branch, over the years.

The Florida Supreme Court Library

Open to the public, the supreme court library was established in 1845 and is the oldest of Florida's state-supported libraries. Originally designed for use of the supreme court and the attorneys who practice before it, the library has over 117,000 volumes and more than 210,000 pieces of microfiche; its collections include most of the reported decisions of all American courts and an extensive array of historical statute law of the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth. In addition, as a designated federal depository library, it houses the legal materials published by the Government Printing Office. Through its subscription services, it also provides electronic access to more than 800 law journals

and other resources. And of course it is a storehouse of historical books and documents associated with the court's development and with the justices who served on it.

This year, the rare book room expansion was completed, and now, 2,500 of the 7,500 books in the rare book collection are housed there. The library's public space also underwent significant renovation and repair. Everything had to be moved to allow for this process, presenting staff with a perfect opportunity to reconsider the organization of all library materials; as a result, the older treatises and older Florida materials, both primary and secondary, were shifted from lower floors to the public areas so that they can be more immediately accessible. Stacks were also made accessible to people with disabilities. (These renovations and repairs were possible with the help of state funding specifically allocated for this purpose prior to the budget crisis.) In the course of the renovations, the library also installed two public access terminals, where visitors can do free legal research online (visitors can take advantage of the library's subscription to WESTLAW and to Martindale-Hubbell's Law Directory); moreover, WiFi hookups were installed, so library visitors can now do research on their laptops.

Over the past year, the library showcased five exhibits in its rotunda cases. For Constitution Day, the display included rare books and documents relating to the U.S. and Florida constitutions. The other exhibits highlighted artifacts from four periods of the library's *Evolution of Justice in Florida* project: Prehistoric Peoples; Spanish and British Period; American Territorial Period; and American Statehood, 1845-1861. *The Evolution of Justice* project was conceived by former Chief Justice Harry Anstead in 2002, who saw it as an opportunity to "educate the public about the history of our state's judiciary and to strengthen confidence in Florida's Courts System."

Special Events

The Gavel Passes from Chief Justice Lewis to Chief Justice Quince

In keeping with a 1926 constitutional amendment, the seven justices of the supreme court select the chief justice, who serves a two-year term. Justice R. Fred Lewis began his term as chief on June 30, 2006. When he passed the ceremonial gavel to Justice Peggy A. Quince on June 27, 2008, she became the Florida Supreme Court's fifty-third chief justice since Florida achieved statehood in 1845—and cracked two glass ceilings to reach this pinnacle: she is the state's first African-American, and third female, chief justice. As Justice Barbara Pariente declared, it was indeed a "momentous and historic occasion for the citizens of this state."

Passing of the Gavel ceremonies typically look toward the past and toward the future: speakers celebrate the achievements of the out-going chief and give voice to the promise of the incoming chief. And at this formal, televised courtroom ceremony that was open to the public—a tradition since 1996—there was no shortage of either praise or promise.

To Chief Justice Lewis, Department of Children and Families Secretary Bob Butterworth expressed particular thanks for initiating inter-branch efforts to address concerns about, and the ramifications of, the heightening prevalence of mental illness among people caught up in the justice system. And Jay White, president of The Florida Bar, extolled his founding of the Justice Teaching Initiative and his stalwart advocacy on behalf of the branch for court funding.

Turning attention to Chief Justice Quince, colleagues, friends, and family applauded her wisdom, legal skill, and big heart, describing her as energetic, passionate, and a strong advocate and voice for judges, the legal profession, the poor, the disadvantaged, the oppressed, and the citizens of the state of Florida.

Administering the oath was Justice Pariente, who, remembering her own term as chief justice, reminded the incoming chief of the weighty responsibilities of the chief justice: to be first among equals; a role model to whom judges and staff will look for guidance and support; captain of the judicial ship; a leader who will lead by example, setting the direction and tone for the entire judicial branch.

Despite the jubilance of this occasion, the pall cast by the three rounds of budget cuts to the court system, and by the state's grim economic climate generally, could not be ignored. Taking her new seat at the center of the bench, Chief Justice Quince began by underscoring the necessity of ensuring that the courts have adequate resources to carry out their function. The judicial branch is facing a great challenge, she stressed, referring to the 9.8 percent cut to the court system's recurring general revenue (base) appropriations for fiscal year 2008-2009 and to the subsequent elimination of 282 full-time positions—and to the threat of even more cuts in the near future. She urged the legislative and executive branches, The Florida Bar, the business community, and all the people of Florida to make sure the court system has the funding it needs so

On June 27, 2008, Chief Justice Peggy Quince became the fifty-third chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court.

that the case of every citizen who comes before the courts is handled effectively and efficiently.

She then touched upon some of the issues she plans to foreground over the next two years. She emphasized the judicial branch's commitment to families and children of this state, reminding listeners that the branch needs to continue ensuring that all children in the court system have a voice. To secure that representation for children, she urged attorneys to volunteer to become guardians ad litem and also to support a program she seeks to establish that will address the needs of older children who are aging out of the foster care system.

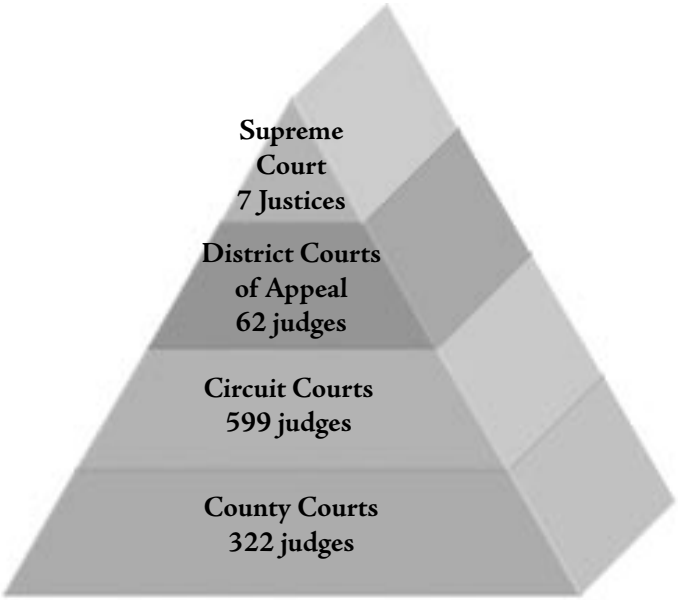
She also extolled Justice Lewis' court diversity and sensitivity awareness program, vowing to continue that effort: "No one should come out of this court system feeling that they were treated unfairly," she declared; "You may lose, but you should not feel that you were treated unfairly." And she pledged to continue collaborating with the Department of Children and Families on mental health issues and their impact on the justice system, thanking Justice Lewis for his leadership in this endeavor.

Appealing to all of Florida's citizens to lend their support, she ended by saying, "We need help in all of these issues. The court system can't do it alone; we need our community partners."

Florida's Court Structure

Florida's court system consists of the following entities: two appellate level courts (the Supreme Court and five district courts of appeal) and two trial level courts (20 circuit courts and 67 county courts). The chief justice presides as the chief administrative officer of the judicial branch.

On July 1, 1972, the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) was created with initial emphasis on developing a uniform case reporting system in order to provide information about activities of the judiciary. Additional responsibilities include preparing the operating budget for the judicial branch, projecting the need for new judges, and serving as the liaison among the court system and the legislative branch, the executive branch, the auxiliary agencies of the court, and national court research and planning agencies.



Note: This pyramid reflects the breakdown in judgeship positions through 2007–2008 fiscal year. On 1/5/09, however, the number of DCA judgeship positions will decrease to 61.

Appellate Courts

Supreme Court

- Seven justices, six-year terms
- Sits in Tallahassee
- Five justices constitute a quorum

District Courts of Appeal

- 62 judges, six-year terms
- Five districts:
  - 1st District: Tallahassee, 15 judges
  - 2nd District: Lakeland, 14 judges
  - 3rd District: Miami, 11 judges
  - 4th District: West Palm Beach, 12 judges
  - 5th District: Daytona Beach, 10 judges
- Cases generally reviewed by three-judge panels

Trial Courts

Circuit Courts

- 599 judges, six-year terms
- 20 judicial circuits
- Number of judges in each circuit based on caseload
- Judges preside individually, not on panels

County Courts

- 322 judges, six-year terms
- At least one judge in each of the 67 counties
- Judges preside individually, not on panels

Supreme Court of Florida

The Supreme Court is the highest court in Florida. To constitute a quorum to conduct business, five of the seven justices must be present, and four justices must agree on a decision in each case.

Mandatory jurisdiction includes death penalty cases, district court decisions declaring a state statute or provision of the state constitution invalid, bond validations, rules of court procedure, and statewide agency actions relating to public utilities. The court also has exclusive authority to regulate the admission and discipline of lawyers in Florida as well as the authority to discipline and remove judges.

District Courts of Appeal

The bulk of trial court decisions that are appealed are reviewed by three-judge panels of the district courts of appeal (DCAs). In each district court, a chief judge, who is selected by the body of district court judges, is responsible for the administrative duties of the court.

The district courts decide most appeals from circuit court cases and many administrative law appeals from actions by the executive branch. In addition, the district courts of appeal must review county court decisions invalidating a provision of Florida's constitution or statutes, and they may review an order or judgment of a county court that is certified by the county court to be of great public importance.

Circuit Courts

The majority of jury trials in Florida take place before circuit court judges. The circuit courts are referred to as the courts of general jurisdiction. Circuit courts hear all criminal and civil matters not within the jurisdiction of county courts, including family law, juvenile delinquency and dependency, mental health, probate, guardianship, and civil matters over $15,000. They also hear some appeals from county court rulings and from administrative action if provided by general law. Finally, they have the power to issue extraordinary writs necessary to the complete exercise of their jurisdiction.

County Courts

Each county has at least one county court judge. The number of judges in each county court varies with the population and caseload of the county. County courts are courts of limited jurisdiction, which is established by statute. The county courts are sometimes referred to as "the people's courts" because a large part of their work involves citizen disputes such as violations of municipal and county ordinances, traffic offenses, landlord-tenant disputes, misdemeanor criminal matters, and monetary disputes up to $15,000. In addition, county court judges may hear simplified dissolution of marriage cases.

DCA Circuits

1st District:	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 14
2nd District:	6, 10, 12, 13, 20
3rd District:	11, 16
4th District:	15, 17, 19
5th District:	5, 7, 9, 18

Circuit Counties

1 Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton
2 Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla
3 Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor
4 Clay, Duval, Nassau
5 Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter
6 Pasco, Pinellas
7 Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, Volusia
8 Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union
9 Orange, Osceola
10 Hardee, Highlands, Polk
11 Miami-Dade
12 DeSoto, Manatee, Sarasota
13 Hillsborough
14 Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington
15 Palm Beach
16 Monroe
17 Broward
18 Brevard, Seminole
19 Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie
20 Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee

Office of the State Courts Administrator

The Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) was created in 1972 to serve the chief justice in carrying out his or her responsibilities as the chief administrative officer of the judicial branch. OSCA's purpose is to provide professional court management and administration of the state's judicial system—basically, the non-adjudicatory services and functions necessary for the smooth operation of the judicial branch, which includes the Supreme Court of Florida, the five district courts of appeal, the 20 circuit courts, and the 67 county courts.

State Courts Administrator Elizabeth H. Goodner

OSCA has manifold duties: it prepares the judicial branch's budget requests to the legislature; it monitors legislation; and it serves as a point of contact for legislators and their staff regarding issues related to the state court system. OSCA also provides a wide spectrum of educational programs for judges; these programs, which enable judges to meet mandatory continuing education requirements, are designed to increase judicial knowledge and skills, thereby improving the administration of justice.

In addition, OSCA performs a broad range of other functions to assist the state court system, including implementing administrative and legislative initiatives for family, dependency, and delinquency court cases; collecting and analyzing statistical information relevant to court operations; developing strategic plans; offering statewide mediation training and certification through the Dispute Resolution Center; coordinating, writing, and editing administrative and judicial publications; and providing technical support for trial and appellate courts, including support for the state-funded computer infrastructure of Florida's court system. For more information about OSCA, visit the Florida State Courts website at **http://www.flcourts.org/**

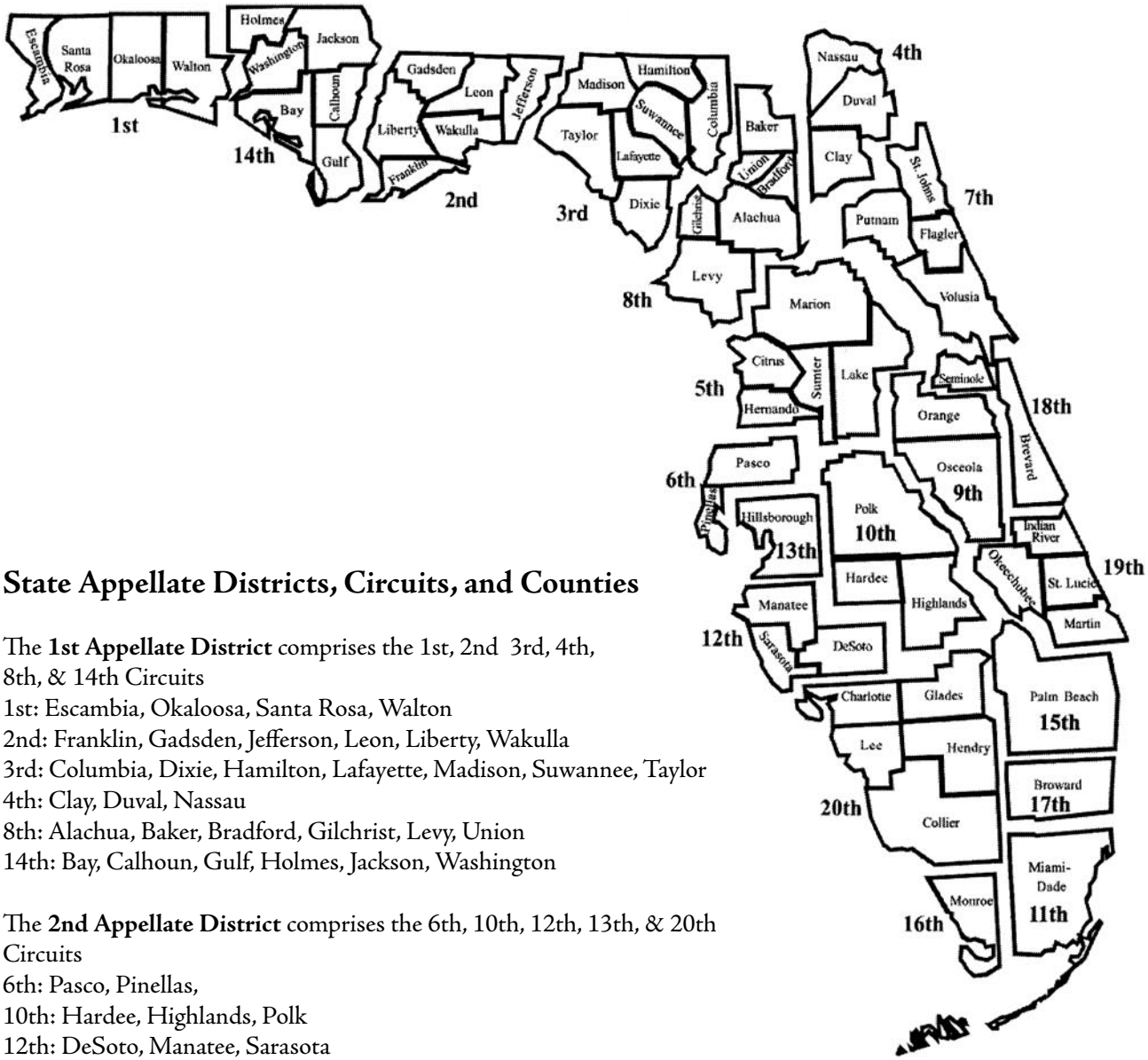
Trial Court Administrators

The trial court administrator supports the chief judge in his or her constitutional role as the administrative supervisor of the circuit and county courts; each of the 20 circuits in Florida has a trial court administrator. The office of the trial court administrator provides professional staff support to ensure effective and efficient court operations.

Trial court administrators have multiple responsibilities. They manage judicial operations such as courtroom scheduling, facilities management, caseflow policy, ADA policy, statistical analysis, inter-branch and intergovernmental relations, technology planning, jury oversight, public information, and emergency planning. They also oversee court business operations including personnel, planning and budgeting, finance and accounting, purchasing, property and records, and staff training.

In addition, the trial court administrators manage and provide support for essential court resources including court reporting, court interpreters, expert witnesses, staff attorneys, magistrates and hearing officers, mediation, and case management. For links to the homepages of Florida's circuit courts, go to **http://www.flcourts.org/courts/circuit/circuit.shtml**

Participants at the trial court administrators' winter education program include (clockwise, from "noon") Carol Lee Ortman, trial court administrator for the Seventeenth Circuit; Steve Martin, director of finance and accounting for the Seventeenth; Robin Wright, trial court administrator for the First; Stacey Hoskins, court operations manager for the Tenth; Julie Nelson, administrative services manager for the Tenth; Nick Sudzina, trial court administrator for the Tenth, and Chris Stoltz, public information officer for the Seventeenth.



State Appellate Districts, Circuits, and Counties

The **1st Appellate District** comprises the 1st, 2nd 3rd, 4th, 8th, & 14th Circuits
1st: Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton
2nd: Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla
3rd: Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor
4th: Clay, Duval, Nassau
8th: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union
14th: Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington

The **2nd Appellate District** comprises the 6th, 10th, 12th, 13th, & 20th Circuits
6th: Pasco, Pinellas,
10th: Hardee, Highlands, Polk
12th: DeSoto, Manatee, Sarasota
13th: Hillsborough
20th: Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee

The **3rd Appellate District** comprises the 11th & 16th Circuits
11th: Miami-Dade
16th: Monroe

The **4th Appellate District** comprises the 15th, 17th, & 19th Circuits
15th: Palm Beach
17th: Broward
19th: Indian River, Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin

The **5th Appellate District** comprises the 5th, 7th, 9th, & 18th Circuits
5th: Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter
7th: Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, Volusia
9th: Orange, Osceola
18th: Brevard, Seminole

Judicial Certification Table

District Court of Appeal

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
1998	0	0	0	n/a	61
1999	1	1	1	100%	62
2000	0	0	0	n/a	62
2001	0	0	0	n/a	62
2002	2	2	0	0%	62
2003	3	2	0	0%	62
2004	4	4	0	0%	62
2005	2	2	0	0%	62
2006	2	2	0	0%	62
2007	2	2	0	0%	62
2008	-1	-1	-1	n/a	61

Circuit

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
1998	19	13	0	0	468
1999	27	25	25	100%	493
2000	34	30	0	0%	493
2001	40	30	16	53.3%	509
2002	35	34	18	52.9%	527
2003	35	33	0	0%	527
2004	54	51	0	0%	527
2005	69	67	37	55.2%	564
2006	41	40	35	87.5%	599
2007	24	22	0	0%	599
2008	44	19	0	0%	599

County

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
1998	12	5	0	0%	263
1999	17	6	6	100%	269
2000	17	13	0	0%	269
2001	23	14	11	78.6%	280
2002	16	13	0	0%	280
2003	23	21	0	0%	280
2004	38	33	0	0%	280
2005	44	41	22	53.7%	302
2006	26	24	20	83.3%	322
2007	15	13	0	0%	322
2008	46	42	0	0%	322

Judicial Certification

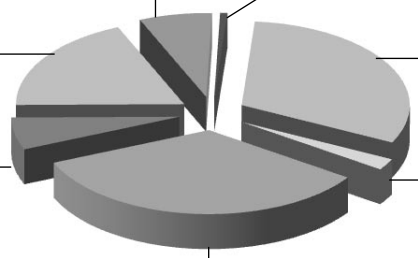
Since 1999, the supreme court has used a weighted caseload system to evaluate the need for new trial court judgeships. The weighted caseload system analyzes Florida's trial court caseload statistics according to complexity. Cases that are generally complex, such as capital murder cases, receive a higher weight, while cases that are typically less complex, such as civil traffic cases, receive a lower weight. These weights are then applied to case filing statistics to determine the need for additional judgeships.

Having an adequate number of judgeships is essential: if judicial workload exceeds capacity and a judicial need deficit is not addressed, likely consequences may be case processing delays, less time devoted to dispositions, and potentially diminished access to the courts.

In April 2008, the Florida Supreme Court certified the need for 19 additional circuit judges and 42 additional county court judges. Based on a continued downward trend in caseload, the supreme court also certified the need to decrease by one position a district court of appeal judgeship.

The Florida Legislature did not approve funding for any new judgeships this year, but it did authorize the decertification of the one DCA judgeship.

2007-2008 Fiscal Year Appropriations

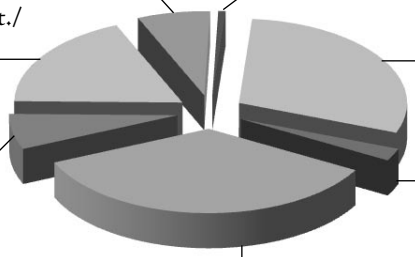


Total: $69,897,375,025

Note: This total includes those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, SB 2800, in addition to 2007 Special Legislative Session C Reductions and HB 7009 Reductions.

Florida's courts get less than 1% of the state's total budget

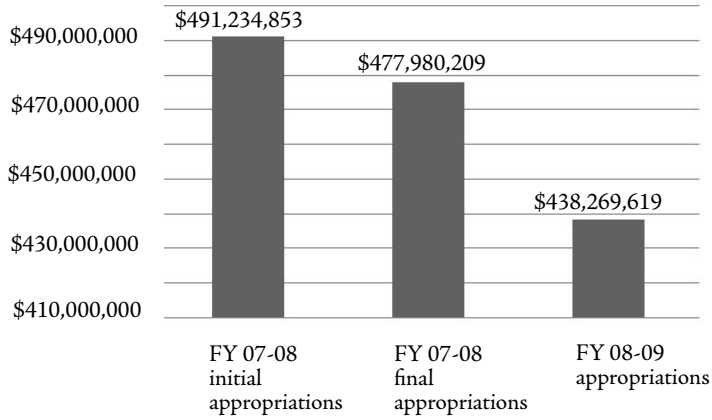
2008-2009 Fiscal Year Appropriations



Total: $66,199,586,152

This total includes only those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, HB 5001.

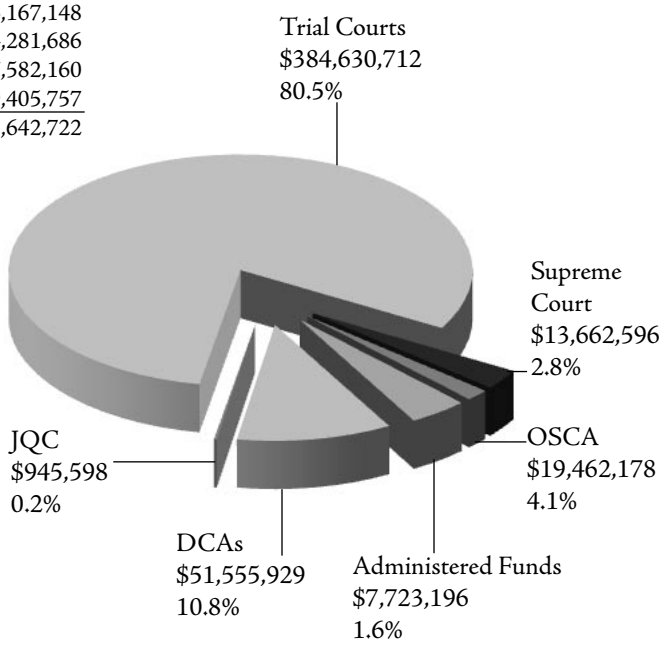
Budget Reductions to the Judicial Branch Between FY 2007-08 and FY 2008-09



As a result of funding cuts—which represent a 9.8% decrease (a $43.7 million loss) from the judicial branch's initial 2007-2008 recurring general revenue base appropriations—the state courts system had to eliminate 282 full-time positions by July 1, 2008.

Final Justice System Appropriations 2007-2008 Fiscal Year

State Courts System	$477,980,209
Justice Administration Executive Direction	$99,106,665
Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Program	$34,343,800
State Attorneys	$386,775,297
Public Defenders Judicial Circuit	$196,167,148
Public Defenders Appellate	$14,281,686
Capital Collateral Regional Counsel	$7,582,160
Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsels	$29,405,757
Total	$1,245,642,722

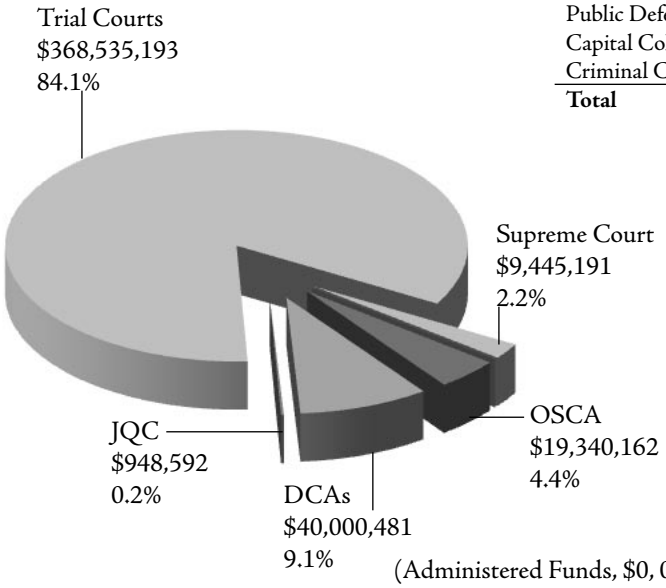


State Courts System Total: $477,980,209

Note: This total includes those issues that were funded in the General Apropriations Act, SB 2800, in addition to 2007 Special Legislative Session C Reductions and HB 7009 Reductions.

Justice System Appropriations 2008-2009 Fiscal Year

State Courts System	$438,269,619
Justice Administration Executive Direction	$82,933,877
Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Program	$33,210,530
State Attorneys	$381,449,498
Public Defenders Judicial Circuit	$190,462,465
Public Defenders Appellate	$13,632,015
Capital Collateral Regional Counsel	$7,269,727
Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsels	$35,234,938
Total	$1,182,462,669

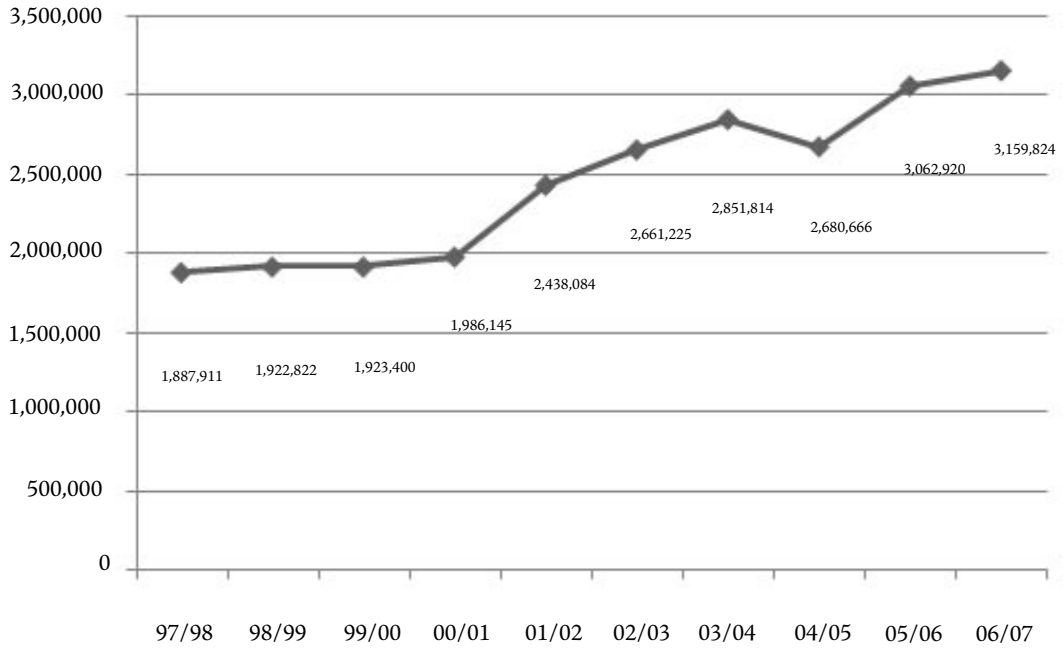


State Courts System Total: $438,269,619

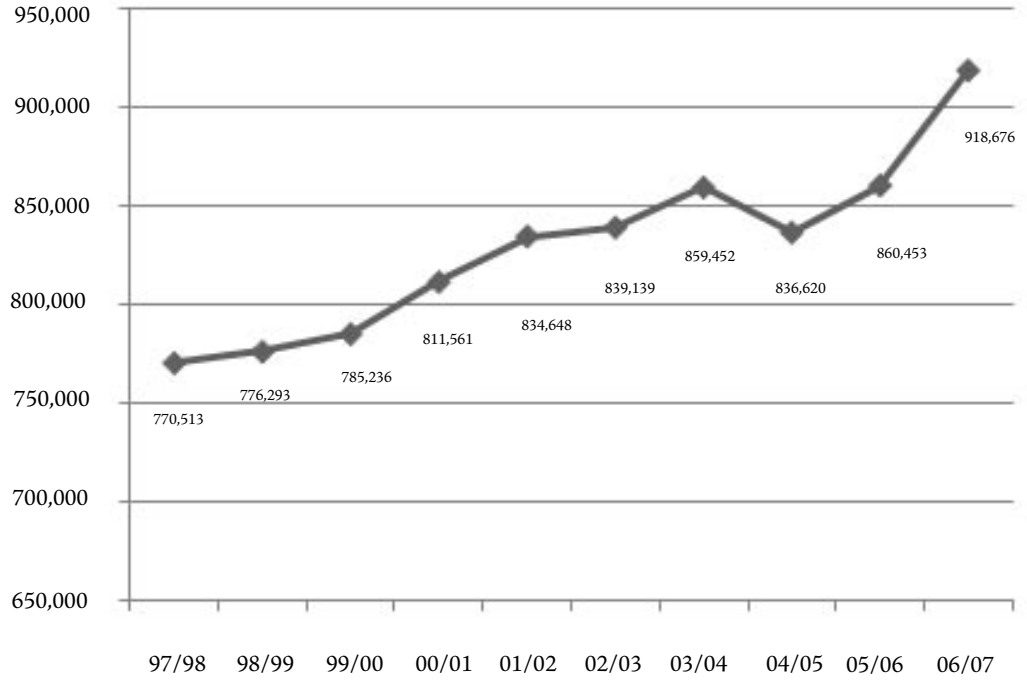
Note: This total reflects those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, HB 5001.

Filings, Florida's Trial Courts
FY 1997-98 to 2006-07

County Courts

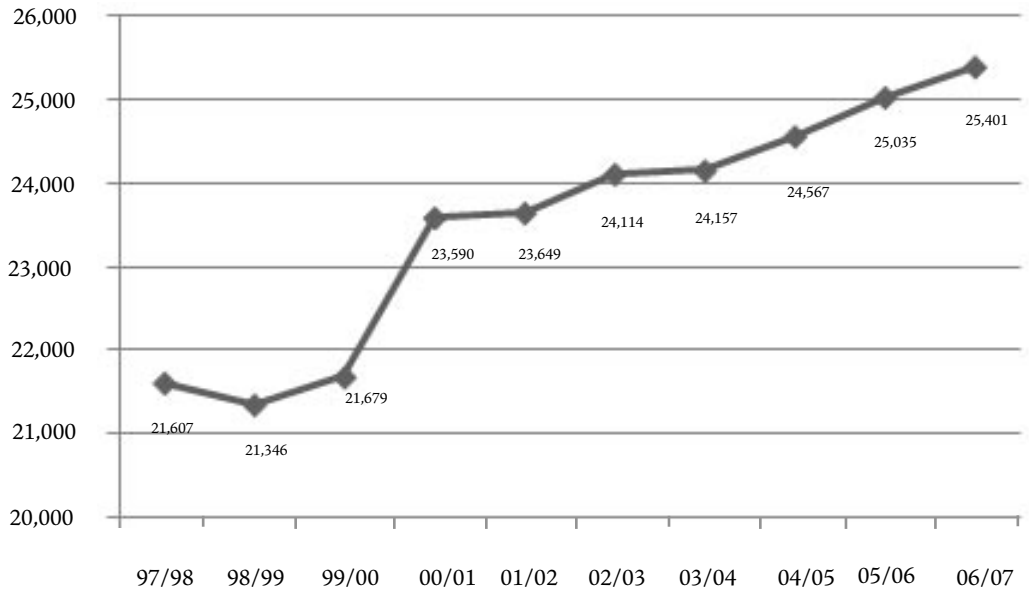


Circuit Courts

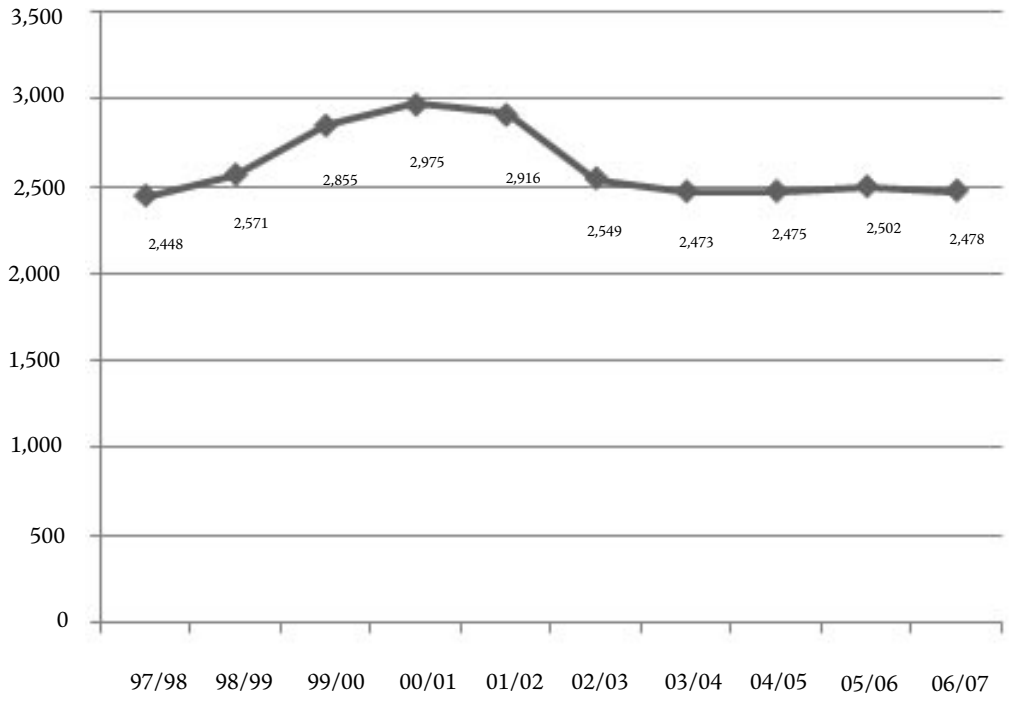


Filings, Florida's Appellate Courts
FY 1997-98 to 2006-07

District Courts



Supreme Court



Notice of Appeal and Petition FY 2006-07

* Criminal post conviction filings include notice of appeal only

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
All	Administrative	1,258
All	Civil	5,119
All	Criminal	10,097
All	Criminal Post Conviction*	5,812
All	Family	1,130
All	Juvenile	1,344
All	Probate/Guardianship	202
All	Workers' Compensation	439
		25,401

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
1	Administrative	709
	Civil	1,506
	Criminal	2,278
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,338
	Family	227
	Juvenile	312
	Probate/Guardianship	28
	Workers' Compensation	439
		6,837
2	Administrative	91
	Civil	1,005
	Criminal	2,747
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,472
	Family	199
	Juvenile	350
	Probate/Guardianship	34
		5,898

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
3	Administrative	157
	Civil	864
	Criminal	1,075
	Criminal Post Conviction*	756
	Family	160
	Juvenile	229
	Probate/Guardianship	46
		3,287
4	Administrative	152
	Civil	1,111
	Criminal	2,046
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,140
	Family	299
	Juvenile	191
	Probate/Guardianship	59
		4,998

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
5	Administrative	149
	Civil	633
	Criminal	1,951
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,106
	Family	245
	Juvenile	262
	Probate/Guardianship	35
		4,381
	Total	**25,401**

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT AND DIVISION

FY 2006-07 (Drawn from frozen database on 6/17/08)

Circuit	County	Division	Total Filings
All	All	Adult Criminal	230,417
All	All	Civil	226,288
All	All	Family Court*	356,485
All	All	Probate	105,486
All	All	County Adult Criminal	1,127,328
All	All	County Civil**	2,032,496
			4,078,500

Court Filings by Circuit and Division

* Family court filings include domestic relations, juvenile delinquency, juvenile dependency, and termination of parental rights.

** These data do not include all civil traffic infractions reported to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. They only represent those civil traffic infraction filings involving a judge or hearing officer.

Circuit	Division	Total Filings
1	Adult Criminal	10,941
	Civil	6,568
	Family Court*	16,760
	Probate	4,224
	County Adult Criminal	40,385
	County Civil**	42,977
		121,855
2	Adult Criminal	5,995
	Civil	4,534
	Family Court*	6,958
	Probate	3,045
	County Adult Criminal	18,563
	County Civil**	27,803
		66,898
3	Adult Criminal	2,399
	Civil	1,406
	Family Court*	5,117
	Probate	1,219
	County Adult Criminal	9,951
	County Civil**	13,693
		33,785
4	Adult Criminal	12,811
	Civil	12,712
	Family Court*	23,125
	Probate	5,639
	County Adult Criminal	92,785
	County Civil**	106,295
		253,367
5	Adult Criminal	12,287
	Civil	10,151
	Family Court*	19,979
	Probate	6,648
	County Adult Criminal	41,707
	County Civil**	58,355
		149,127
6	Adult Criminal	20,010
	Civil	16,108
	Family Court*	25,222
	Probate	9,248
	County Adult Criminal	79,536
	County Civil**	77,493
		227,617
7	Adult Criminal	9,917
	Civil	8,869
	Family Court*	17,107
	Probate	5,900
	County Adult Criminal	59,989
	County Civil**	56,957
		158,739
8	Adult Criminal	4,253
	Civil	2,549
	Family Court*	7,602
	Probate	2,467
	County Adult Criminal	23,302
	County Civil**	33,275
		73,448
9	Adult Criminal	21,797
	Civil	18,050
	Family Court*	29,814
	Probate	5,024
	County Adult Criminal	67,115
	County Civil**	111,709
		253,509
10	Adult Criminal	8,908
	Civil	7,617
	Family Court*	18,665
	Probate	4,656
	County Adult Criminal	43,841
	County Civil**	47,494
		131,181
11	Adult Criminal	29,177
	Civil	35,569
	Family Court*	38,999
	Probate	10,378
	County Adult Criminal	159,784
	County Civil**	536,647
		810,554
12	Adult Criminal	8,635
	Civil	6,907
	Family Court*	12,842
	Probate	5,275
	County Adult Criminal	38,319
	County Civil**	38,718
		110,696
13	Adult Criminal	19,826
	Civil	14,022
	Family Court*	26,024
	Probate	5,780
	County Adult Criminal	81,395
	County Civil**	141,885
		288,932
14	Adult Criminal	5,434
	Civil	2,769
	Family Court*	6,713
	Probate	1,867
	County Adult Criminal	24,151
	County Civil**	21,100
		62,034
15	Adult Criminal	11,777
	Civil	18,222
	Family Court*	18,525
	Probate	7,882
	County Adult Criminal	83,374
	County Civil**	229,373
		369,153
16	Adult Criminal	1,490
	Civil	1,218
	Family Court*	1,686
	Probate	611
	County Adult Criminal	3,617
	County Civil**	6,150
		14,772
17	Adult Criminal	18,371
	Civil	26,837
	Family Court*	33,197
	Probate	8,753
	County Adult Criminal	94,786
	County Civil**	311,113
		493,057
18	Adult Criminal	9,190
	Civil	8,843
	Family Court*	16,623
	Probate	5,060
	County Adult Criminal	54,232
	County Civil**	63,592
		157,540
19	Adult Criminal	6,158
	Civil	6,895
	Family Court*	11,624
	Probate	3,833
	County Adult Criminal	35,986
	County Civil**	40,378
		104,874
20	Adult Criminal	11,041
	Civil	16,442
	Family Court*	19,903
	Probate	7,977
	County Adult Criminal	74,510
	County Civil**	67,489
		197,362
Total		**4,078,500**

FY 2006-07 (drawn from frozen database on 6/17/08)

* Family court filings include domestic relations, juvenile delinquency, juvenile dependency, and termination of parental rights.

** These data do not include all civil traffic infractions reported to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. They only represent those civil traffic infraction filings involving a judge or hearing officer.

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
1	Escambia	Adult Criminal	5,665
		Civil	2,740
		Family Court*	7,835
		Probate	2,118
		County Adult Crim.	16,547
		County Civil**	17,724
			52,629
	Okaloosa	Adult Criminal	2,853
		Civil	1,651
		Family Court*	4,847
		Probate	1,251
		County Adult Crim.	10,961
		County Civil**	12,797
			34,360
	Santa Rosa	Adult Criminal	1,621
		Civil	1,298
		Family Court*	2,977
		Probate	555
		County Adult Crim.	7,612
		County Civil**	9,093
			23,156
	Walton	Adult Criminal	802
		Civil	879
		Family Court*	1,101
		Probate	300
		County Adult Crim.	5,265
		County Civil**	3,363
			11,710
2	Franklin	Adult Criminal	433
		Civil	177
		Family Court*	341
		Probate	84
		County Adult Crim.	1,443
		County Civil**	656
			3,134
	Gadsden	Adult Criminal	937
		Civil	456
		Family Court*	1,496
		Probate	637
		County Adult Crim.	3,463
		County Civil**	5,353
			12,342
	Jefferson	Adult Criminal	226
		Civil	150
		Family Court*	223
		Probate	103
		County Adult Crim.	489
		County Civil**	1,187
			2,378
	Leon	Adult Criminal	3,878
		Civil	3,392
		Family Court*	4,038
		Probate	1,987
		County Adult Crim.	11,679
		County Civil**	17,873
			42,847
	Liberty	Adult Criminal	109
		Civil	48
		Family Court*	204
		Probate	43
		County Adult Crim.	353
		County Civil**	693
			1,450
	Wakulla	Adult Criminal	412
		Civil	311
		Family Court*	656
		Probate	191
		County Adult Crim.	1,136
		County Civil**	2,041
			4,747
3	Columbia	Adult Criminal	870
		Civil	541
		Family Court*	1,686
		Probate	432
		County Adult Crim.	3,725
		County Civil**	4,691
			11,945
	Dixie	Adult Criminal	166
		Civil	91
		Family Court*	505
		Probate	147
		County Adult Crim.	634
		County Civil**	934
			2,477
	Hamilton	Adult Criminal	271
		Civil	103
		Family Court*	280
		Probate	81
		County Adult Crim.	813
		County Civil**	990
			2,538
	Lafayette	Adult Criminal	90
		Civil	49
		Family Court*	150
		Probate	33
		County Adult Crim.	222
		County Civil**	393
			937
	Madison	Adult Criminal	287
		Civil	159
		Family Court*	543
		Probate	128
		County Adult Crim.	1,028
		County Civil**	2,772
			4,917
	Suwannee	Adult Criminal	411
		Civil	312
		Family Court*	1,249
		Probate	225
		County Adult Crim.	2,101
		County Civil**	2,456
			6,754
	Taylor	Adult Criminal	304
		Civil	151
		Family Court*	704
		Probate	173
		County Adult Crim.	1,428
		County Civil**	1,457
			4,217
4	Clay	Adult Criminal	1,097
		Civil	1,483
		Family Court*	3,101
		Probate	543
		County Adult Crim.	6,329
		County Civil**	13,950
			26,503
	Duval	Adult Criminal	11,069
		Civil	10,609
		Family Court*	18,615
		Probate	4,795
		County Adult Crim.	82,752
		County Civil**	88,412
			216,252
	Nassau	Adult Criminal	645
		Civil	620
		Family Court*	1,409
		Probate	301
		County Adult Crim.	3,704
		County Civil**	3,933
			10,612
5	Citrus	Adult Criminal	1,360
		Civil	1,233
		Family Court*	2,829
		Probate	1,143
		County Adult Crim.	5,679
		County Civil**	7,562
			19,806

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
	Hernando	Adult Criminal	2,185
		Civil	2,104
		Family Court*	3,365
		Probate	1,530
		County Adult Crim.	5,903
		County Civil**	13,576
			28,663
	Lake	Adult Criminal	3,685
		Civil	2,372
		Family Court*	4,929
		Probate	1,661
		County Adult Crim.	12,243
		County Civil**	14,575
			39,465
	Marion	Adult Criminal	4,393
		Civil	3,032
		Family Court*	7,763
		Probate	2,015
		County Adult Crim.	15,385
		County Civil**	17,080
			49,668
	Sumter	Adult Criminal	664
		Civil	1,410
		Family Court*	1,093
		Probate	299
		County Adult Crim.	2,497
		County Civil**	5,562
			11,525
6	Pasco	Adult Criminal	4,283
		Civil	5,085
		Family Court*	8,086
		Probate	2,975
		County Adult Crim.	19,113
		County Civil**	22,318
			61,860
	Pinellas	Adult Criminal	15,727
		Civil	11,023
		Family Court*	17,136
		Probate	6,273
		County Adult Crim.	60,423
		County Civil**	55,175
			165,757
7	Flagler	Adult Criminal	698
		Civil	1,248
		Family Court*	2,076
		Probate	581
		County Adult Crim.	3,164
		County Civil**	5,519
			13,286
	Putnam	Adult Criminal	839
		Civil	733
		Family Court*	1,983
		Probate	534
		County Adult Crim.	4,646
		County Civil**	5,201
			13,936

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
	St. Johns	Adult Criminal	1,923
		Civil	1,411
		Family Court*	2,989
		Probate	763
		County Adult Crim.	8,719
		County Civil**	11,531
			27,336
	Volusia	Adult Criminal	6,457
		Civil	5,477
		Family Court*	10,059
		Probate	4,022
		County Adult Crim.	43,460
		County Civil**	34,706
			104,181
8	Alachua	Adult Criminal	2,426
		Civil	1,527
		Family Court*	4,907
		Probate	1,685
		County Adult Crim.	15,811
		County Civil**	22,440
			48,796
	Baker	Adult Criminal	343
		Civil	220
		Family Court*	590
		Probate	255
		County Adult Crim.	1,337
		County Civil**	2,246
			4,991
	Bradford	Adult Criminal	458
		Civil	213
		Family Court*	463
		Probate	112
		County Adult Crim.	1,750
		County Civil**	4,314
			7,310
	Gilchrist	Adult Criminal	168
		Civil	115
		Family Court*	431
		Probate	67
		County Adult Crim.	1,161
		County Civil**	968
			2,910
	Levy	Adult Criminal	668
		Civil	355
		Family Court*	962
		Probate	275
		County Adult Crim.	2,797
		County Civil**	2,704
			7,761
	Union	Adult Criminal	190
		Civil	119
		Family Court*	249
		Probate	73
		County Adult Crim.	446
		County Civil**	603
			1,680

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
9	Orange	Adult Criminal	18,674
		Civil	13,660
		Family Court*	23,605
		Probate	3,967
		County Adult Crim.	53,278
		County Civil**	90,461
			203,645
	Osceola	Adult Criminal	3,123
		Civil	4,390
		Family Court*	6,209
		Probate	1,057
		County Adult Crim.	13,837
		County Civil**	21,248
			49,864
10	Hardee	Adult Criminal	295
		Civil	205
		Family Court*	808
		Probate	140
		County Adult Crim.	2,691
		County Civil**	2,570
			6,709
	Highlands	Adult Criminal	1,097
		Civil	1,026
		Family Court*	1,983
		Probate	1,144
		County Adult Crim.	3,648
		County Civil**	6,469
			15,367
	Polk	Adult Criminal	7,516
		Civil	6,386
		Family Court*	15,874
		Probate	3,372
		County Adult Crim.	37,502
		County Civil**	38,455
			109,105
11	Dade	Adult Criminal	29,177
		Civil	35,569
		Family Court*	38,999
		Probate	10,378
		County Adult Crim.	159,78
		County Civil**	536,64
			810,554
12	Desoto	Adult Criminal	546
		Civil	266
		Family Court*	757
		Probate	118
		County Adult Crim.	2,322
		County Civil**	2,205
			6,214
	Manatee	Adult Criminal	3,616
		Civil	2,811
		Family Court*	5,985
		Probate	1,881
		County Adult Crim.	15,935
		County Civil**	13,884
			44,112

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
	Sarasota	Adult Criminal	4,473
		Civil	3,830
		Family Court*	6,100
		Probate	3,276
		County Adult Crim.	20,062
		County Civil**	22,629
			60,370
13	Hillsborough	Adult Criminal	19,826
		Civil	14,022
		Family Court*	26,024
		Probate	5,780
		County Adult Crim.	81,395
		County Civil**	141,885
			288,932
14	Bay	Adult Criminal	3,622
		Civil	1,765
		Family Court*	3,959
		Probate	1,037
		County Adult Crim.	17,147
		County Civil**	11,408
			38,938
	Calhoun	Adult Criminal	315
		Civil	109
		Family Court*	366
		Probate	73
		County Adult Crim.	906
		County Civil**	1,090
			2,859
	Gulf	Adult Criminal	281
		Civil	190
		Family Court*	323
		Probate	81
		County Adult Crim.	913
		County Civil**	624
			2,412
	Holmes	Adult Criminal	338
		Civil	126
		Family Court*	420
		Probate	114
		County Adult Crim.	1,268
		County Civil**	1,387
			3,653
	Jackson	Adult Criminal	600
		Civil	349
		Family Court*	1,099
		Probate	362
		County Adult Crim.	2,547
		County Civil**	3,933
			8,890
	Washington	Adult Criminal	278
		Civil	230
		Family Court*	546
		Probate	200
		County Adult Crim.	1,370
		County Civil**	2,658
			5,282

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
15	Palm Beach	Adult Criminal	11,777
		Civil	18,222
		Family Court*	18,525
		Probate	7,882
		County Adult Crim.	83,374
		County Civil**	229,373
			369,153
16	Monroe	Adult Criminal	1,490
		Civil	1,218
		Family Court*	1,686
		Probate	611
		County Adult Crim.	3,617
		County Civil**	6,150
			14,772
17	Broward	Adult Criminal	18,371
		Civil	26,837
		Family Court*	33,197
		Probate	8,753
		County Adult Crim.	94,786
		County Civil**	311,113
			493,057
18	Brevard	Adult Criminal	5,358
		Civil	5,530
		Family Court*	9,901
		Probate	3,108
		County Adult Crim.	37,931
		County Civil**	34,831
			96,659
	Seminole	Adult Criminal	3,832
		Civil	3,313
		Family Court*	6,722
		Probate	1,952
		County Adult Crim.	16,301
		County Civil**	28,761
			60,881
19	Indian River	Adult Criminal	1,511
		Civil	1,380
		Family Court*	2,298
		Probate	1,069
		County Adult Crim.	6,333
		County Civil**	8,645
			21,236
	Martin	Adult Criminal	1,369
		Civil	1,423
		Family Court*	2,436
		Probate	768
		County Adult Crim.	10,189
		County Civil**	9,873
			26,058

Circuit & County		Division	Total Filings
	Okeechobee	Adult Criminal	759
		Civil	382
		Family Court*	1,183
		Probate	260
		County Adult Crim.	2,393
		County Civil**	3,024
			8,001
	St. Lucie	Adult Criminal	2,519
		Civil	3,710
		Family Court*	5,707
		Probate	1,736
		County Adult Crim.	17,071
		County Civil**	18,836
			49,579
20	Charlotte	Adult Criminal	1,893
		Civil	2,303
		Family Court*	3,465
		Probate	1,986
		County Adult Crim.	5,473
		County Civil**	9,356
			24,476
	Collier	Adult Criminal	2,468
		Civil	3,367
		Family Court*	4,652
		Probate	1,731
		County Adult Crim.	24,028
		County Civil**	20,699
			56,945
	Glades	Adult Criminal	225
		Civil	97
		Family Court*	226
		Probate	42
		County Adult Crim.	1,120
		County Civil**	2,327
			4,037
	Hendry	Adult Criminal	793
		Civil	443
		Family Court*	1,005
		Probate	223
		County Adult Crim.	3,484
		County Civil**	2,148
			8,096
	Lee	Adult Criminal	5,662
		Civil	10,232
		Family Court*	10,555
		Probate	3,995
		County Adult Crim.	40,405
		County Civil**	32,959
			103,808

Court Contacts for 2008-2009

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

Chief Justice Peggy A. Quince (850) 922-5624
Clerk Thomas D. Hall (850) 488-0125
Act. Marshal Kevin White (850) 488-8845
Director of Public Info. Craig Waters (850) 414-7641
Website http://www.floridasupremecourt.org

DISTRICT COURTS OF APPEAL

1st DCA
Chief Judge EDWIN B. BROWNING, JR. (850) 487-1000
Clerk Jon S. Wheeler (850) 488-6151
Marshal Donald H. Brannon (850) 488-8136
Website http://www.1dca.org

2nd DCA
Chief Judge STEVAN T. NORTHCUTT (813) 272-3430
Clerk James R. Birkhold (863) 499-2290
Marshal Jo Suhr (863) 499-2290
Website http://www.2dca.org

3rd DCA
Chief Judge DAVID M. GERSTEN (305) 229-3200
Clerk Mary Cay Blanks (305) 229-3200
Marshal Dottie Munro (305) 229-3200
Website http://www.3dca.flcourts.org

4th DCA
Chief Judge GEORGE A. SHAHOOD (561) 242-2063
Clerk Marilyn Beuttenmuller (561) 242-2000
Marshal Glen Rubin (561) 242-2000
Website http://www.4dca.org

5th DCA
Chief Judge WILLIAM D. PALMER (386) 947-1502
Clerk Susan Wright (386) 255-8600
Marshal Ty W. Berdeaux (386) 947-1500
Website http://www.5dca.org

CIRCUIT COURTS

1st Judicial Circuit
Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties
Chief Judge KIM A. SKIEVASKI (850) 595-4456
Court Administrator Robin Wright (850) 595-4400
Website http://www.firstjudicialcircuit.org

2nd Judicial Circuit
Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, and Wakulla counties
Chief Judge CHARLES A. FRANCIS (850) 577-4306
Court Administrator Grant Slayden (850) 577-4420
Website http://www.2ndcircuit.leon.fl.us

3rd Judicial Circuit
Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor counties
Chief Judge E. VERNON DOUGLAS (386) 758-1010
Court Administrator Sondra Williams (386) 758-2163
Website http://www.jud3.flcourts.org

4th Judicial Circuit
Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties
Chief Judge DONALD R. MORAN, JR. (904) 630-2541
Court Administrator Joe Stelma (904) 630-2564
Website
http://www.coj.net/Departments/Fourth+Judicial+Circuit+Court/default.htm

5th Judicial Circuit
Hernando, Lake, Marion, Citrus, and Sumter counties
Chief Judge DANIEL MERRITT, SR. (352) 754-4221
Court Administrator David M. Trammell (352) 401-6701
Website http://www.circuit5.org

6th Judicial Circuit
Pasco and Pinellas counties
Chief Judge ROBERT J. MORRIS, JR. (727) 464-7457
Court Administrator Gay Inskeep (727) 582-7477
Website http://www.jud6.org

7th Judicial Circuit
Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns, and Volusia counties
Chief Judge J. DAVID WALSH (386) 239-7790
Court Administrator Mark Weinberg (386) 257-6097
Website http://www.circuit7.org

8th Judicial Circuit
Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union counties
Chief Judge FREDERICK D. SMITH (352) 374-3652
Court Administrator Ted McFetridge (352) 374-3648
Website http://www.circuit8.org

9th Judicial Circuit
Orange and Osceola counties
Chief Judge BELVIN PERRY, JR. (407) 836-2008
Court Administrator Matthew Benefiel (407) 836-2050
Website http://www.ninthcircuit.org/

10th Judicial Circuit
Hardee, Highlands, and Polk counties
Chief Judge J. DAVID LANGFORD (863) 534-4650
Court Administrator Nick Sudzina (863) 534-4686
Website http://www.jud10.org

11th Judicial Circuit
Miami-Dade County
Chief Judge JOSEPH P. FARINA (305) 349-7054
Court Administrator Ruben Carrerou (305) 349-7001
Website http://www.jud11.flcourts.org

12th Judicial Circuit
DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties
Chief Judge LEE E. HAWORTH (941) 861-7950
Court Administrator Walt Smith (941) 861-7800
Website http://12circuit.state.fl.us

13th Judicial Circuit
Hillsborough County
Chief Judge MANUEL MENENDEZ, JR. (813) 272-5022
Court Administrator Mike Bridenback (813) 272-5894
Website http://fljud13.org

14th Judicial Circuit
Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, and Washington counties
Chief Judge HENTZ MCCLELLAN (850) 674-5442
Court Administrator Jan Shadburn (850) 747-5327
Website http://www.jud14.flcourts.org

15th Judicial Circuit
Palm Beach County
Chief Judge KATHLEEN J. KROLL (561) 355-4378
Court Administrator Barbara L. Dawicke (561) 355-4495
Website http://www.15thcircuit.com

16th Judicial Circuit
Monroe County
Chief Judge SANDRA F. TAYLOR (305) 292-3480
Act. Court Administrator Holly Elomina (305) 295-3644
Website http://www.keyscourts.net

17th Judicial Circuit
Broward County
Chief Judge VICTOR TOBIN (954) 831-6332
Court Administrator Carol Ortman (954) 831-7740
Website http://www.17th.flcourts.org

18th Judicial Circuit
Brevard and Seminole counties
Chief Judge CLAYTON D. SIMMONS (407) 665-4299
Court Administrator Mark Van Bever (321) 633-2171
Website http://www.flcourts18.org

19th Judicial Circuit
Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie counties
Chief Judge WILLIAM A. ROBY (772) 871-7252
Court Administrator Tom Genung (772) 807-4370
Website http://www.circuit19.org

20th Judicial Circuit
Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties
Chief Judge G. KEITH CARY (239) 335-2156
Court Administrator Richard Callanan (239) 533-1712
Website http://www.ca.cjis20.org

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