

FLORIDA STATE COURTS



2010–2011

Annual Report

THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

Annual Report, July 1, 2010—June 30, 2011



Charles T. Canady

Chief Justice

Barbara J. Pariente

R. Fred Lewis

Peggy A. Quince

Ricky Polston

Jorge Labarga

James E. C. Perry

Justices

Elisabeth H. Goodner

State Courts Administrator



Expressing strength and the spirit of freedom and independence, this eagle, sculpted by Panama City artist Roland Hockett, is one of two that adorn the rotunda of the Florida Supreme Court building.

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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.

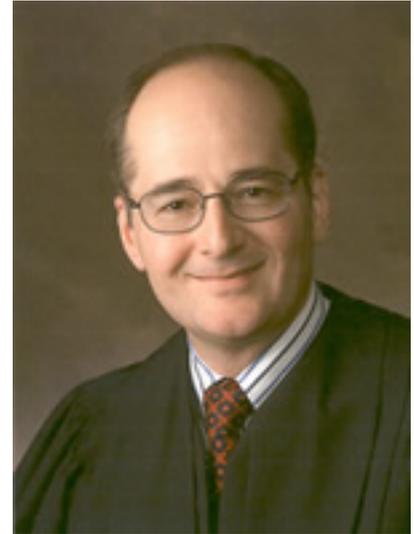
To be **accountable**, the Florida justice system will use public resources efficiently,
and in a way that the public can understand.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE

During the 2010-11 fiscal year, Florida's courts have faced significant challenges. One of the most notable challenges has been funding for the judicial branch. State government as a whole has struggled with this issue in recent years, and Florida's judicial branch has not been spared. Thus, in the past year, this branch has prioritized developing a stable source of funding for Florida's courts. Stable funding is essential to the branch's mission to appropriately handle the hundreds of thousands of cases that are filed each year.

During the spring 2011 legislative session, Florida's lawmakers faced an unprecedented challenge in balancing Florida's budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2011. Despite great pressure to reduce spending, the Legislature maintained judicial branch funding at the prior year's level, thereby acknowledging the important work that the judicial branch does to provide justice for the people of Florida. We in the judicial branch very much appreciate the decisions the Legislature made to meet the needs of the Florida courts, which had sustained significant cuts in the first years of the recent economic downturn.

We also appreciate the decision by Governor Scott and the Legislature to approve short-term loans from court trust funds and other sources to address the budget shortfall created by an unexpected drop in mortgage foreclosure case filings. Thanks to this inter-branch cooperation, the Florida courts were able to seamlessly continue court services despite the drastic reduction in revenue.



These economic developments of the past year underscore the urgent need for stable judicial branch funding. The Revenue Stabilization Joint Workgroup, which is composed of judges and clerks of courts, is currently overseeing a study to find suitable revenue streams for the courts and the clerks. Additionally, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability is exploring methods to resolve civil disputes in a timely manner and to reduce legal costs.

I encourage you to read more about the issue of stable court funding in this report—and to monitor developments in the future. Judicial branch funding is an issue that affects each of us.

I also encourage you to read in this report about some of the other recent accomplishments of Florida's courts. As part of its ongoing effort to improve the administration of justice, the judicial branch is diligently searching for innovative ways to carry out the branch's mission effectively and efficiently.

One example of such progress is the effort of the District Courts of Appeal to improve the processing of petitions seeking to terminate parental rights due to child abuse. In order to more effectively handle these important, time sensitive cases, the district courts have employed careful data monitoring and analysis. Their progress has been documented by the Commission on District Court of Appeal Performance and Accountability and illustrates the dedication of the men and women who work in Florida's courts.

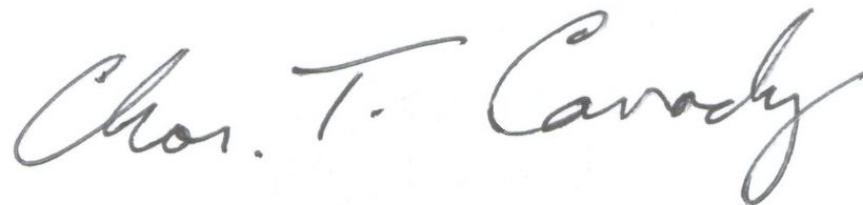
Another major accomplishment is the launch of Florida's e-filing portal in several counties this past January. The e-filing portal is an important technological milestone, and the ability to file cases electronically in every court in the state will be a priority in the coming years.

Other technological advances include the effort of the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability to standardize two major trial court functions: case processing and performance monitoring. This complex, multi-year project will culminate in the creation of the Trial Court Integrated Management Solution—TIMS—which will provide judges and court staff with the

information they need to handle cases appropriately and efficiently. In addition, the TIMS system will provide trend data that will aid judicial branch leaders in making policy decisions for the branch as a whole. TIMS will help the judiciary fulfill its fundamental mission of providing justice.

This report also describes the creation and work of the Innocence Commission, which was established to study the cause of wrongful convictions and to recommend steps to prevent such miscarriages of justice in the future. The Innocence Commission has issued an interim report focusing on the problem of eyewitness misidentification and plans to release a final report next year.

As you read this annual report, I hope you are struck by the judicial branch's commitment to effectively and efficiently address each case filed. We simply cannot have a functioning democracy without a healthy, independent court system that ensures the rule of law throughout the State.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris T. Carady". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "C".

FLORIDA'S SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

Charles T. Canady *Chief Justice*

Justice Canady was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in August 2008, and he advanced to chief justice on June 30, 2010. He is the court's fifty-fourth chief justice.

Born in Lakeland, Florida, Justice Canady has the unusual distinction of having served in all three branches of government. Returning to Lakeland after receiving his BA from Haverford College and his JD from Yale Law School, he went into private practice, concentrating on real estate law. In 1984, he successfully ran for a seat in the Florida House and served for three terms. Then in 1993, he was elected to the US House, serving until 2001. Throughout his tenure in Congress, he was a member of the House Judiciary Committee, which sparked his interest in appellate work; he chaired the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution from 1995 to 2001. After leaving Washington, DC, he returned to Florida and settled in Tallahassee, where he served as the governor's general counsel. In 2002, the governor appointed him to the Second District Court of Appeal, where he remained until his appointment to the Florida Supreme Court.

Justice Canady and his wife, Jennifer Houghton, have two children.

Barbara J. Pariente *Justice*

Justice Pariente was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in 1997. From 2004 – 2006, she was the chief justice, the second woman to serve in that role.



Born and raised in New York City, Justice Pariente received her BA from Boston University and her JD from George Washington University Law School. But Florida has been her home since 1973. After a two-year judicial clerkship in Fort Lauderdale, 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 years with 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; she promotes judicial education on the unified family court and advocates for improved case management, case coordination, and non-adversarial methods for resolving family disputes. Because of her longstanding commitment to children, Justice Pariente continues to be a mentor to school-age children.

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

R. Fred Lewis *Justice*

Justice Lewis was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in December 1998, and he served as chief justice from 2006 – 2008.

Born in Beckley, West Virginia, Justice Lewis made Florida his home in 1965, when he arrived to attend Florida Southern College in Lakeland. He then went to the University of Miami School of Law, and, after graduating, he attended the United States Army Adjutant General 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.



While serving as chief justice, he founded Justice Teaching, an organization that pairs legal professionals with elementary, middle, and high schools in Florida to enhance civic and law-related education; currently, over 3,900 volunteer lawyers and judges are placed with and active in Florida's public and private schools. He also convened the first inter-branch mental health summit, which developed and proposed a comprehensive plan to address the increasing needs of those with mental illnesses who are involved in the criminal justice system. In addition, he established a

FLORIDA'S SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

task force to develop a survey with which to audit all court facilities in the state with the goal of identifying and removing obstacles that inhibit access to justice for people with disabilities.

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

Peggy A. Quince

Justice

Justice Quince was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in December 1998, and she served as chief justice from 2008 –2010. She has the distinction of being the first African-American woman on the court.



Born in Virginia, Justice Quince received her BS from Howard University and her JD from the Catholic University of America. She began her legal career in 1975 in Washington, DC, 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 remained until her appointment to the Supreme Court.

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

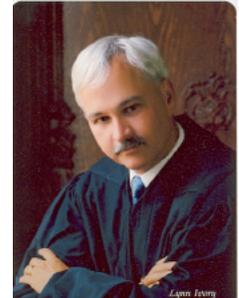
Justice Quince and her husband, attorney Fred L. Buckine, have two daughters, Peggy LaVerne and Laura LaVerne.

Ricky Polston

Justice

Justice Polston was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in October 2008.

A native of Graceville, Florida, Justice Polston grew up on a farm that raised peanuts, watermelon, and cattle. He began his professional life as a certified public accountant: he received his BS in accounting from Florida State University in 1977 and developed a thriving career (in fact, he is still a licensed CPA). Nine years later, he received his law degree, also from Florida State University. He then went into private practice, where he handled cases in state, federal, and appellate court. He remained in private practice until his appointment to the First District Court of Appeal in 2001, where he served until he was appointed to the Supreme Court.



Justice Polston and his wife, Deborah Ehler Polston, are the parents of ten children: in addition to raising four biological children, they are raising a sibling group of six children whom they adopted from the state's foster care system.

Jorge Labarga

Justice

Justice Labarga was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in January 2009; he is the second Hispanic to sit on the court.



Born in Havana, Cuba, Justice Labarga was a young boy when he ventured to Pahokee, Florida, with his family. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in 1976, and, three years later, he earned his law degree, also from the University of Florida. He spent three years as an assistant public defender (from 1979 – 1982), five years as an assistant state attorney (from 1982 – 1987), and nine years in private practice, all in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. Then in 1996, he was appointed a circuit judge in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, where he served in the family, civil, and criminal divisions and as the administrative judge

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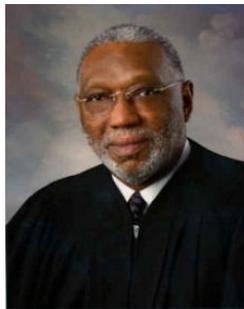
of the civil division. Then in December 2008, he was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeal. However, Justice Labarga was on the appellate bench only one day before the governor selected him to serve on the Florida Supreme Court.

Justice Labarga and his wife Zulma have two children.

James E.C. Perry *Justice*

Justice Perry was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in March 2009.

Born in New Bern, North Carolina, Justice Perry received his BA in business administration and accounting in 1966 from Saint Augustine's College. Drafted into the Army soon after he graduated, he went to officer candidate school, got a commission, and was eventually promoted to first lieutenant.



The assassination of Martin Luther King prompted his decision to go to law school: he felt that as a lawyer, he could do the most good. After earning his JD from Columbia University School of Law in 1972, he was determined "to go back to the South to fight for justice." He arrived in Florida in 1973 and has lived here ever since. He was in private practice, specializing in civil and business law, until his 2000 appointment to the circuit bench in the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit—the first African-American appointed to that circuit. For a two-year term (2003 – 05), he was chief judge of the circuit. He served there until his appointment to the Supreme Court.

Involved in many community and civic organizations, Justice Perry is especially committed to those that serve at-risk children, and he has received numerous awards and honors for his work on behalf of children, minorities, and social justice issues.

Justice Perry and his wife, Adrienne M. Perry, a professor at Stetson University, have three children.



Florida's Supreme Court Justices. Seated (l-r) are Justice Pariente, Chief Justice Canady, and Justice Lewis; standing (l-r) are Justice Labarga, Justice Quince, Justice Polston, and Justice Perry.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2010 – 2011: The Year in Review

Florida's judicial branch, like many across the nation, has been under serious strain these last four years. The fiscal crisis began with a significant reduction in the funding originally appropriated to the branch for the 2007/08 fiscal year. Since then, the court system has been able to regain some lost ground—thanks, in part, to the establishment, in January 2009, of the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund, which is helping to stabilize branch funding. However, funding still remains considerably below the level initially appropriated for the 2007/08 fiscal year, and the positions that were cut—positions filled by employees who provided invaluable support to Florida's judges (e.g., magistrates, hearing officers, case managers)—have not been restored. Meanwhile, over these years, the courts have been facing a dramatic increase in workload, fuelled in large part by the rise in the kinds of cases generally precipitated by economic hardship—among them, foreclosure filings, which, until October 2010, were rising at an uncustomarily rapid pace.

Chief Justice Charles T. Canady often remarks that “Florida has experienced an unprecedented shortfall in revenues and that all parts of Florida government have been required to make adjustments to the fiscal realities facing the state.” And he adds that “The legislature continues to face an extraordinarily challenging situation in producing a budget for the state within the revenues that are available.” But he is also quick to point out that, in terms of resources received, Florida's judicial branch is already extremely spare and economical compared with other state judiciary systems. For instance, he emphasizes that for every 100,000 people, Florida has only 4.7 judges: in fact, although it is the fourth most populous state in the nation, “Florida ranks forty-fifth of the 50 states in the number of judges per 100,000 population.” Indeed, he notes that “Many states have more than twice as many judges per capita as we do in Florida.”

He makes these comparisons to call attention to Florida's “lean, efficient judicial system, a system in which the judges and support personnel are working hard to provide justice for the people of Florida.” —And to caution that “Further reductions in the resources we are provided would threaten to seriously compromise our ability to do the work we are called on to do.”

To ensure that people who come to court can obtain justice without unreasonable delay, especially through this dark economic stretch, court leadership has heightened its efforts to manage court resources and services as

effectively and efficiently as possible. To make the best use of taxpayer dollars, the court system has been looking both within and without (through collaborations with state government partners and other stakeholder groups) for ways to improve productivity and efficiency—without sacrificing quality or effectiveness.

This *Year in Review* section of the *2010 – 2011 Florida State Courts Annual Report* highlights some of the many economies and efficiencies that the branch has implemented over the course of the 2010/11 fiscal year. These accomplishments are described in the context of the strategic plan's five long-range issues—the high-priority areas that the branch must address over the long term in order to move toward fulfilling its vision and mission: *Strengthening Governance and Independence*; *Improving the Administration of Justice*; *Supporting Competence and Quality*; *Enhancing Court Access and Services*; and *Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence*.

Long Range Issue #1: Strengthening Governance and Independence

To fulfill its mission, the judicial branch must strengthen its ability to fully function as a coequal and independent branch of government, to govern itself with coherence and clarity of purpose, to manage and control its internal operations, and to be accountable to the people.

In this age of escalating workloads and diminishing resources, Florida's judicial branch is especially mindful of the importance of strengthening its governance structure and upholding its independence as one of the three coequal branches of government. Toward these ends, judicial branch leaders have heightened their efforts to stabilize court funding and to meet the strategic goals defined in the state courts system's long-range plan.

Stabilizing State Courts System Funding

Like most states in the US, Florida has a balanced budget requirement. When the legislature met in spring 2011, the state was facing a \$3.83 billion deficit for the 2011/12 fiscal year, and every entity that relies on state funding was anticipating cuts. In the end, many suffered quite significant reductions.

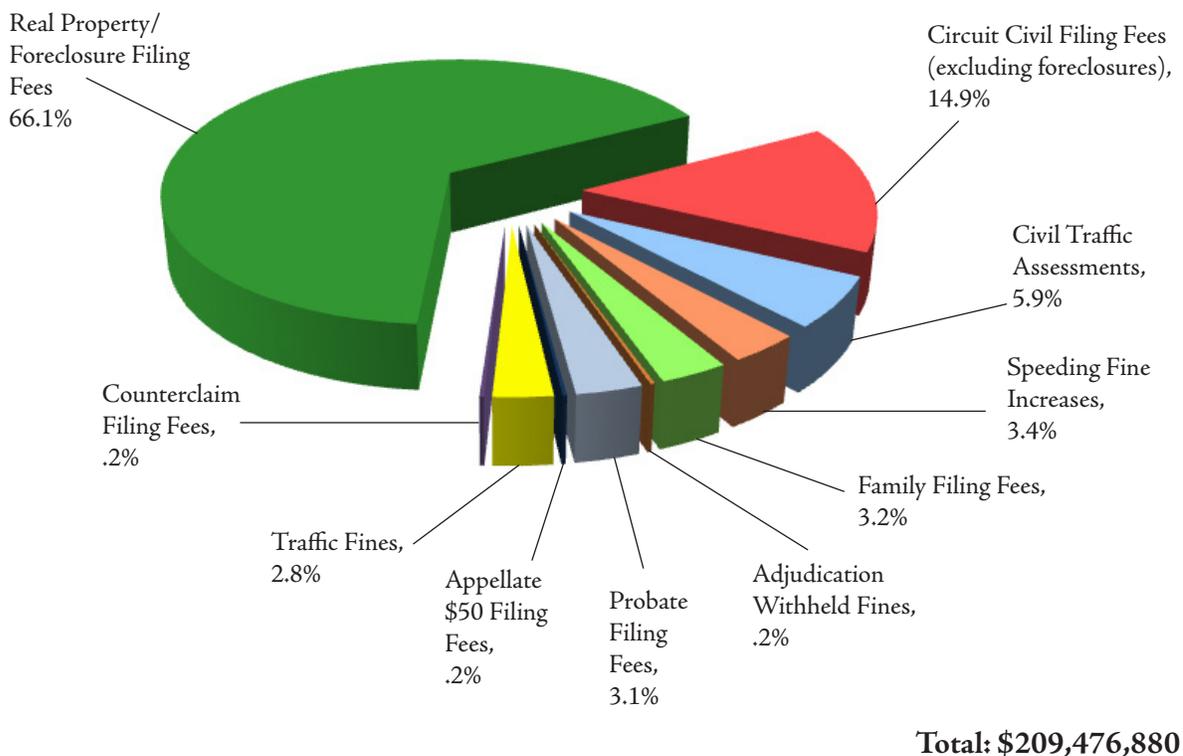
Ultimately, the legislature appropriated \$458.1 million to the state courts system—a figure not much diminished from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010/11. In large

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State Courts Revenue Trust Fund Revenue Collections by Source July 2010 through June 2011

as reported in the Department of Revenue Consolidation Report and OSCA, Finance and Accounting

(For an accessible version of this information, follow [this link](#).)



part, the branch was able to sustain its funding level because of the existence of the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund, created by the legislature in 2009. The trust fund, which now supports 89.6% of court operating costs, was the fruit of branch leaders' and lawmakers' efforts to establish a stable, reliable, dedicated funding source for the courts that would insulate them from economic turbulence.

Until recently, the court system depended predominantly on general revenue funding to support court operations (in 2007/08, for example, 95% of the court system's operating budget came out of general revenue). When the state's general revenue began dwindling as a result of declines in sales tax and property revenues, state courts system appropriations naturally reflected the decline: in July 2008, the courts suffered a 12% budget reduction, and 290.5 positions were eliminated. To protect the courts

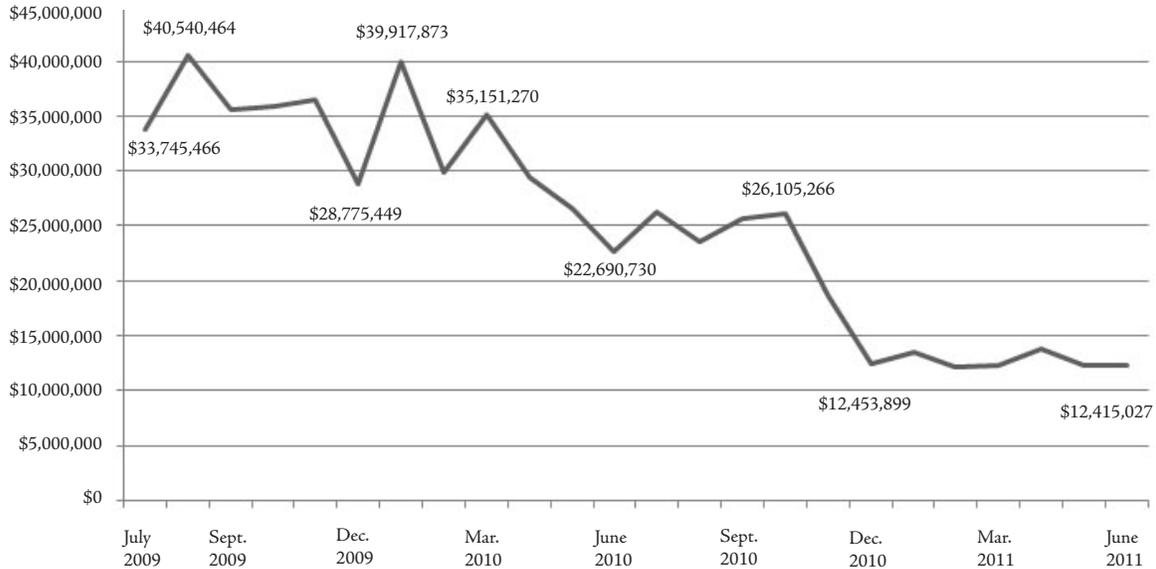
from further reductions in budget and personnel in the event that general revenue continued falling, lawmakers, in a special session in January 2009, passed legislation that increased court fines, and they directed a majority of the increase into the newly-created State Courts Revenue Trust Fund.

Then, during regular session that spring, responding to the unprecedented rise in foreclosure filings, the legislature decided to fill the shortfall in the state budget by subsidizing the court trust fund with revenue generated by an increase in foreclosure filing fees. They set the fees according to a sliding scale: from \$400 (for mortgages valued at up to \$50,000) to \$1,905 (for mortgages valued at more than \$250,000). With this new sliding-scale formula in place, foreclosure filings soon began providing as much as 79% of the courts' revenue.

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State Courts Revenue Trust Fund Monthly Revenues, July 2009 - June 2011

(For an accessible version of this information, follow [this link](#).)



Note: As reported in the Department of Revenue Consolidation Report and OSCA, Finance and Accounting, for revenues remitted July 2009 through June 2011.

Since the soundness of the trust fund depends entirely upon the amount of filing fees and fines the clerks take in for the courts, the trust fund enjoyed a healthy cash balance as long as foreclosure filings were on the rise. However, beginning in October 2010, that robust balance started to shrink when the courts began encountering a tsunami of questionable paperwork—e.g., forged signatures, post-dated documents, lost documents—submitted by so-called “foreclosure mill” law firms. Most of the major mortgage lenders imposed a voluntary moratorium on foreclosures—to give themselves time to get their processes and paperwork in order. Suddenly, foreclosure filings fell from over 30,000 a month to under 9,000 a month. This drop in filings created a considerable shortfall in the court trust fund; consequently, trust fund revenue was no longer sufficient to cover the court system’s operating costs. In order to sustain court operations and to make payroll without imposing furloughs or layoffs, the court system had to secure \$33 million in emergency funding this past spring from the governor and the legislature.

The Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) projects that mortgage foreclosure filings will remain

relatively flat for the rest of the 2011/12 fiscal year. Thus, in all probability, the revenue streams into the trust fund will be insufficient to support the branch’s legislative appropriation. Chief Justice Canady has already exercised his authority to obtain a \$54 million cash transfer to shore up the revenue in the trust fund; even so, internal estimates forecast that the deficit will continue to grow.



Because recurrent cash flow problems hinder court efficiency and can potentially disrupt day-to-day court operations, branch leaders and lawmakers agree that the funding crisis must be resolved. All concur that the court budget cannot continue to be balanced on the back of the foreclosure crisis and that a more diversified and resilient funding stream formula is necessary. Toward that end, the legislature authorized the judicial branch and the clerks of court to work together to determine suitable,

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less volatile revenue streams for the court system's and the clerks' trust funds. "Stabilizing court funding remains my highest priority," emphasizes Chief Justice Canady, and the governor has indicated that a stable funding source for the courts is a priority for him as well.

Regular legislative sessions typically begin in March of each year. However, this fiscal year, to address the complex issue of redistricting, lawmakers will convene their 2012 regular session in January. In anticipation, the judicial branch—in collaboration with the legislature, the governor, other government entities, and justice system partners—is gearing up early this year to continue its efforts to institute a steady and dependable funding source for the branch. ([Take this link for more information on court funding.](#))

Long-Range Planning

Often compared to a roadmap, a long-range plan embodies an organization's efforts to gauge where it is, to consider where it hopes to be, and to devise strategies for getting there. Simultaneously aspirational (it cranes toward a desired end) and pragmatic (it describes concrete steps to help achieve that end), a long-range plan supports an organization's efforts to anticipate environmental change and to react quickly, nimbly, and purposefully when change arises. In times of crisis, a long-range plan also helps an organization stay focused and keep its ultimate objectives in sight. Generally, an organization that is guided by a long-range plan is well-positioned to exercise a measure of control over its present and the shaping of its future.

Not only is strategic planning prudent, but, for some government entities, it's imperative: in Florida, since the passage of a 1992 voter-driven amendment to the constitution, all departments and agencies of state government, including the judicial branch, have been required to construct and abide by a long-range plan. Rule of Judicial Administration 2.225 also mandates that the branch develop one.

The judicial branch's first long-range plan, *Taking Bearings, Setting Course*, was published in 1998. In order to remain relevant, however, strategic plans need to undergo periodic review and revision. So in May 2006,

the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning, chaired by Judge Joseph P. Farina (Eleventh Judicial Circuit), with the support of OSCA's Strategic Planning Unit, spearheaded the process of reassessing and revising the plan. Highly intensive and extensive, this process involved significant input from the general public, legal professionals, advocates, a variety of justice system partners, and judges and court staff throughout the state. The revised plan, *The Long-Range Strategic Plan for the Florida Judicial Branch: 2009 – 2015*, was unanimously approved by the supreme court in July 2009.

The long-range plan charts the course for the entire judicial branch, which includes the supreme court, five district courts of appeal, 20 circuit courts, 67 county courts, and OSCA. The plan's five major long-range issues, together with related goals and strategies, articulate a comprehensive plan of action to guide the judicial branch in advancing its mission and vision. Also a leadership and management tool, the plan assists the supreme court and the chief justice in effectively administering the state courts system and in providing overall guidance and direction to the judicial branch.

In place for a few years now, the revised plan is reflected in court policies and operations and is becoming an intrinsic part of the court system's culture and vocabulary. ([Follow this link to the plan.](#))

To assess the judicial branch's movements toward meeting its challenges and strategic goals, the Strategic Planning Unit set out to survey and chronicle the branch's achievements since the adoption of the revised plan. Its work product, *Progress Report 2011*, is a mid-cycle description of judicial branch milestones thus far. Following the pattern of the long-range plan, the report tells the story, to date, of the judicial branch's advances toward its vision of creating an accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable justice system for all Floridians.

The report begins by pointing out that Florida's courts disposed of more than 4.5 million cases in each of the last two years—while facing diminishing fiscal and staff resources. Despite these and other daunting challenges, "The Florida Judicial Branch continues to make progressive strides in the high priorities defined



Judge Joseph P. Farina, Eleventh Circuit, chaired the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning.

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in its long-range strategic plan,” the report emphasizes. Among the numerous accomplishments highlighted in the progress report, Strategic Planning Unit staff singled out some of the most inspiring ones.

Under Long-Range Issue #1, Strengthening Governance and Independence, staff emphasized the work of the Judicial Branch Governance Study Group, which was charged with carrying out an in-depth study of the current governance system of the branch. Chaired by Justice Ricky Polston, the study group focused on policy-making, budgeting, rulemaking, leadership, decision-making, planning, and intergovernmental relations. After extensive research, outreach, and review, the study group submitted a final report and recommendations to the supreme court on January 31, 2011, and at the end of February, the group presented these recommendations to the court for its consideration. ([Follow this link to the report.](#))

Under Improving the Administration of Justice, Long-Range Issue #2, staff noted that, despite resource challenges and other external pressures, all tiers of court continue to ensure the timely disposition of cases. Specifically, the supreme court disposed of close to 91% of its cases within one year of filing, exceeding the nationally-recognized standard. And the appellate courts disposed of 98% of criminal and almost 97% of civil cases within 180 days of oral argument. For the county and circuit courts, the clearance rate for 2009/10 was nearly 110%—the first time the clearance rate exceeded the standard in the last 10 years.

Most noteworthy under Long-Range Issue #3, Supporting Competence and Quality, according to Strategic Planning staff, is the expanding provision of distance learning opportunities to support the education and training of court personnel and to supplement live, in-person training for judges and judicial officers. While the fiscal climate remains constrained, distance learning enables judges and court staff to meet many of their professional development, education, and training needs. Also significant is the growing body of electronic publications and self-learning resources for judges, court staff, justice system partners, and court users. Available on demand, these resources—among them, benchguides, case law summaries, reference guides, web-based courses

and virtual courtrooms, and videos—can be accessed when needed or when users have time to study and assimilate their information.

Strategic Planning staff called attention to two accomplishments under Long-Range Issue #4, Enhancing Court Access and Services. First is the court system’s continued emphasis on architectural and electronic access for people with disabilities and on language access for people with limited English proficiency who are involved in criminal, juvenile, and certain civil proceedings. Second is the branch’s ongoing commitment to drug courts and to the expansion of adult post-adjudicatory drug court programs—alternatives to incarceration that save both money and lives.

Finally, the accomplishment under Long-Range Issue #5, Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence, that stands out



As part of the exacting process of revising the long-range plan, the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning, after an extensive information-gathering initiative, coordinated meetings with four separate focus groups to elicit their recommendations for the goals and strategies of the plan. Brainstorming about strategies for improving the administration of justice are the following focus group members (clockwise from ‘9 o’clock’): Judge Alice Blackwell, Ninth Circuit; Chief of Personnel Services Gary Phillips, OSCA; senior attorney Dana Dowling, OSCA; Marshal Jo Suhr, Second DCA; and Chief of Court Services Greg Youchock, OSCA.

most prominently to Strategic Planning Unit staff is the work of the Florida Innocence Commission. Established by Chief Justice Charles T. Canady in July 2010 and chaired by Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., Ninth Judicial Circuit, the commission is charged with identifying the common causes of wrongful or erroneous convictions and with recommending measures for decreasing the

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possibility of future wrongful convictions. In its interim report, submitted in June 2011, the commission focused on the issue of eyewitness misidentification—the single greatest cause of wrongful convictions nationwide and in Florida.

In addition to completing the progress report, the Strategic Planning Unit has been working on constructing an operational plan for the branch. Linked to the issues and goals identified in the long-range plan, the operational plan will spell out the court system's short-term priorities and will guide the branch's major activities by laying out the concrete, practical steps it must take in order to reach its objectives. The operational plan, which is expected to be completed in January 2012, will cover a three-year span.

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

The judicial branch must remain committed to ongoing improvement in the administration of justice, including effective case processing policies and the efficient management of resources.

Through an array of dispute resolution processes—diversion, mediation, plea, and adjudication by trial, among others—Florida's courts disposed of more than 4.5 million cases in fiscal year 2010/11. These cases ranged from simple traffic citations to complex civil disputes with multiple parties to intricate and protracted criminal cases. Against the backdrop of a persistently languid economy that has wrought increased caseloads and diminished resources, the court system has been working vigorously to refine both its management of these large caseloads and its administration of the resources and personnel necessary to handle the different case types. Seeking to improve the administration of justice, the branch implemented a range of technology advances, performance and accountability measures, court improvement initiatives, and alternative dispute resolution practices.

Technology

The judicial branch has been making enormous strides in its migration toward a comprehensive digital environment. Among the more heralded achievements, the electronic portal went “live” in January, and attorneys in many counties across the state are now e-filing documents with the trial courts; the appellate courts have integrated numerous automated court processes; the supreme court has taken another important step toward making court

information electronically accessible to the public by amending the rules of court to minimize the inclusion of personal information in court records; and OSCA's Information Systems Services Unit (ISS) has continued to expand its Server Virtualization Initiative.

Electronic Filing

Electronic filing in Florida has made great progress since 1979, when the supreme court adopted its first rules governing e-filing—which, back then, meant filing by fax. Over the years, the court has taken a gradual, measured approach in meeting its ambitious e-filing goals, which include reducing costs for the court and clerks; improving



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

case processing and case management; and enhancing attorneys' and litigants' courtroom experience and their secure access to the courts, without substantially increasing their costs to use the courts.

Before e-filing could become a statewide reality, the court had to resolve certain global issues. For instance, it had to develop policies to ensure uniformity as well as standards to secure a comprehensive record, and it charged the Florida Courts Technology Commission, chaired by Eleventh Circuit Judge Judith L. Kreeger, with addressing that need. The commission developed *Florida Supreme Court Statewide Standards for Electronic Access to the Courts*, which the court approved and adopted in



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July 2009. As a “living document,” it has already been revised on numerous occasions to keep up with current technology. ([Take this link to the document and other e-filing information.](#))

Also needed was a statewide e-filing portal: a uniform, public, Internet-based gateway or access point for the transmission of electronic court records to and from all Florida courts. In fall 2009, the Florida Association of Court Clerks and Comptrollers (FACC) announced that it had built a portal that the courts could use. But before the courts could begin utilizing the portal, the supreme court and the FACC had to negotiate

and get approval for their e-filing plan (for each division) from the Florida Courts Technology Commission. After a plan was approved, clerk technology staff had to build an interface with the portal and provide the necessary codes for the FACC to program. The final steps were end-to-end testing and then piloting with the help of interested attorneys.

The portal finally went “live” in January 2011, and, since then, statewide e-filing has been growing incrementally. Currently, attorneys can e-file in 12 counties, for cases in five of the 10 trial court divisions. As of June 30, 2011 (the end of the last fiscal year), 6,822 filings had been submitted through the portal, and the attorneys and clerks of court who’ve been utilizing it have extolled its efficiency, its time-savings, and its cost-effectiveness. Before the calendar year is over, e-filing is expected to be available in all 67 counties and in all 10 trial court divisions.

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In the future, Florida’s appellate courts will also be able to accept e-filings through the portal. And, in time, self-represented litigants

the terms of two agreements: first, an inter-local agreement between the supreme court and the clerks to establish the E-Filing Authority, a public entity that would own the portal and make the business decisions regarding its operation; and second, a development agreement between the E-Filing Authority and the FACC providing that the FACC would design, develop, implement, operate, upgrade, support, and maintain the portal for the benefit of the E-Filing Authority (in adherence to the standards created and approved by the Florida Courts Technology Commission).

will be able to file documents electronically: the FACC is working on a specialized e-filing program that, much like tax preparation software packages, will walk a pro se party through a series of questions and create the pleading for him/her.

Then, certain practical, technical matters needed attention. For instance, for each of the 10 trial court divisions, a distinct e-filing “data envelope” had to be developed. A data envelope is a kind of electronic container that filers populate with the various information needed to support the creation of a new case in the court’s case management information system. (So far, OSCA’s Information Systems Services Unit, or ISS, has created data envelopes for probate, circuit civil, county civil, family, and dependency filings; the unit is currently finalizing the envelopes for civil traffic, criminal traffic, juvenile delinquency, county criminal, and circuit criminal.) Also, before clerks of court could begin accepting e-filings, they had to develop

E-filing is already benefitting many people who utilize or work in the court system: the public and the legal community have easier and more convenient access to the courts; clerks don’t have to spend time scanning, processing, copying, and searching for paper documents; and judges and court employees are able to retrieve case-related documents more readily, which is improving judicial case management and increasing the timely processing of cases. In addition to saving time for everyone, e-filing is reducing the costs associated with using and storing records in paper form.

Appellate Courts Technology Pilots

E-filing is just one of a host of automated court processes that the court system must implement to support its migration toward a comprehensive digital culture. Therefore, as they prepare for the inevitability of e-filing, Florida’s appellate courts have kept their focus on the bigger picture, working to develop software applications

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that will enable the seamless integration of e-filing with other automated court processes like case management, document management, and workflow management. In May 2010, the Appellate Courts Technology Committee voted to approve two pilot projects designed to facilitate this migration, and both have been making considerable progress.

The first project, called iDCA/eDCA, was developed by the First DCA for workers compensation cases. Closely connected to the existing case management system, it includes e-filing, document management, and automated workflow features covering the appellate process. It consists of three closely linked sites: Internal DCA (iDCA), which is an internal component for document management for use by judges and law clerks; External DCA (eDCA), which is a template for electronic filing; and the Case Review System. iDCA/eDCA is now in full use at the First DCA and is in voluntary use in some offices at the Fifth DCA.

The second project was inspired by the work of the First DCA. Named eFACTS (Electronic Florida Appellate Courts Technology Solution), it is being developed by OSCA's ISS Unit and piloted in the supreme court and the Second DCA. Based in a Microsoft web application platform called SharePoint, eFACTS builds on SharePoint's capacity as an electronic document management and workflow system: eFACTS will capture paper documents that have been scanned as well as electronic documents that have been received via standard email, the e-filing portal, and other electronic means; it will facilitate the logical organization of the documents and will automatically input the data into the case management system; it will store the documents in a secure environment; and it will enable users to locate, retrieve, and work on the documents they need, when they need them. Utilizing SharePoint's innovative collaboration tools, eFACTS will also enable multiple users to view and modify the same documents simultaneously, unconstrained by physical access to case files, and it will keep track of the different versions created by different users. eFACTS will also offer a panoply of other features tailored to the needs of appellate court processes.

eFACTS is a two-phase project: Phase I, which began in June 2010, is an overlay on the supreme court's and Second DCA's current case management systems. During Phase II, those systems will be replaced; also during the second phase, the portal will begin accepting appellate court e-filings. In April 2011, the project entered the

implementation stage of the first phase: the pilot courts have begun user-acceptance testing in preparation for deploying this version of the application for production use.

Contemplating the great potential of the two pilots, Second DCA Judge Stevan Northcutt, who chairs the Appellate Courts Technology Committee, said, "The caseloads in Florida's appellate courts have been outpacing their resources for years. With these projects, the courts are taking a giant leap forward. The end result will greatly improve the courts' abilities to decide their cases in a timely manner."

Supreme Court Approves New Privacy Rules

In its endeavor to provide the public with electronic access to non-confidential court records, the branch has worked carefully to ensure that the courts do not inadvertently make public the kinds of information that is meant to be kept confidential (e.g., social security numbers, medical



records, financial information, juvenile information). Several years back, the Committee on Access to Court Records acknowledged that the current policies and regulations were inadequate to protect the public's privacy; in two petitions to the supreme court, the committee proposed rule changes that it held to be necessary preconditions for implementing electronic access to court records. In April 2010, the supreme court adopted the rule amendments proposed in the first petition, reforming the process for identifying and screening from the public confidential information filed with the courts.

Then in June 2011, the court adopted the rule amendments proposed in the second petition—a comprehensive initiative to amend rules of court in all practice areas with the intention of minimizing the inclusion of personal information in court records when such information is not needed for purposes of adjudication or case management. Most notably, the

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court adopted new Rule of Judicial Administration 2.425 (Minimization of the Filing of Sensitive Information), to govern the filling of sensitive information, which is at the heart of the minimization effort.

“With the benefits of electronic access to documents comes the responsibility to minimize unnecessary personal information in court records,” the court emphasizes in its opinion, and it cautions attorneys and pro se litigants to take care to file only authorized documents that comply with the new requirements. The opinion points out that the newly-enacted rules provide sanctions for violations but adds that the court will continue to promote education and a change in mindset for everyone involved in the litigation process. ([This link goes to the opinion.](#))

Server Virtualization Initiative

In order to accommodate the proliferation of computer-dependent projects across the state, the court system has had to purchase, and ISS has been responsible for managing, an ever-growing number of servers. In 2000, ISS managed only about 19 servers, but these days, it manages close to 200. Through its Server Virtualization Initiative, ISS has crafted a sophisticated, money-saving, and environmentally-friendly solution to this perpetual heightening of hardware needs.

The Server Virtualization Initiative involves the conjoining of two innovative technologies: virtualization and clustering. “Virtualization” allows a single physical server hardware device to host multiple, unique operating systems that function independently of one another: in effect, numerous “virtual servers” run inside a single physical server. “Clustering” is a complementary piece of technology that involves the teaming together of multiple hardware servers, called “nodes,” to share their powerful resources, thus eliminating their dependence on a particular hardware device. The advantage of this teaming effort is that, if one node malfunctions, another node in the cluster picks up where the broken one left off, and users experience no, or minimal, interruption of service; among other benefits, clustering also plays an important role in the branch’s disaster recovery plan.

The Server Virtualization Initiative has enabled ISS to replace 120 physical servers with just 13 machines. In addition to saving considerable space, the branch has been able to reap significant savings in maintenance, network cabling, hardware replacement, and operating system licensing costs. Recently, ISS virtualized the entire Judicial Inquiry System infrastructure, significantly reducing the number of physical servers the system utilized—from 28 to just three. Virtualizing the Judicial

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Pictured here are some of the physical servers that are the foundation for the virtual infrastructure that supports the server virtualization environment.

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Inquiry System has had the added benefit of stabilizing the system (the new servers are less likely to cause system crashes) and streamlining the process for maintenance, service, and update installations.

One of the greatest benefits of this initiative is that it decidedly enhances the level of services that ISS can provide to users: it ensures that judges and court personnel can consistently and reliably access the computer-based services they need, when they need



As a result of having “virtualized” the entire Judicial Inquiry System infrastructure, OSCA’s Information Systems Services Unit was able to reduce the number of physical servers the system utilized from 28 to just three. Pictured here is a small portion (roughly one-fourth) of the old physical servers that have been replaced by virtual servers.

them, in order to perform their functions efficiently (in other words, it offers “high availability of services”). Another advantage of this initiative is that it enables ISS to develop and test applications before rolling them out to users. An additional benefit is the reduction of non-technical administration costs associated with managing IT hardware: there are fewer machines to buy, resulting in smaller inventories and easier hardware audit processes. Finally, the Server Virtualization Initiative is good for the environment: because the branch now runs far fewer

machines, it has reduced its electricity needs (and costs). Clearly, the virtualization effort has reduced costs on many fronts.

Performance and Accountability

The supreme court established the Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability (its first iteration was in 1997) and the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability (whose first iteration was in 1998) to recommend policies and procedures to improve court operations through the development of comprehensive performance measurement, resource management, and accountability programs. The work of these commissions supports the branch’s efforts to “utilize public resources effectively, efficiently, and in an accountable manner,” one of the goals of long-range issue #2.

Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability

In order to minimize the harmful effects on children involved in dependency and termination of parental rights (TPR) cases, the DCAs strive to resolve these cases as quickly as possible. Working with the DCA clerks and OSCA staff, the Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability, chaired by Judge William A. Van Nortwick, First DCA, developed a system for generating reports that reveal the median days for eight different dependency/TPR timeframes (a timeframe is the standard amount of time spent on a particular stage of a case). In addition, these reports indicate the percentage of cases that fall within the recommended timeframes for each district. The reports also link court personnel to more detailed case information that may assist in



Judge William A. Van Nortwick, First DCA, chairs the Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability.

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determining the cause of delay and suggest actions to reduce that delay. Drawn from the DCA case management system and available on demand, the reports help DCA judges and court personnel assess how efficiently they are processing dependency and TPR cases.

After carefully monitoring the data for a year, the commission recently reported that the five DCAs are meeting the overall performance goal of 195 median days from final judgment (lower tribunal date rendered) to final disposition by the appellate court: data indicate that processing times went from a high of 209 median days in fiscal year 2007/08 to a low of 163 median days in the second quarter of fiscal year 2010/11. In addition, most DCAs are meeting the performance goals for Notice of Appeal to Disposition and from Answer Brief to Conference/Oral Argument, with substantial improvement by most districts since 2007. Moreover, in four of the eight timeframes being measured, the number of cases meeting the performance goal also increased—and the increases appear to be directly linked to the courts' changes in practice. Although the data suggest that there is still room for improvement, they also reflect the DCAs' determined efforts to expedite their processing of these cases, despite the complexity of the issues involved and the loss of resources over the last four years.

Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability

The Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability has also been working to develop and implement mechanisms to move cases more efficiently and effectively through court processes and to support performance monitoring and resource management. Chaired by Chief Judge Terry D. Terrell, First Circuit, the commission has begun to design a standardized, statewide solution for addressing the automation of two major trial court functions: case processing and performance monitoring.

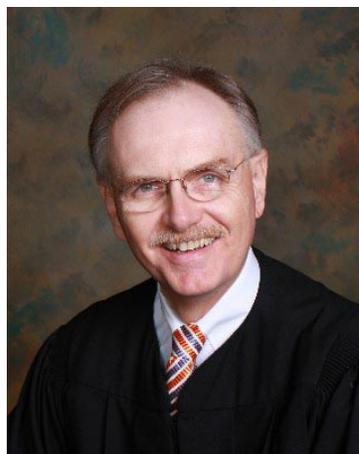
Called the Trial Court Integrated Management Solution (TIMS), this complex, multi-year project has two central, equally important thrusts. First, it will support the efforts of judges, court staff, court administrators, clerks, and others on the front line by providing them with the information they need to process cases fluently and adeptly—which, in turn, will help the courts better meet the needs of the people

who enter them. And, second, TIMS, which will serve as the backbone of a statewide integrated data system, will elicit uniform and comparable data from across the state—data that will help inform the policy decisions of the supreme court and its appointed committees for the management of the entire court system and that will assist with monitoring trial court performance measures.

TIMS is a unique project for several reasons. Most notably, it is benefitting from an unusually broad, cross-collaborative approach: governed by the supreme court and coordinated by the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability, TIMS has three other primary, court-based sponsors (Court Statistics Workload Committee, Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, and Florida Courts Technology Commission); multiple project partners and subject matter experts are also participating in its development. Another sign of this project's singularity is that every effort will be made to build upon existing court and clerk resources, both technological and staffing, thereby minimizing the need for new resources or new sources of funding. So, both in the ambit of its participants and in the reserves on which it will be drawing, TIMS is a truly integrative project.

Phase I of TIMS, which began in summer 2011, involves a labor-intensive process of identifying the standardized case information needed for processing cases, managing resources, and monitoring performance. In Phase II, technical and functional standards will be developed, and a technical assessment will be conducted to determine the most feasible technological approach; Phase III will focus on implementation planning. The commission aims to present the supreme court with a comprehensive report and recommendations by July 2012. ([Link to more information on TIMS.](#))

In addition to its work on TIMS, the commission has been developing a comprehensive, online *Compendium of Standards of Operation and Best Practices* for the trial court elements (i.e., classifications of resources that are essential to operate a modern court system). In addition to the supreme court-approved standards of operation (mandatory practices that must be implemented by the trial courts) and best practices (suggested practices intended to improve court operations but not required), the compendium provides



Chief Judge Terry D. Terrell, First Circuit, chairs the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability.

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links to applicable statutes, court rules, Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability reports, and other useful resources. The collection of these documents in a central, online location supports the long-range plan strategy to “continue to develop and institutionalize performance and accountability management systems that implement best practices in resource management.”

Organized by trial court element or topical area, the compendium currently includes *Alternative Dispute Resolution Standards of Operation and Best Practices* and *Court Reporting Standards of Operation and Best Practices*.



The commission, which is currently focusing on court interpreting services, will continue to add elements as they are approved by the supreme court. ([Link to the compendium.](#))

In developing standards of operation and best practices, the commission’s goal is to improve the performance of the trial courts and support unification of trial court operations into one statewide system. In 2002, the commission formulated its approach in its *Best Practices Model for Ensuring the Highest Performance & Accountability for Trial Court Resources*. This model defines three main action areas: to define, to develop, and to implement. The compendium is a component of the commission’s implementation plan. Other commission-based implementation efforts include the creation of technical assistance workgroups (which provide technical support materials, standardized forms, and other services that help the trial courts monitor and manage their operations), and quarterly conference calls (which ensure ongoing communication between OSCA and the circuits and among the circuits themselves).

Court Improvement

Some of the most complex and intimate family matters—issues associated with separation and divorce, child support, child neglect, delinquency, dependency, family violence, substance abuse, and mental illness—wind up being addressed in the courts. Since launching its first

family court initiative in 1988, the judicial branch has worked with its statewide and community partners to develop integrated, comprehensive approaches to handling these sensitive cases. Through its implementation of innovative practices and programs associated with family court and drug court, and through its efforts to address the underlying problems leading to the repeated incarceration of people with mental illnesses, the branch tries to resolve the disputes that touch families in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

Family Court

Since its creation in 2008, the statewide, multidisciplinary Dependency Court Improvement Panel has been working steadily to improve courtroom practice and decision-making in dependency cases. Chaired by Judge Jeri B. Cohen, Eleventh Circuit, the panel, which is required by the court system’s federal dependency grants, was established by former Chief Justice Peggy A. Quince to rectify deficiencies discovered during Florida’s second federal Child and Families Services Review (the Department of Children and Families is responsible for addressing most of the deficiencies uncovered by the review, but the court system, recognizing the need to take concurrent action, developed a work plan to improve the dependency division of family court).



At a recent meeting of the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, Justice Barbara J. Pariente, committee chair, Judge Nikki Ann Clark, First DCA, and Chief Judge Lee E. Haworth, Twelfth Circuit, listen to a presentation on designing a collaborative framework for courts dealing with “crossover children,” i.e., children who are under the dual jurisdiction of the delinquency and dependency courts.

With the help of OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement staff, the panel developed a model shelter hearing benchcard, family time (visitation) protocols, stability practices, safety tools, materials related to involving children in courts, and judicial checklists for physical,

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mental, and dental health. In addition, panel members continue to offer regional training programs as well as courses for judicial education programs. Perhaps the culmination of the panel's work was its revision of the *Dependency Benchbook*, published in spring 2011. Based on state-of-the-art science and child welfare knowledge, the benchbook identifies promising and evidence-based practices geared to support the efforts of judges and magistrates who address the safety, permanency, and well-being of children involved in Florida's court system. ([Take this link to the *Dependency Benchbook*.](#))



In Tallahassee, Judge Jill Walker, Wakulla County, leads a regional training for dependency judges and magistrates on the revised *Dependency Benchbook*.

After producing this wealth of practical, handy material, the panel recognized that this information is useful only insofar as it is being used. Shifting its focus from theory to practice, the panel, with the support of Chief Justice Canady, established "model courts" in 17 of Florida's judicial circuits. Through this network of model courts, each of which includes a team of broad-based child welfare stakeholders, the panel is working to ensure the implementation of best practices across the state.

To inaugurate this initiative, the panel sponsored a Model Courts Kickoff, a three-day conference that brought together branch-based and community-based partners committed to implementing a model dependency court in their circuits. The first part of the conference was designed for judges and magistrates and focused on developing off-the-bench leadership skills; on the last day, the 46 judges and magistrates were joined by 130 community partners to learn how to build and to work together in teams. Since the January kickoff, the courts and their partners have been working purposefully to achieve a shared goal, which Justice Barbara J. Pariente describes as "doing the very best we can for our children

who need us the most—those who have been the subject of abuse, neglect, or abandonment."

In another effort to help model court judges and magistrates implement best practices, Office of Court Improvement staff coordinated five, day-long regional trainings to introduce the revised *Dependency Benchbook* and to highlight all the changes that were made since the 2008 edition. These judges and magistrates continue to have opportunities to receive training and participate in facilitated discussions at periodic "all-sites meetings." Moreover, each model court judge and magistrate has been assigned an Office of Court Improvement liaison, who promotes and assists in implementing benchbook practices, assesses the current practices and training needs of each circuit, and serves as a link to technical assistance.

Now that science-informed and promising practices are being implemented, the panel will work to systematically monitor data related to the improvements. This ongoing quality-improvement approach will help the panel understand the results of the practices and will also inform future practice.

While the branch has clearly made great strides in improving the dependency division of family court, it has also facilitated significant advances in other family court divisions. For instance, to support circuit efforts to move ahead with implementing family court principles,



Judge Lynn Tepper, Sixth Circuit, conducts a lively session on crossover cases at the statewide meeting of domestic violence coordinators.

the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, chaired by Justice Pariente, has been coordinating regional collaboration meetings. Sometimes referred to as "circuit pairings," these meetings bring together family court judges, family court administration staff, and key

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community partners from neighboring circuits to discuss family court best practices and to consider how, through communication and collaboration, participants can advance family court principles to improve the way the courts serve children and their families.

In addition, family court judges and staff can now take advantage of several new web-based learning opportunities. Using as a template *Domestic Violence Virtual Court*, which they developed in 2009, Court Improvement staff designed two online training programs. An excellent tool both for dependency judges and for duty judges who hear shelter hearings on occasion, the *Dependency Court Shelter Hearings Training* takes users to an interactive courtroom, where, after watching testimony, they must rule on issues like paternity, child support, and psychotropic medication. The training also puts a variety of resources at users' fingertips (e.g., the newly updated *Dependency Benchbook*, Florida statutes, and Florida rules of juvenile procedure). The other new virtual court, the *Domestic Violence Interactive Classroom*, is an orientation program for new domestic violence case managers as well as a useful refresher for seasoned case managers seeking to update their knowledge. Covering the entire domestic violence injunction process, the program gives users a chance to test their knowledge of the injunction process in the context of a simulated case that covers many of the issues they will encounter on the job. ([This link goes to the court system's virtual court site.](#))

Among the more traditional self-learning resources are educational videos and publications, and Court Improvement has been expanding its store of those as well. Over the last seven years, staff have created seven videos—some, for audiences of judges and court personnel; others, for parties involved in, or about to be involved in, specific courtroom procedures. The latest addition is *Mythbreakers: Chapter 39 Injunctions* (Chapter 39 refers to the statute addressing children's issues). Funded with a STOP Violence Against Women grant, this professionally-produced video was created for judges, court personnel, and other parties interested in the chapter 39 injunction process. Both instructive and entertaining, it explains some of the basics—like what a chapter 39 injunction is, how it is different from a chapter

741 injunction (the chapter that addresses marriage; domestic violence issues), what its primary purpose is, whom it protects, and who is typically present at a hearing—and it also dispels four harmful myths about these injunctions. ([This link goes to the court system's video projects.](#)) Moreover, staff recently released *Florida, Firearms, and Domestic Violence: A Quick Reference Guide to Firearms in Florida*, which provides information about the intersection between firearms law (both state and federal) and domestic violence. ([Take this link to the guide.](#))

While the number, kinds, and subject areas of self-learning resources continue to flourish, face-to-face programs still remain popular, and, this year, family court judges and staff were able to participate in some compelling live instructional programs. For instance, 26 judges participated in a three-day conference called *Enhancing Judicial Skills in Domestic Violence Cases*, presented by the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence. The highly-interactive format—which included hypothetical case problems, role-play exercises, small group discussions, faculty demonstrations, and working lunches—was designed to enable new and experienced judges to learn from one another. In addition, 37 domestic violence coordinators from all 20 circuits came together for a comprehensive, statewide education program that familiarized attendees with recent court improvement initiatives and introduced them to new strategies and tools to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Current Office of Court Improvement projects include a revision of the *Domestic Violence Benchbook* and of the *Delinquency Benchbook*. Also under revision is the 2006 *Domestic Violence Injunction Case Management Guidelines*; with this update, staff are expanding and supporting the information provided in the *Domestic Violence Virtual Court*. Of particular importance are the chapters dealing with the nature of domestic violence and the effects of domestic violence on children.

Staff are also completing two new publications. Since studies have shown that batterers are more likely to comply with injunctions when they believe that the court is actively reviewing their compliance, staff are developing



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Promising Practices Guide for Enforcement, a step-by-step approach to an efficient, streamlined process that allows the court to review batterer compliance with batterer intervention programs. Through assisting courts in proactive verification of batterer compliance, this model guide will support court personnel's efforts to reduce the risk of harm to domestic violence victims in the state. Staff are also working on a *Child Support Benchbook*. Designed for judges, magistrates, and child support hearing officers, the benchbook will include case law, statutes, and other relevant resources; sections on how to address child support in dependency, domestic violence and dissolution cases; and sections on establishing paternity, public assistance cases, and collection enforcement.

Drug Court

Recently marking its twenty-second anniversary, drug court, conceived in Dade County in 1989, comprises a 12 to 18-month process in which non-violent substance abusers are placed into treatment programs under the close supervision of a judge and a team of treatment and justice system professionals. Although each drug court is singular, a product of the needs, priorities, and resources



Chief Justice Charles T. Canady (on left) hands the Florida Supreme Court Drug Court Month Proclamation to Judge Mark H. Jones, Sixteenth Circuit, who presided over the statewide graduation ceremony.

of its local community, most have certain elements in common: among their shared features, they remove drug-related cases from the traditional courtroom environment; take a non-adversarial approach; offer a range of treatment and rehabilitation services; require offenders to maintain ongoing interaction with the court; and compel offenders to undergo random alcohol and drug tests, rewarding them for positive behavior and sanctioning them when

they do not meet their obligations. The primary goal of all drug courts is the offender's treatment and recovery.

Over the years, drug court has expanded well beyond its first incarnation, which was adult criminal drug court. Currently, the drug court model also includes juvenile, dependency, misdemeanor, and DUI drug courts, and features of the drug court model, especially its case management practices, have been adopted by other docket types (mental health, veterans, and other problem-solving court dockets). Florida is home to 103 drug courts: 48 adult felony; 25 juvenile delinquency; 20 dependency; five misdemeanor; four DUI; and one juvenile re-entry.

Drug courts have been touted for reducing recidivism, improving public safety, restoring productive citizens, reuniting families, and saving lives. They also save public money—always an inducement, but an especially appealing one in a grim economy—prompting an interest, several years back, in expanding the number of adult post-adjudicatory drug courts in the state. Now entering its third year, Florida's Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program is redirecting a sizable population of non-violent drug offenders from prison into effective treatment and diversion programs, thereby saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

Eight counties are participating in the program: Broward, Escambia, Hillsborough, Marion, Orange, Pinellas, Polk, and Volusia. Subsidized until March 2013, the program is funded with \$18.6 million in federal stimulus dollars that the legislature appropriated to the court system in 2009. To flourish, the program also depends on the support of county government, the offices of the state attorneys and public defenders, the Department of Corrections, and substance abuse treatment providers.

The goal of the program is to successfully treat and graduate 2,000 prison-bound, non-violent offenders with substance abuse problems. Treating this population outside the traditional prison system means Florida can avoid building a new prison—at a cost of \$95 million for construction and more than \$28 million per year for operating costs. In addition, because drug court graduates are proven to have lower rates of recidivism than prisoners, the state will also benefit from long-term costs savings.

The expansion program has been operational in all eight counties since March 2010. By mid-August 2011, a total of 1,123 offenders had been admitted into the program, and, already, the program has saved taxpayer dollars. The

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Department of Corrections estimates that housing non-violent offenders in prison costs \$58.36 per person per day—while expansion drug courts cost on average \$22 per person per day: so far, expansion drug courts have saved the state more than \$7 million.

Admissions are poised to increase more rapidly now. Starting July 1, 2011, lawmakers raised the number of “Criminal Punishment Code scoresheet total sentencing points” a defendant may have and still be eligible for the program. Also as of July 1, a defendant with any violations of probation—not just violations for a

would efficiently collect the number and kinds of data required by the state and federal governments.

Last spring, OSCA selected a vendor with an “off the shelf” system that can be shaped to reflect the branch’s needs; that system, now called the Florida Drug Court Case Management System, is currently being adapted to accommodate the court system’s specific data requirements. At first, the system will be utilized exclusively by the expansion program drug courts. In the next phase, it will be broadened to collect data from the rest of the state’s adult drug courts; the goal is to extend it to include the other drug court types as well.

The Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program has been operational in all eight counties since March 2010. By mid-August 2011, a total of 1,123 offenders had been admitted into the program, and, already, the program has saved taxpayer dollars. The Department of Corrections estimates that housing non-violent offenders in prison costs \$58.36 per person per day—while expansion drug courts cost on average \$22 per person per day: so far, expansion drug courts have saved the state more than \$7 million.

For three reasons, OSCA drug court team members are calling the drug court case management system a “milestone.” First, because Florida never had a statewide drug court data system, collecting data was always a challenge; with this fully automated system, OSCA will be able to collect uniform and comparable data that will inform the supreme court’s policy and budget decisions while simultaneously satisfying state and federal requirements. Second, the system will be a boon on the local level as well because it will enable

positive urinalysis—can now be considered for post-adjudicatory drug court. With these recent legislative amendments, the pool of eligible participants is expected to grow. And as admissions continue to climb, savings will continue to swell.

As a stipulation of this federal stimulus funding, the expansion program drug courts must comply with strict state and federal reporting requirements involving the collection of a vast number of client-level data elements. These data elements include arrest, offense, and sentencing information; demographics; progress in treatment; drug test results; incentives and sanctions; and positive outcomes (measured by comparing the before-and-after data reflecting, among other things, each participant’s academic status, income, housing status, and physical health status). Therefore, soon after the legislature announced its appropriation of federal stimulus dollars to support the expansion of adult post-adjudicatory drug courts, OSCA staff began investigating prospects for a comprehensive and secure case management system that

case managers to access the information they need to manage their cases more efficiently; moreover, they will be able to produce complex reports, statistical analyses, and other performance measurement documents on demand. And, last, the case management system will support branch efforts to perform local and statewide evaluations of drug court; by measuring drug court efficacy, these evaluations will provide tangible evidence of the specific success of Florida’s drug court programs.

Although the drug court case management system will eventually be able to carry out statewide evaluations, the supreme court, prompted by a 2008 recommendation of its Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts, has sought to assess Florida’s drug courts more immediately. Toward that end, the task force and OSCA, with technical assistance from the National Center for State Courts, developed a plan for evaluating drug courts across the state. In 2010, with a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, OSCA selected a nationally-recognized research organization for the project.

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In the first phase of the evaluation, which began in March 2011, the research team performed an online assessment of all 48 of Florida's adult felony drug courts, examining their implementation of the ten key components of drug court and the extent to which each of those drug courts has implemented best practices. Based on these assessments, OSCA is now selecting five drug courts for a comprehensive evaluation that will include a process, outcome, impact, and cost effectiveness analysis (based on data collection, site visits, and interviews).

The statewide evaluation will provide the branch with an accurate, statewide picture of how the drug court programs are operating; will document the effectiveness of drug court versus traditional sentencing options for

Court Institute. In addition, although live programming is not practicable these days, distance learning surely is, and opportunities for online trainings beckoned: utilizing videoconferencing and web conferencing, OSCA's Office of Court Improvement staff, together with the Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals, coordinated four distance learning programs for drug court judges, magistrates, court personnel, and community partners.

Finally, in May, in celebration of National Drug Court Month, Florida held its twelfth annual statewide drug court graduation ceremony. The event, hosted by the Sixteenth Circuit this year, took place in Key West. All told, 160 drug court graduates from 17 drug courts in nine judicial circuits participated in the graduation ceremony,

and circuits across the state viewed the ceremony through the court system's videoconferencing network. Keynote speaker Chief Justice Canady compellingly encapsulated the value and the fruits of drug court when he emphasized, "Every participant who successfully completes drug court is one less individual in our jails and prisons,

"Every participant who successfully completes drug court is one less individual in our jails and prisons, which ultimately saves money for the people of Florida. It's one more child who gets back on the right track. It's one more child that has their parent back. Drug courts are smart on crime and smart for our communities. The more participants who overcome addiction through drug courts, the more Floridians save and the more productive and healthy our entire state is. The positive outcomes are far reaching, and they restore our society as a whole." ~Chief Justice Canady at Florida's twelfth annual statewide drug court graduation ceremony

substance abusers who enter the criminal justice system; and will identify the elements of drug court that are related to successful outcomes. In addition, by substantiating the success of drug court, the evaluation should help the branch improve prospects for drug court funding.

Not surprisingly, the current budget constraints limited the number of face-to-face training opportunities for drug court judges and staff this year, but they were able to take advantage of a few educational offerings. For instance, 22 expansion program judges and case managers (from the eight participating counties), along with several members of the OSCA drug court team, attended the four-day National Association of Drug Court Professionals 17th Annual Drug Court Training Conference, where they were introduced to some of the most recent, cutting-edge information on drug courts. And representatives from each of those counties will also participate in the upcoming "Operational Tune-Up," presented by the National Drug

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Mental Health and Substance Abuse Initiatives

One of the many consequences of the current fiscal crisis is the reduction in funding for critical community services and other local safety nets. As a result, individuals with mental illnesses and/or substance abuse problems are increasingly likely to find themselves caught up in the already-overcrowded justice system, where services are both more costly and, in the long term, less effective. The judicial branch continues its efforts to address this mounting concern.

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Approximately 75% of the people with acute mental illnesses who are arrested and booked into US jails also meet the criteria for co-occurring substance abuse disorders. Recognizing the rise in the co-occurrence of mental illness and substance abuse—and the similarity of the judicial case management principles associated with cases involving these conditions—Chief Justice Canady, in October 2010, created the Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Court. In creating this task force, he forged a union of the Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts (instituted in 1998) and the Mental Health Subcommittee (established in 2006).

The new task force has four charges: to continue promoting the recommendations of the Mental Health Subcommittee's 2007 report, *Transforming Florida's Mental Health System* ([take this link to the report](#)); to analyze the reports of the Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts, determine the status of task force recommendations, and propose a strategy to address unresolved matters; to support OSCA's efforts to resolve issues associated with implementing the Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program; and to



Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, chairs the Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Court.

consider how Florida's courts may more effectively serve veterans with mental illnesses and substance abuse issues who become involved in the criminal justice system.

The task force is benefitting from its members' long-historied knowledge and understanding of mental health, substance abuse, and veterans affairs issues. To chair the committee, the chief justice named Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, who headed up the Mental Health Subcommittee and also served as special advisor to criminal justice and mental health to

two former chief justices: Justice R. Fred Lewis and Justice Peggy A. Quince. Of the 24 members, five served on one or both of the parent committees, six have been drug court judges, three are veterans affairs officers, and the others represent a variety of state agencies and non-governmental organizations that attend to mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

The task force's primary goal is to work with the legislature to implement the recommendations on which the branch and its partners have been working for four years now—that is, to tap into federal dollars to subsidize a comprehensive system of community-based care, diversion, and re-entry initiatives that will help people with mental illnesses and keep them from entering/re-entering the criminal justice system. In essence, the task force seeks to bring about a shift in focus—from incarceration of nonviolent offenders to their rehabilitation. This is a win-win strategy, Judge Leifman points out: courts will experience decreased caseloads; communities will be safer; law enforcement and corrections officers will run less risk of injury; the state won't have to build as many prisons—to the relief of taxpayers; and people with mental illnesses will have the chance to receive superior treatment for significantly less than it costs the state to treat them behind bars.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Initially sparked by grassroots, community-based efforts, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in Florida has its origins in Dade County's first citizen dispute settlement center, founded in 1975. In 1988, ADR was brought under the umbrella of the court system, and, since then, the branch has developed the most comprehensive court-connected mediation program in the nation. ([For more on ADR, follow this link.](#))

Litigants who work with a mediator benefit from being able to take an active role in solving their disputes and fashion a solution that reflects their needs and concerns. Moreover, mediation and other alternative dispute resolution methods are generally quicker and less costly than traditional litigation, conserving both the parties' and the courts' time and resources. By helping the branch use public resources responsibly and by supporting its efforts to process cases effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms play an important role in improving the administration of justice.

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At the Mediation Day event at the supreme court, Justice Ricky Polston spoke about the importance of mediation with 15 elementary school students who are studying conflict resolution skills in school. He showed his appreciation for their interest in conflict resolution with a personalized certificate of commendation to each student.

In the 2010/11 fiscal year, the supreme court focused on several ADR-related issues; among them, it clarified its administrative order on managed mediation programs for residential mortgage foreclosure cases; made several amendments to the Small Claims Rule, one of which delineates the permissible role of non-judicial personnel in the pretrial process; and authorized some technical changes to the Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators regarding the grievance disciplinary process. But its most momentous ADR focus was on appellate mediation. Up until recently, the supreme court certified mediators in four areas: county court, family, circuit court, and dependency (the last of which was certified over a decade ago). The court's recent certification of appellate mediation is actually a significant development, for with the addition of this mediation area, the supreme court now certifies all five areas of mediation authorized in chapter 44, Florida Statutes.

Although statewide certification for appellate mediation is new, most of the DCAs have had appellate mediation pilot programs over the last ten years. Interest in it was

rekindled in 2001, when the Fifth DCA began piloting the Appellate Mediation Program for final civil and family appeals, in cases in which attorneys represent all parties. Calling the pilot a success, the Fifth DCA adopted it as a permanent program in 2004, saying that appellate mediation resolved disputes more quickly and less expensively than the appellate process and that it helped to narrow and clarify the issues for appeal so that cases could be expedited. Since then, at former Chief Justice Pariente's suggestion, the other DCAs considered implementing similar programs.

In 2009, the ADR Rules and Policy Committee submitted a petition to the supreme court to amend the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure and the Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed mediators to include mediation in appellate procedures, and the court approved the new rules in a July 1, 2010, opinion. ([Read the supreme court opinion.](#)) In September 2010, Chief Justice Canady issued an administrative order adopting the inclusion of training standards for Florida Supreme Court certified appellate mediation training programs, and three months later, he issued an administrative order that addresses matters associated with the administration of appellate mediator certification. With the finalization of training standards and various administrative and procedural details, the certification process was ready to begin.

A person interested in becoming an appellate mediator must be a Florida Supreme Court certified circuit court, family, or dependency mediator and must successfully complete a certified appellate mediation training program.

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In addition, in order to be appointed by the court in an appellate case, the mediator must be licensed to practice law (unless the parties agree otherwise). After becoming certified, appellate mediators are required to maintain at least one underlying certification; for each renewal cycle, they must complete appellate mediator-specific education

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as well as continuing mediator education for their underlying certification. ([Take this link to learn How to Become a Florida Supreme Court Certified Mediator.](#)) So far, two programs have been approved to provide appellate mediation training, and, as of August 2011, 266 appellate mediators have been certified in Florida.



Kimberly Kosch, court operations consultant with OSCA's Dispute Resolution Center, conducts a mediator ethics presentation, "High Adventure in Ethics," to certified mediators in the Second Judicial Circuit during their annual Fall Refresher training.

Long-Range Issue #3: Supporting Competence and Quality

The Florida State Courts System is committed to having a workforce that is highly qualified and dedicated to service.

To meet the demands of justice in the twenty-first century, judicial officers and court staff must have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to administer the justice system fairly, effectively, and in ways that promote trust and confidence. As Long-Range Issue #3 notes, "Advanced levels of training and development are critical to enable those who work within the system to effectively perform the challenging work of the courts and meet the demands placed on them."

Education for Judges and Court Personnel

Embracing an engaging assortment of approaches, and with an eye toward making efficient and effective use of funding and staff resources, many entities within the state courts system provide the men and women who work in the judicial branch with high-quality training

opportunities and educational materials. For example, the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity, with the help of the 26 Diversity Teams (one in each circuit and appellate court), ensures that diversity training is dependably available for judges and court personnel (see below, p. 30). In addition, opportunities for continuing education are regularly coordinated by various OSCA units: among them, the Office of Court Improvement puts together an exceptional variety of live and online trainings, publications, and videos for family court and drug court judges and staff (see above, pp. 18-20), and the Florida Dispute Resolution Center offers annual, statewide conferences that give mediators and arbitrators a chance to earn continuing education credits.

However, this section focuses on the educational programs and resources supported by the Florida Court Education Council (FCEC), which was established by the supreme court in 1978 to coordinate and oversee the creation and maintenance of a comprehensive education program for judges and some court personnel and to manage the budget that supports these endeavors. Chaired by Justice Jorge Labarga and vice-chaired by Judge Jennifer Bailey, Eleventh Circuit, the council, with the support of OSCA's Court Education Section and the Publications Unit, offers continuing education through both statewide and local live programs, distance learning events, and publications and other self-learning resources.

Education for Judges

Judges are required to earn a minimum of 30 approved credit hours of continuing judicial education every three years, and new judges, as well as judges in certain divisions, often have to satisfy additional requirements. Although budget constraints and a travel freeze prevented the FCEC from offering its full range of



Justice Jorge Labarga chairs the Florida Court Education Council.

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live programs for fiscal year 2010/11, the council worked with the leaders of the various Florida judicial conferences and colleges to ensure that judges would be able to meet their educational obligations.

The Florida judicial branch has three judicial conferences: the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida, the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges, and the Florida Conference of District Court of Appeal Judges. One of the functions of each conference is to ensure that the education needs of its respective judges are met. Each conference has a representative on the FCEC, who

These faculty training and enrichment courses demonstrate the Florida Court Education Council's commitment to ensuring that its education programs are needs-based, student-driven, and worthwhile and that its faculty are meaningfully meeting the needs of learners.

helps to develop educational policy, and each conference coordinates live education programs every year. Although some of the other live programs had to be cut in the 2010/11 fiscal year, the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida and the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges were able to hold their annual education programs in summer 2010, and the Florida Conference of District Court of Appeal Judges offered its annual education program that fall.

Both phases of the Florida Judicial College were also held. During their first year of judicial service, trial court judges who are new to the bench are required to complete this intensive, ten-day program: the first phase, a pre-bench program in January, explores the art and science of judging through a series of orientation sessions and a trial skills workshop; the second phase, two months later, focuses on more substantive and procedural matters. Both phases were well attended: 69 new trial judges, one new DCA judge, and 13 general magistrates attended the first phase; 65 new trial judges, three judges who transitioned from the county to the circuit bench, 36 judges who recently changed (or were about to change) divisions, and nine general magistrates participated in the second phase. In addition, judges new to the appellate bench were able to

participate in the New Appellate Judges Program in the spring of this year.

The FCEC was also able to offer the DUI Traffic Adjudication Lab in the winter; the Handling Capital Cases course, for judges who hear death penalty cases, in the spring; and the education program for chief judges and trial court administrators, also in the spring.

In order to be able to offer hundreds of hours of continuing judicial education instruction each year, court education leaders rely significantly on the time and dedication of a slate of sitting and retired judges who generously agree to serve as faculty. Judges who wish to teach are required to participate in a faculty training course designed specifically for them. This day-and-a-half long program is offered at least once a year, and it immerses the aspiring judicial teachers in adult education principles. In a small-group setting (usually the training is capped at 18), they learn how to do a needs assessment and how to create learning objectives; they also learn how to team teach, how to reach different kinds of learners, and how to plan a successful course. And they get to work with some of the court system's most experienced and accomplished judicial faculty, who share practical and anecdotal tips about what works well and what is likely to falter. Seventeen people attended the faculty training held this winter.

In addition, for judicial faculty who sought even deeper teacher training, the FCEC sponsored a day-long Faculty Enrichment Course last fall. Altogether, 41 judicial faculty members participated in a course that could just have suitably been called, "It's not about my need to tell but about their need to know." The course focused on using participatory learning activities to improve teaching skills and to involve students more intensively in the learning process. Participants had the opportunity to learn through doing: after the faculty modeled a range of participatory learning activities, each student then created one of his/her own and presented it to the group. These faculty training and enrichment courses demonstrate the FCEC's commitment to ensuring that its education programs are needs-based, student-driven, and worthwhile and that its faculty are meaningfully meeting the needs of learners.

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Education for Court Personnel

One of the goals of Long-Range Issue #3 is to ensure that court personnel, like judges, “have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve and perform at the highest professional levels.” To meet this goal, the Florida Court Education Council, through the agency of its Florida Court Personnel Committee and with the assistance of OSCA’s Court Education Section, continues to improve and expand training and educational opportunities and offerings for the approximately 3,000 employees who work in Florida’s courts system.

The movement to build a thriving education program for court personnel began in 2006, when the council hired a consultant to perform an education needs assessment. After evaluating the training needs of six categories of



Via webcast, attorneys with the supreme court and OSCA listen to retired Judge David Gersten, Third DCA, discuss the most important decisions of the US Supreme Court from the 2010/11 term.

court staff—general magistrates and hearing officers; trial court staff attorneys and general counsel; judicial assistants; administrative services personnel; family court personnel; and case managers—the consultant made recommendations about their training needs and the most effective means to address them. Soon thereafter, the council established the Florida Court Personnel Committee, chaired by Judge Kathleen Kroll, Fifteenth Circuit, to create a framework for meeting these needs. Since then, the council has provided funding and support for some invigorating instructional opportunities for court employees.

In fiscal year 2010/11, the council subsidized a number of locally-driven education events across the state. Through a procedure that the Florida Court Personnel Committee developed two years back, employee groups are able to apply for funding for education programs they

design together. Although the budget crisis forced the cancellation of several approved programs last year, 10 council-funded local trainings did take place, providing instruction on topics such as group development and performance management, leadership development, creative problem-solving, effective interpersonal communication and conflict management, preventing harassment in the workplace (computer-based), and realtime mastery training for court reporters (via videoconference). Altogether, approximately 790 court employees took advantage of these local trainings.

Also committed to the development of computer-based self-learning resources, the Florida Court Personnel Committee tasked OSCA’s Court Education Section with creating an online learning program for all recent hires. The result is an interactive intranet module called *Introduction to the Florida Court System*, with sections on state government, the judicial branch, court functions, and court administration. It was designed to familiarize new court employees with the realities, conventions, and vocabularies of the judicial world.

In addition, the council supported three statewide educational initiatives. Thanks to council funding, 22 general magistrates and hearing support officers were able to participate in Phase I and/or Phase II of the Florida Judicial College; for most of the sessions, they were integrated with the judges, but they also had some programming tailored to their specific needs. Moreover, the council sponsored 15 judicial assistants to attend the two-and-a-half day Judicial Assistants Association of Florida conference in August 2010. The council also subsidized a two-day program for 20 civil traffic hearing officers in March 2011. To enable the fruits of this training to reach hearing officers across the state, a representative from each circuit attended with the intention of designing a local program in the future—venues where they can share their new knowledge and insights. With both the statewide and some of the local events, the Florida Court Personnel Committee sees itself as having a kind of “clearinghouse” function: it aims to facilitate the sharing of course offerings with other locations, through distance learning or other means, and thereby maximize the number of court employees who can benefit from any given event.

For the 2011/12 fiscal year, assuming no additional budget restrictions, the council has approved funding for local trainings on, among other topics, customer service, preventing harassment in the workplace, managerial training, communicating effectively in the court

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environment, and diversity and cultural awareness. And, again, the council is funding a few statewide programs: one for judicial assistants and one for general counsel, staff attorneys, and law clerks.

Publications and Other Self-Learning Resources

To boost the breadth of training and educational offerings for judges and court employees, Long-Range Issue #3 recommends that the branch expand its trove of self-learning resources and electronic/online tools. Toward that end, the Florida Court Education Council supported judicial and staff efforts to compose new court education publications, update existent ones, develop a web-based course for family court judges, and enlarge the online Court Education Resource Library.

The council's Publications Committee, with the support of OSCA's Publications Unit, worked studiously to update and to add to its inventory of online publications, among the most utilized of the branch's self-learning resources.

The committee's most recent publication is *Handling Florida Cases Involving Self-Represented Litigants: A Manual for Florida Courts*, which was designed to assist Florida judges in meeting the ethical, legal, and practical challenges presented by the increasing number of Florida litigants who represent themselves. Adapted from a national publication to focus on Florida law and practice, the manual discusses characteristics and needs of self-represented litigants; provides suggestions for controlling case flow and calendar management

and for managing a courtroom where at least one litigant is self-represented; and includes tools for communicating with participants in a hearing or trial involving self-represented litigants, for avoiding unintended bias, and for providing judicial leadership. Also recently published is the *Florida Judges' Guide to Resources for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*, a handy reference that links readers to seminal Florida organizations and publications, national organizations and publications, and journal and law review articles.

In addition, the Publications Committee revised the *Judicial Ethics Benchguide*, the *Criminal Benchguide for Circuit Judges*, and the *Contempt Benchguide* to reflect changes in the law. Also updated were the Topical Index of the *Opinions of the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee* and *An Aid to Understanding Canon 7* (a manual that assists

judicial candidates in campaign and political activities). Furthermore, on a quarterly basis, the committee continues to produce its cumulative and indexed *Domestic Violence Case Law Summaries* and to summarize the *Traffic-Related Appellate Opinion Summaries*. In progress is an update of the *Judicial Administration Benchguide*.

Also in progress is the composition of the *Florida Benchguide on Court Interpreting*, a useful guide for judicial officers and court staff involved in Florida cases involving spoken language and sign-language interpreters. This benchguide will address, among other topics, existing law and policy; determining the need for, waiving the right to, and appointing a spoken language interpreter; the role of the spoken language interpreter and the Code of Professional Conduct; conducting interpreted proceedings; best practices for working with spoken language interpreters; and interpreters for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. The committee aims to release this publication sometime this fall.



The Publications Committee also produced a web-based education program for family court judges. *Fundamentals for Family Court Judges* was designed to satisfy the supreme court requirement that judges who are new to the family division, as well as judges who haven't served in the division in two years, take a course in family fundamentals before assuming the assignment or within 60 days after assuming the assignment. The curriculum is divided into four modules: Dissolution of Marriage,

Domestic Violence, Juvenile Delinquency, and Juvenile Dependency. Through the use of text, sample forms, hypotheticals, videotaped scenarios simulating court hearings, and links to statutes, rules, and additional resources, this interactive program introduces learners to the issues and challenges that frequently arise in family court. Exercises and questions are included throughout the four modules to give participants a chance to measure what they have learned along the way.

Finally, the Court Education Resource Library continues to flourish, providing links to myriad publications and other media prepared by various OSCA units; materials from live programs and other educational events; online training and CD-ROM information; and useful articles, curricula, handbooks, and reports from other state and national organizations.

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

Florida's judicial branch is committed to improving access to courts, and to providing the highest quality of services to everyone who enters a courthouse.

“Public access to the courts is a cornerstone of our justice system,” begins the narrative introducing Long-Range Issue #4. Summoning one of the Florida constitution’s dictums—that “The courts shall be open to every person for redress of any injury, and justice shall be administered without sale, denial or delay”—the narrative goes on to remind readers that “Inherent in this mandate is the precept that our courts are neutral bodies that will interpret the law fairly, and will ensure equal treatment of all parties.”

However, the long-range plan acknowledges that, when seeking access to the courts, litigants may face a range of impediments—such as cultural and attitudinal biases, language and communication hurdles, and physical and electronic obstacles. Through its commitment to increasing diversity awareness, to enlarging the pool of qualified court interpreters, and to promoting architectural and electronic access for people with disabilities—and through its efforts to keep the court house doors open, even in emergencies—the branch endeavors to provide all people with meaningful access to Florida’s courts and to treat all people fairly and respectfully.

Emergency Preparedness

At the most primary level, court access is possible only when the courthouse doors are open and the courts are operational. If a natural or human-authored disaster strikes and causes a court shutdown, then, for all intents and purposes, court access, and thus justice, is denied. The catalyst for institutionalizing branch-wide policies

and procedures for anticipating and managing court emergencies was the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Within two months, former Chief Justice Charles Wells created the Work Group on Emergency Preparedness, which he directed to “develop a plan for the State Courts System to better respond to emergency situations.” He instructed the workgroup to heed two policy goals: to protect the health and safety of everyone inside the courts and to “keep the courts open” to ensure justice for the people.

The emergency preparedness measures he set in motion have been commended as a model of teamwork and inter-governmental collaboration: the branch has established lines of communication with executive branch agencies as well as with local and statewide emergency management and first responder agencies in order to facilitate immediate responses to threats and emergencies as well as to support the coordination of resources. In addition, each Florida court has identified its mission-essential functions; each has a preparedness plan that includes emergency and administrative procedures as well as a continuity of operations plan; and each designates an emergency coordinating officer, a public information officer, and a court-emergency management team. The chief justice’s efforts also led to the creation of the Unified Supreme Court/Branch Court Emergency Management Group (CEMG), which recommends policy for, prepares for, and responds to emergencies both in the supreme court building and in courts statewide.

Emergency management means being prepared both for nature-made crises (everything from hurricanes, tropical storms, tornados, and floods to pandemics) as well as for human-made ones (accidents—e.g., oil spills, biohazards, extended information systems outages—and military or terrorist attack-related incidents). Of course in Florida, most crises are due to inflictions of the weather variety, particularly hurricanes. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Sunshine State is the most hurricane prone state in the country. Historically, 40% of the hurricanes that have struck the US hit Florida. The most hurricane prone regions in the entire US are the Florida Keys and Southeast Florida, and, since 1851, the Keys have been struck by hurricanes more than any other area in Florida, with 19 landfalls. Meanwhile, also since 1851, 15 major hurricanes have buffeted Southeast Florida, 13 have hit Southwest Florida, and 13 have battered the Florida Panhandle.



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Since the calamitous 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, Florida courts have not had to activate their continuity of operations plans (the only recent disaster in the state was the BP oil spill, which did not cause any court closures). Nonetheless, the court system takes very seriously its responsibility to keep updating and improving its emergency preparedness plans and to keep in mind the critical lessons learned from those hurricane tribulations: the need for unambiguous, on-the-ground leadership before, during, and after the emergency; the need for a branch-wide emergency plan; and the need for cooperation among all court stakeholders. All three of these elements have been in place for several years now.

The emergency preparedness measures that then Chief Justice Wells set in motion have been commended as a model of teamwork and inter-governmental collaboration: the branch has established lines of communication with executive branch agencies as well as with local and statewide emergency management and first responder agencies in order to facilitate immediate responses to threats and emergencies as well as to support the coordination of resources.

A fourth fundamental is the need for a reliable means of communication. In addition to the staggering loss of life as well as the significant disruption to people's everyday lives, major natural disasters tend to cause an almost total breakdown in the ability to communicate with the outside world: power is lost; telephone services are discontinued; and cell phone service is either non-existent or so congested that it is difficult to get a call through. To address this inevitable disaster-aftermath, in 2005, the branch purchased 33 satellite phones (one for each circuit and DCA, with the remaining for distribution on an as-needed basis). These phones, considered a top-of-the-line emergency communications alternative when they were bought, might no longer be sufficient: although they offer mobile phone services, they are not capable of providing sustained data communication or Internet kinds of services. In an effort to make the court system as disaster-ready as possible, the CEMG has begun researching all emergency communication alternatives

to determine whether the current satellite phones are still viable or can be enhanced; if neither, the group will investigate different solutions.

Even in times of peace and calm—or, more accurately, especially in times of peace and calm—the branch continues to focus on ensuring that Florida's courts will be ready to respond thoughtfully to any crisis.

Fairness and Diversity Awareness

As one of the goals of Long-Range Issue #4 underscores, "Florida's courts will treat all people fairly and with respect." To achieve this end, the long-range plan notes that "The judicial branch must continue its vigilance in correcting any bias inherent in court processes and any conduct evidencing bias by attorneys, court personnel, judges, or litigants."

Since 1987, the state courts system has reinforced its commitment to this goal through its appointment of various diversity committees: the Gender Bias Study Commission, the Racial and Ethnic Bias Study Commission, the Committee on the Court-Related Needs of Elders and Persons with Disabilities, and the Commission on Fairness. Since its inception in 2004, the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity has continued the mission.

Currently chaired by Judge Scott Bernstein, Eleventh Circuit, the standing committee, now in its fourth two-year term, has realized some considerable accomplishments over the years: it created an online court diversity information resource center; prepared a report called *Promoting and Ensuring the Diversity of Judicial Staff Attorneys and Law Clerks* and began implementing the report's recommendations; coordinated an extensive outreach project on perceptions of fairness in Florida's courts and prepared and distributed its report, *Perceptions of Fairness in the Florida Court System*; supported the creation of local diversity and sensitivity awareness programs for judges and court staff; coordinated the development of a courts-specific survey instrument used to evaluate all state court facilities to determine their accessibility to people with disabilities; encouraged the development of local programs to strengthen court-community relationships; developed practical educational materials to help judges, court staff, and lawyers recognize, respond to, and understand their role in eradicating bias

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in the courtroom; and worked with the Florida Court Education Council to identify and recommend resources for implementing permanent fairness and diversity training for judges and court personnel at the local and state levels. ([This link goes to the current administrative order governing the committee.](#))



Eleventh Circuit Judge Scott Bernstein, chair of the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity, and Ms. Karen Samuel, OSCA human resource officer and lead staff to the committee, welcome new and returning members to the first meeting of the 2010/11 term.

In the 2010/11 fiscal year, thanks to the work of the committee and to the support of the 26 Diversity Teams (each circuit and appellate court has a team), almost every circuit and DCA was able to offer fairness and diversity trainings for judges, and often, as well, for court personnel. To save on costs, some circuits paired together for a program; some partnered with their local bar association, their local sheriff's department, or their county government for training; and some judges did their training via videoconference, with local facilitators to assist with the small-group exercises. In addition, several circuits were able to offer their own programs because they have in-house trainers—judges who have gone through a train-the-trainer program and are now certified diversity trainers themselves. As a result of these local training initiatives, over 90% of Florida judges have been through a full day-long, stand-alone diversity training with no more than 30 participants, emphasized Judge Bernstein.

Eager to continue providing judges with (fiscally-prudent) opportunities to explore fairness and diversity topics, the committee has been working to increase the number of judicial trainers in the state. Supporting this endeavor is The Florida Bar's Center for Professionalism, which, last June, coordinated a day-long train-the-trainer program for judges, resulting in five new certified diversity trainers. Their expertise will significantly reduce the cost of providing diversity education in the future.

The timing couldn't be better, in fact, because as of January 2012, diversity training will become a standard feature of the continuing judicial education requirements. In response to recommendations of the Florida Court Education Council, the supreme court amended a Florida Rule of Judicial Administration to increase the number of continuing judicial education credit hours required in ethics from two to four hours in each three-year reporting period—and to add language to clarify that approved courses in fairness and diversity can be used to fulfill the ethics requirement. Standing committee members are now focusing on strategies to help judges satisfy this new requirement, possibly by creating programs in diversity education for the various judicial conferences and colleges.

Court Interpreters Program

According to the most recent US Census figures, 18.7% of Florida's household population is foreign born, and 25.8% of Floridians speak a language other than English at home. The judicial branch recognizes that language barriers can hinder a party's ability to



Among the many activities featured in a Court Interpreters Orientation Workshop, prospective interpreters participate in role plays that illustrate some of the ethical issues that interpreters might encounter while interpreting in a court setting. Here, Lisa Bell, OSCA court operations consultant (standing), leads a discussion about the ethical nuances evoked by a particular role play.

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participate effectively in court processes, and its long-range plan clearly reflects this concern: “Non-English speakers and those not fluent in English generally have significant difficulty understanding the court system and may not be able to fully participate in the court process,” Long-Range Issue #4 cautions. It also stresses that “Our system of jurisprudence may be unfamiliar to citizens from other nations, and may present a level of complexity that is intimidating and frustrating.” Through measures to enhance the caliber of certified court interpreters, to provide guidance to judges and court staff who handle cases involving spoken and sign language interpreters, and to improve the overall effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, and uniformity of court interpreting services, the judicial branch continues to make efforts to reduce barriers to communication in Florida’s courts.

The supreme court established the Court Interpreter Certification Board in 2006 to help judges and trial court administrators evaluate the credentials of foreign language interpreters seeking appointment. The board is responsible for certifying, regulating, and disciplining court interpreters, as well as for suspending and revoking certification. Currently chaired by Judge Ronald Ficarrotta, Thirteenth Circuit, the board first set out to develop comprehensive certification guidelines, which it implemented in May 2008. Since July of that year,



From her workstation in the Orange County Courthouse, Ody Arias-Luciano, lead court interpreter for the Ninth Circuit, is interpreting Spanish for an arraignment in an Orange County Jail courtroom.

judges have been required, whenever possible, to appoint certified or duly qualified court interpreters for people with limited English proficiency who are involved in criminal, juvenile, and select civil proceedings.

To ensure that certified court interpreters are as accomplished as possible, the board mandates that they meet a series of requirements, one of which is to earn a minimum of 16 hours of continuing interpreter education credits every two years. Through continuing education, interpreters reinforce their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Continuing education also helps them perform their duties competently, fairly, and efficiently, and it supports their efforts to achieve the highest standards of personal and professional conduct.

In the 2009/10 fiscal year, before members of the first class of certified court interpreters reached their two-year anniversary, the board’s Continuing Education Committee, chaired by Trial Court Administrator Gay Inskeep, Sixth Circuit, worked intently to ensure that continuing education requirements would be in place before any of the interpreters had to renew. Effective July 1, 2010, continuing education was phased in, and, thus far, 26 courses have been approved for continuing interpreter education credits. Approval has been granted to various live and web-based programs—as well as to a number of programs developed and offered by several circuits to area interpreters at no cost. Among the approved trainings, interpreters have been able to earn education credits in courses on techniques for sight translation, techniques for consecutive and simultaneous interpretation, the Code of Professional Conduct, the juvenile delinquency and dependency systems, interpreting in depositions, the Baker Act, immigration terminology, firearms, and controlled substances.

Another educational milestone is the development of an invaluable publication conceived to assist judges and court staff with cases involving spoken language and sign-language interpreters. Spearheaded by the Florida Court Education Council’s Publications Committee, the *Florida Benchguide on Court Interpreting* is being fashioned with the help of four Court Interpreter Certification Board members. Based on a national model but with significant, Florida-specific adaptations, the benchguide covers existing law and policy; determining the need for, waiving the right to, and appointing a spoken language interpreter; the role of the spoken language interpreter and the Code of Professional Conduct; conducting interpreted proceedings; best practices for working with spoken language interpreters; and interpreters for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Available in fall 2011, this benchguide is designed as a “work in progress” that will be updated as needed to reflect changing law and the availability of new resources.

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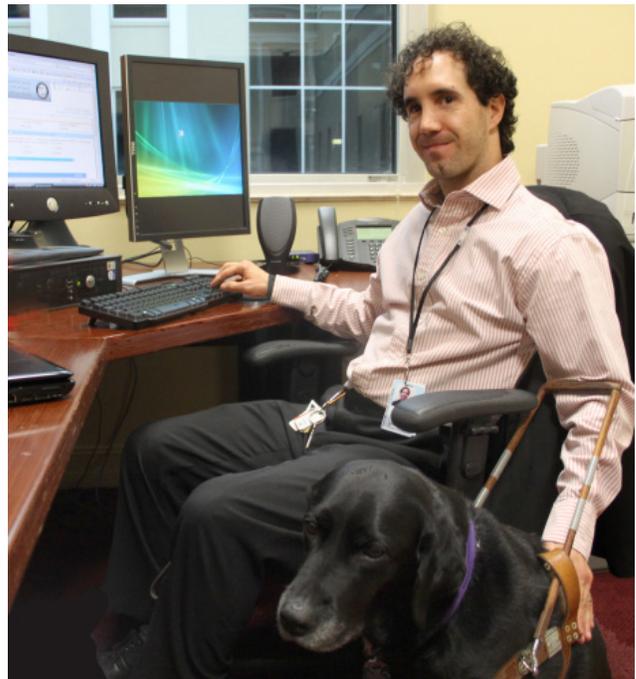
During the 2010/11 fiscal year, OSCA staff also worked to implement many of the recommendations of the Court Interpreting Workgroup, an arm of the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability that was established to develop standards of operation and best practices for court interpreting services. For instance, the program now strives to offer its orientation workshops, written exam administrations, and oral exam testing at a minimum of three venues each year; to offer the orientations and written exams back-to-back, when warranted; and to take into account non-English speaking population statistics and recruitment-need when selecting venues. In addition, OSCA maintains a link to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf to provide the circuits with access to a database of nationally-certified sign language interpreters. Furthermore, to facilitate the sharing of information about sign language interpreter services, OSCA maintains a statewide electronic listserv for court ADA coordinators, and it created and maintains a statewide electronic listserv to facilitate communication and information sharing for all spoken language court interpreting services coordinators. Numerous other workgroup recommendations associated with assignment of services, staffing, courtroom procedures, and technology/remote interpreting were implemented pursuant to federal compliance requirements or Florida Supreme Court rule; others were circuit-initiated.

Particularly in this gloomy economic climate, this last category, which covers the growing use of technology for interpreting services, holds out special promise, both for the courts and for those who need to use the service of court interpreters. Traditionally, interpreters have been physically present at hearings, supporting litigants or witnesses through direct, face-to-face contact; alternatively, courts have contracted with private telephonic interpreting services on an as-needed basis. However, faced with continuing budget cutbacks, a still relatively modest pool of certified interpreters, and the increasing need for “exotic” language interpreting, many circuits have been taking advantage of technological advances to provide interpretations with the use of sophisticated digital audio/video communications systems. Circuits that have implemented remote interpreting using recent technology in courtrooms have found a cost-effective and time-saving strategy for providing necessary court interpreting services. Currently, 13 circuits report using some remote audio or audio/video technology to provide court interpreting services. In Florida, with its richly diverse population, these technologies used in court interpreting services are significantly increasing the availability of qualified court interpreters across the state.

Architectural and Electronic Access for People with Disabilities

Often called the most significant piece of federal legislation since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed by Congress in 1990 to ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities have the same opportunities that are available to people without disabilities. On July 1, 2010, his first day as chief, Chief Justice Canady marked this legislative landmark with a proclamation in which he declared that “July 2010 shall be known within the State Courts System as a month of commemoration in honor of the Twentieth Anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.” He “reaffirm[ed] the court system’s commitment to full compliance with the Act,” and he concluded by saying, “I call upon judicial officers and court staff members to renew their efforts to eliminate obstacles that prevent full inclusion of all Floridians in the State Courts System.”

This proclamation underscored the court system’s long-term commitment to a goal formally initiated in 2006, when then Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis, concerned



Attorney Scott Greenblatt and his dog Karly volunteered their services to the Supreme Court Public Information Office last winter. Mr. Greenblatt is a “power user” of the screen reader application called JAWS (Job Access with Speech), which helps people who have sight loss by reading aloud what is on their computer screen. In the court’s ongoing effort to deal effectively with accessibility concerns, Mr. Greenblatt helped web administrators verify the accessibility and usability of court websites and associated electronic documents.

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about physical impediments that inhibit access to the courts, determined to eradicate “these artificial barriers.” Inaugurating a branch-wide court accessibility initiative, he established a committee to shepherd the development of a courts-specific survey instrument to identify architectural barriers in public areas of court facilities; to work with chief judges to create a local Court Accessibility Team in each circuit and DCA; and to provide regional training sessions to teach team members how to survey and evaluate their court facilities. Based in its findings, each team prepared a transition plan that identified architectural barriers in its facilities, discussed measures for addressing the problems, and determined who would be responsible for making the corrections. Despite the lack of funding at the state and local levels, Florida’s courts continue working to eliminate the physical obstacles that impede access to justice.

To support their courts’ ongoing efforts, the ADA coordinators in each circuit and appellate court have maintained their tradition of participating in bimonthly conference calls in which they learn about resources available to them, share solutions for challenging situations, find out about germane news and events, and learn about topics of interest from guest presenters. During the 2010/11 fiscal year, coordinators benefitted from presentations on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; 2010 Title II Regulations, ADA Standards, and Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Websites; the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Creating Accessible Word Documents; ADA Grievance Requirements, Procedures, and Best Practices; and the Role of an ADA Coordinator.

ADA coordinators have also been working to educate their judges and court personnel about new federal rules published by the US Department of Justice regarding the implementation of Title II of the ADA (which governs access to the services, programs, and activities of local and state government) and the new ADA Standards for Accessible Design (governing new construction and renovations to existing facilities).

In addition to these sets of regulations, the federal government has announced its intention to enact rules governing the accessibility of web information and services provided by entities covered by the ADA. So while addressing architectural barriers, the courts have also been committed to ensuring that their websites, electronic information, and information technologies are accessible to people with disabilities. The imminence of these new regulations—as well as budget cuts, which

have prompted the courts to rely more substantially on making information and services available online—have galvanized ADA coordinators to work toward making their web-based communications as effective and accessible for people with disabilities as they are for others.

The First Judicial Circuit deserves particular notice for its efforts in this area because, under the direction of Chief Judge Terry D. Terrell, it embraced the daunting challenge of reconstructing its entire website in order to accommodate as many users as possible and offer



The Disability Resource Center of the Council for Independent Living honored Ms Shelia Sims, senior deputy court administrator and ADA coordinator for the First Judicial Circuit, with the Joe Oldmixon Award for Outstanding Service to People with Disabilities. Presented by First Circuit Judge Michael G. Allen, this award recognizes Ms Sims for her efforts to improve and enhance access to the courts for persons with disabilities.

them a resource-full site that is easy to understand and navigate. Trial Court Administrator Robin Wright appointed a website committee to research requirements for developing an ADA-compliant website, to assess the circuit’s funding needs, and to change the website focus to meet its new goals. And to ensure the new website would respond to the needs of the varying groups of users of varying demographics, the committee held focus group meetings across the circuit, involving members of The Florida Bar, the community, and the disability community, as well as court partners, judges, and court personnel.

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With the website’s launch on March 1, 2011, the committee successfully achieved its aim: it has designed a site that includes all the information and services these user groups need, all in an ADA-compliant format, and all seamlessly branching out from one Internet address, <http://www.firstjudicialcircuit.org/>

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

Regardless of the economic and political challenges, the branch must remain steadfast in its commitment to maintain and consistently build the public’s trust and confidence.

Equal in substance and significance, the five issues that the long-range plan comprises, though discrete, are vibrantly interconnected. Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence is positioned last, however, because it can be seen as the realization of the four issues that herald it—the fruit the judicial branch gathers after earnestly applying itself to the tasks of Strengthening Governance and Independence, Improving the Administration of Justice, Supporting Competence and Quality, and Enhancing Court Access and Services.

The judicial branch also works to build public trust and confidence by endeavoring to epitomize the five core values that constitute the vision of the branch—its aspiration to be “accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable.”

The branch aims to be *accessible* through its emergency management advances, designed to keep the courts open, even in crises; through its efforts to reduce physical, communication, and language barriers; and through its embrace of new technologies that facilitate the transmission of court records and make court information electronically available to the public (see long-range issues #2 and 4).

The branch strives to be *fair* through its education and training programs, which ensure that Florida’s judges and court personnel develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to administer the justice system impartially; through its commitment to initiatives that develop fairness and diversity awareness among judges and court staff; and through its efforts to enable all people to participate fully and effectively in court proceedings (see long-range issues #2, 3, and 4).

The branch endeavors to be *effective* through its resolution to establish a permanent, stable source of funding; through its implementation of time- and cost-saving alternative dispute resolution methods; through its strategies for monitoring performance and managing resources; through its wide-ranging and sundry court improvement measures; and through its high-quality education and training opportunities that help judges and court personnel successfully perform the challenging work of the courts (see long-range issues #1, 2, and 3).

The branch tries to be *responsive* through its determination to minimize impediments to court access (e.g., language hurdles, communication barriers, cultural and attitudinal biases, architectural obstructions, physical proximity) and through its extensive outreach initiatives, currently being employed to develop standards of operation and best practices for the trial courts, to design mechanisms to automate case processing and monitor performance for the trial and appellate courts, to build the infrastructure for statewide e-filing, and to promote comprehensive, integrated approaches to addressing the complex and intimate family matters that end up in the court system (see long-range issues #2 and 4).

And the branch seeks to be *accountable* through its commitment to strategic planning; through its drive to strengthen the governance and policy development structures of the branch; through its development of standards for monitoring and measuring court performance; and through its vigorous and quantifiable court improvement strategies (see long-range issues #1 and 2).

The articles that follow highlight some of the branch’s additional undertakings to foster public trust and confidence.

Florida Innocence Commission

Wrongful convictions are “expensive” by every measure. When innocent people are wrongfully convicted, both they and their families suffer the weight of their punishment. On top of that, the wrongfully convicted lose time, freedom, and opportunities they can never recover. The crime victims also bear a cost for wrongful convictions, for they are subjugated to continued participation in the criminal justice system. And the public too pays a price: taxpayers pick up the tab for the prosecution, trial, and appeal processes as well as for the high cost of compensation (in Florida, \$50,000 for each year that a wrongfully convicted person spent

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behind bars). Meanwhile, the actual perpetrators roam without restraint—unpunished and free to continue committing criminal acts. It is no surprise that wrongful convictions also erode the public’s trust and confidence in the justice system.

Despite the safeguards inherent in the criminal justice system, it is still possible for people to be convicted of crimes for which they are not responsible. In Florida over the last few years, as a result of DNA evidence, 11 convictions were reversed. The Florida Innocence Commission, a 25-member body of judges, legislators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement officers, legal scholars, and victim advocates, was established by Chief Justice Canady in July 2010 to identify the common causes of wrongful or erroneous convictions and to recommend strategies for eliminating or significantly reducing these causes. ([Take this link to the administrative order creating the commission.](#))



Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Ninth Judicial Circuit, chairs the Florida Innocence Commission.

Chaired by Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., Ninth Judicial Circuit, and under the executive directorship of former Monroe County Judge Lester A. Garringer, Jr., the commission has six goals: to identify the most common causes of conviction of the innocent; to provide a forum for open and productive dialog among commission members regarding each type of cause; to identify current Florida law enforcement procedures for each type of cause; to identify potential solutions in the form of statutory, procedural, or process changes for eliminating each type of cause; to promulgate the work of the commission through interim

reports to the supreme court and the legislature; and to issue a final report to the supreme court, recommending solutions for each cause that the commission addressed.

At its first meeting, in September 2010, the commission identified the five main causes for wrongful conviction: eyewitness misidentification, false confessions, informants/jailhouse snitches, invalidated or improper



scientific evidence, and professional responsibility and accountability. The single greatest cause of wrongful convictions is eyewitness misidentification: experts testify that the convictions of 77% of the 261 exonerations nationwide were the result of misidentifications; in Florida, the convictions of nine of the 11 exonerees were the result of misidentifications. Therefore, commission members voted unanimously to address this cause of wrongful conviction first and immediately began an in-depth study of eyewitness misidentification.

Commission members include several with a law enforcement affiliation (Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Sheriffs Association, the Florida Police Chiefs Association, and the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association). The commission formed a workgroup with these law enforcement members and directed the workgroup to create a written protocol for photographic or live lineup eyewitness identification. The workgroup’s product is a set of voluntary guidelines, called *Standards for Florida State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies in Dealing with Photographic or Live Lineups in Eyewitness Identification*, along with a *Commentary and Instructional Suggestions* to accompany the standards. Last May, the workgroup presented its guidelines to the full commission, which endorsed most of the protocols and used them as the model for the final commission recommendations. These recommendations were presented in an appendix to the commission’s interim report. ([Take this link to the interim report and guidelines.](#))

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After slightly modifying its guidelines, the workgroup members won the endorsement of the four participating law enforcement associations. The guidelines were then sent to all the state and local law enforcement agencies in Florida, with the instruction that, “By November 1, 2011, each Florida state and local law enforcement agency should have in place a written policy regarding photographic or live lineups to be utilized in eyewitness identification.” Agencies were also cautioned that, in order to receive state accreditation by the Florida Commission on Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc., each agency’s written policy will now have to meet certain mandatory standards. Thanks to the work of the Innocence Commission and this collaboration it fostered, not only will each law enforcement agency in the state soon have a written policy, but there will be a statewide consistency in the ways in which agency investigators deal with eyewitness identification.

As Judge Perry remarked in the interim report, “As the law evolves, so too must the technologies, methods, and procedures utilized to enforce the law. It is a basic axiom to leave something better than how you found it. Consequently, we cannot ignore what must be done in order to improve our ever-evolving criminal justice system. We must continue to be vigilant in seeking and maintaining the spirit of cooperation between the courts, law enforcement, and other agencies in identifying issues and implementing solutions.” Now into the last half of its two-year term, the commission has begun addressing a second major cause of wrongful convictions: false confessions. It will submit a final report to the supreme court at the end of June 2012.

Education and Outreach

As retired US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor has been known to point out, her compatriots know more about the judges on the wildly popular reality TV singing competition than they do about the justices on their nation’s highest court (polls have shown that two-thirds of Americans can identify at least one of the judges on the TV show, but not even half can name one US Supreme Court justice).

To be informed and responsible citizens who appreciate the mission of the judicial branch and its role as the guardian of the Constitution, Americans must grasp the fundamental principles of democracy and understand the inner workings of the court system. Through its creation of educational opportunities for “students” of all ages, the branch supports efforts to develop more engaged, active,

and conscientious citizens who fathom the role, function, and accomplishments of the courts. This section chronicles some of the branch’s many initiatives to teach people about the courts—endeavors that have the added consequence of building public trust and confidence in the justice system.

Judicial Campaign Conduct Forums

The Judicial Campaign Conduct Forums, instituted in 1998, are generally held in the spring of election years. In these 90-minute forums, judicial candidates receive instruction about the requirements of Canon 7 of the *Code of Judicial Conduct*, which guides political conduct by judges and judicial candidates. Forum attendees learn



Attendees at the Reporters Workshop listen to a panel on Judicial Elections and Merit Retention. Moderated by attorney Dean Bunch, a member of the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee, the panel includes (l-r) Martin Dyckman, journalist and author; Mike Vasilinda, president of Capitol News Service; and retired Supreme Court Justice Major Harding.

about the importance of integrity and professionalism among candidates for political office, the impact of campaign conduct on public trust and confidence in the judicial system—and the grave and mortifying consequences of any breaches of the code.

Coordinated by the supreme court, trial court chief judges, the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee, and The Florida Bar Board of Governors, the forums are also open to campaign managers, campaign staff, local political party chairs, the presidents of local bar associations, print and broadcast media, and the public. The next set of forums will be held in spring 2012.

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Annual Reporters Workshop

For over 20 years, the supreme court has hosted an annual Reporters Workshop, a two-day event designed to teach journalists who are new to the legal/courts “beat,” or new to Florida, about the basics of legal reporting. Presented by The Florida Bar Media and Communications Law Committee and subsidized by The Florida Bar Foundation, the workshop is open to newspaper, radio news, TV news, and Internet news services reporters who have been nominated to attend by their editors. Sessions are led by justices, judges, lawyers, professors, and veteran reporters.

The public still gets most of its information about the court system from the more traditional news sources, and this workshop provides reporters with a helpful introduction to covering justice system issues. The 23 reporters who participated in September 2010 workshop were treated to sessions on the Florida Innocence Commission, Judicial Selection and Election, Covering High-Profile Court Cases, Covering the Courts, Reporting via Social Media, Libel Law and Defamation, and Public Records.

Justice Teaching Initiative

Established in 2006 by then Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis, Justice Teaching is a law-related education initiative that aims to partner a legal professional with every elementary, middle, and high school in the state in order 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.

So far, more than 3,900 lawyers and judges have been trained to serve as resources for Justice Teaching, and almost every one of Florida’s approximately 2,800 public, charter, and alternative schools has at least one Justice Teaching volunteer. Within the last two years, the initiative has been expanded to include Florida’s private schools (of which there are approximately 1,500); the program has already assigned volunteers to teach in 313 private schools. After attending a Justice Teaching training session, volunteers have access to a host of tested, interactive strategies for engaging students in lively exchanges about the justice system and how it affects their lives. ([This link goes to the Justice Teaching website.](#))

Justice Teaching Institute

First offered in 1997, when then Chief Justice Gerald Kogan conceived it as part of the Florida Supreme Court’s Sesquicentennial Celebration, the annual Justice Teaching Institute gives 25 secondary school teachers from across

the state a chance to explore, over a five-day period, the fundamentals of the judicial branch. Sponsored by the supreme court, subsidized by The Florida Bar Foundation, and coordinated by the Florida Law Related Education Association, the institute is an intense, highly participatory program for which teachers, to be chosen, must undergo a demanding selection process.

Taught primarily by the justices and by Ms Annette Boyd Pitts, executive director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, teachers learn about the structure and function of the state courts system, the criminal court process, the significance of an independent judiciary, the Florida constitution, the case study method, alternative dispute resolution methods, accessing legal resources from the library and the Internet, the oral argument process,



After his presentation on the structure, function, and funding of the Florida courts system, Chief Justice Charles T. Canady is happy to pose for a photo with some of the Justice Teaching Institute fellows.

and the constitutional issues underlying an actual case that is about to be argued before the court. The capstone of the program is the teachers’ own mock oral argument on the very case for which the justices themselves are preparing.

After they return to their schools, most of the teachers develop a courts unit for classroom use and/or facilitate training programs for other teachers at their school, thereby creating opportunities for a great many students to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the role and functions of the judicial branch. ([Follow this link to the Justice Teaching Institute website.](#))

Visiting the Courts: Educational Tours and Programs
Inhabitants of and guests in Florida’s capital city can

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choose from a range of ways to learn about the history and function of the state’s highest court and the workings of its court system. The favorite activity of student groups (fourth to twelfth graders) visiting the court is the Mock Oral Argument. Students spend the first part of



Justice Teaching Institute fellows Heather Selens, a teacher at Lakewood Ranch High School in Manatee County, and Jason Agins, a teacher at Manatee Academy in St. Lucie County, go over their notes in preparation for their mock oral argument.

this 90-minute program learning a detailed lesson about the judicial branch and Florida’s court system. Then, led by a staff attorney or trained volunteer, students act out an oral argument on an age-appropriate hypothetical case (there are 15 from which to choose).

Available to court visitors of all ages is the Educational Tour, which includes instruction about the branch and



The children of court personnel in the supreme court building participate in a courtroom activity designed for Take Your Child to Work Day.

the court system, in-depth information about the history of the supreme court, and a tour of the library and the lawyer’s lounge. During the 2010/11 fiscal year, more than 5,500 participants took part in the Mock Oral Argument and the Educational Tour. If they prefer, court guests can take a self-guided tour of the public areas of the building (courtroom, library, rare book room, upper and lower rotunda, portrait gallery, and lawyer’s lounge).

Another popular student-focused initiative is the Making My Vote Count! Civics Program for seventh grade groups. This joint program of the supreme court, Florida’s Historic Capitol, and the Museum of Florida History explores



At the recent Girls State Program in Tallahassee, Judge Simone Marsteller, First DCA, swears in the newly-elected officers.

the importance and individual responsibility of voting in Florida. The goal of this civics program is to familiarize students with the election process and encourage them to become involved, informed, engaged citizens.

Finally, student groups can participate in the Journey Through Justice Program, which works in conjunction with the Courtroom to Courtroom Program offered by the Leon County Teen Court. This program, for which students participate in a mock trial and a mock oral argument, gives them a comprehensive understanding of the court system and Florida’s third branch of government. ([Take this link for information on these and other education programs.](#))

In addition to these supreme-court based education and outreach programs, every circuit and appellate court in

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Florida offers a host of projects and activities that educate the public about the court system and enliven court-community relationships—enterprises like courthouse tours, citizen guides, Justice Teaching and other school outreach efforts, teen courts, Law Day and Constitution Day activities, Take Your Child to Work Day, Girls State and Boys State activities, meet your judge programs, speaker’s bureaus, public opinion surveys, and media outreach efforts. ([Follow this link to learn more about these activities.](#))

Florida Supreme Court Library

Established in 1845, the Florida Supreme Court Library is the oldest of Florida’s state-supported libraries. It was originally designed for use by the supreme court and the attorneys who practice before it. Now, as well as serving the entire court system and OSCA, the library assists the general public and answers calls for support from law firms and other law libraries in the state and around the country.

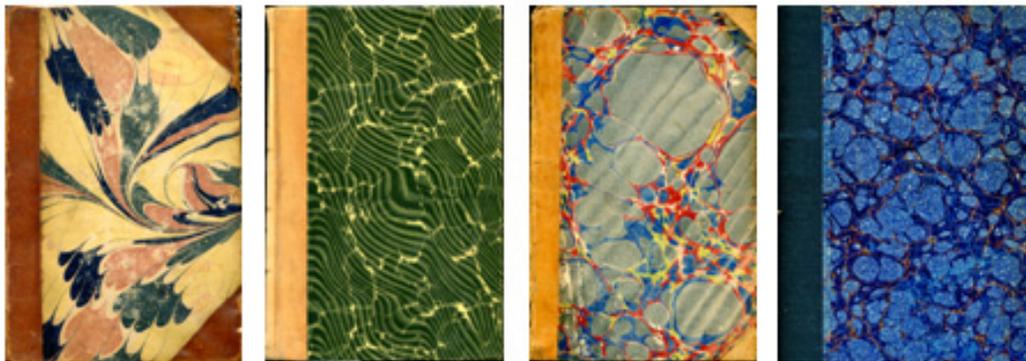
Over the fiscal year, some items of significant historical value were added to the library’s collection. Among them were five personal diaries of Justice Armstead Brown (who served from 1925 to 1946); the wood and wicker rocking chair of the court’s longest-serving justice, W. Glenn Terrell (who served from 1923 to 1964); two large boxes of papers of Justice Alan C. Sundberg (who served from 1975 to 1982), relating to the work of the 1997/98 Constitutional Revision Commission; and two folders of correspondence from the years Justice Harry Lee Anstead was chief (he served from 1994 to 2009 and

Finally, as part of its *Evolution of Justice in Florida* project, the library prepared three new rotunda exhibits this year. Included in the “Supreme Court in the Modern Era, 1945 to 1975” exhibit were books, photographs, and documents pertaining to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Virgil Hawkins case, and the *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision, which originated in Panama City. In the “Election 2000” exhibit were copies of the filings in cases that came before the supreme court; letters, emails, and faxes sent to the court from the public; photos of court members, attorneys presenting oral arguments, and the media circus unfolding outside the building; one of the video cameras that broadcast the proceedings to media outlets around the world; and a Votomatic voting machine used in Palm Beach County, which counted now-infamous “butterfly ballots.” The third exhibit, still on display, presents some of the library’s finest American and European rare books, published between 1815 and 1918, featuring marbled paper book bindings with their extravagantly complex, kaleidoscopic designs. Conceived in 2002 by then Chief Justice Anstead, this *Evolution of Justice* project was designed to “educate the public about the history of our state’s judiciary and to strengthen confidence in Florida’s Courts System.” ([This link goes to the library website.](#))

Court Publications

To educate and inform the public about the judicial branch and to support communication between the courts and other justice system entities, the legislative and executive branches, and the community, OSCA’s Publications Unit, under the direction of the supreme court, produces the *Florida State Courts Annual Report* each fall. ([Take this link to the annual reports.](#))

In addition, each spring, summer, and winter, it produces the *Full Court Press*, the official newsletter of the state courts system of Florida, whose aim is to share information about local and statewide court-based initiatives



Some of the Florida Supreme Court Library’s rare books dazzle the eyes with their marbled paper book bindings. Dating back to the twelfth century, marbleizing is a craft that involves transferring onto absorbent paper or fabric a pattern that is created by floating color on plain water or a viscous solution.

was chief from 2002 to 2004). The library also continued its inventory of the papers of Justice Leander Shaw (who served from 1983 to 2003).

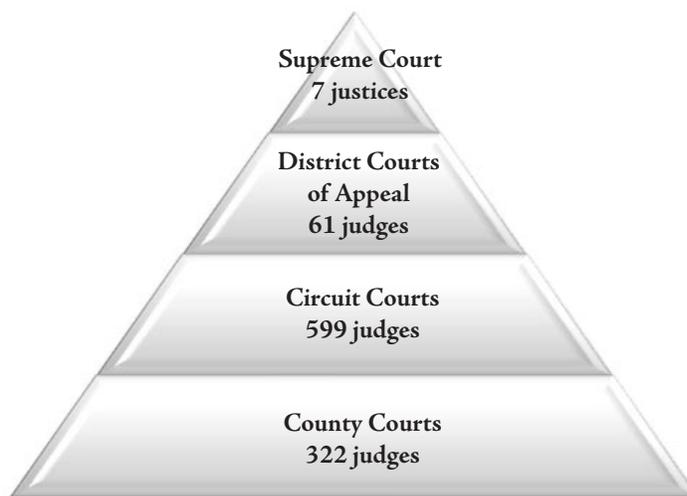
and programs, to promote communication among Florida’s courts, and to serve as a kind of “meeting place” for all the members of the state courts family, both immediate and extended. ([This link goes to the newsletters.](#))

FLORIDA'S COURT STRUCTURE

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, who serves a two-year term, 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 between the court system and the legislative branch, the executive branch, the auxiliary agencies of the court, and national court research and planning agencies.



Appellate Courts

Supreme Court

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

District Courts of Appeal

- † 61 judges, six-year terms
- † Five districts:
 - 1st District: Tallahassee, 15 judges
 - 2nd District: Lakeland, 14 judges
 - 3rd District: Miami, 10 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

FLORIDA'S COURT STRUCTURE

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 majority 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 of Florida's 67 counties 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

COURT ADMINISTRATION

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 was established to provide professional court management and administration for the state's judicial branch—basically, the non-adjudicatory services and functions necessary for the smooth operation of the branch, which includes the Supreme Court of Florida, the five district courts of appeal, the 20 circuit courts, and the 67 county courts.

OSCA prepares the judicial branch's budget requests to the legislature, monitors legislation, and serves as a point of contact for legislators and their staff regarding issues related to the state court system. In addition, OSCA coordinates a host of educational programs designed to ensure that judges and court employees have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve and perform at the highest professional levels.

Among other duties, OSCA also collects and analyzes statistical information relevant to court operations; implements administrative and legislative initiatives for family, dependency, and delinquency court cases; develops long-range and operational plans; offers statewide mediation training and certification through the Dispute Resolution Center; evaluates the qualifications of court interpreters; coordinates, writes, and edits administrative and judicial publications; and provides technical support for the 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

Each of the 20 circuits in Florida has a trial court administrator, who supports the chief judge in his or her constitutional role as the administrative supervisor of the circuit and county courts. 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.

Moreover, 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>

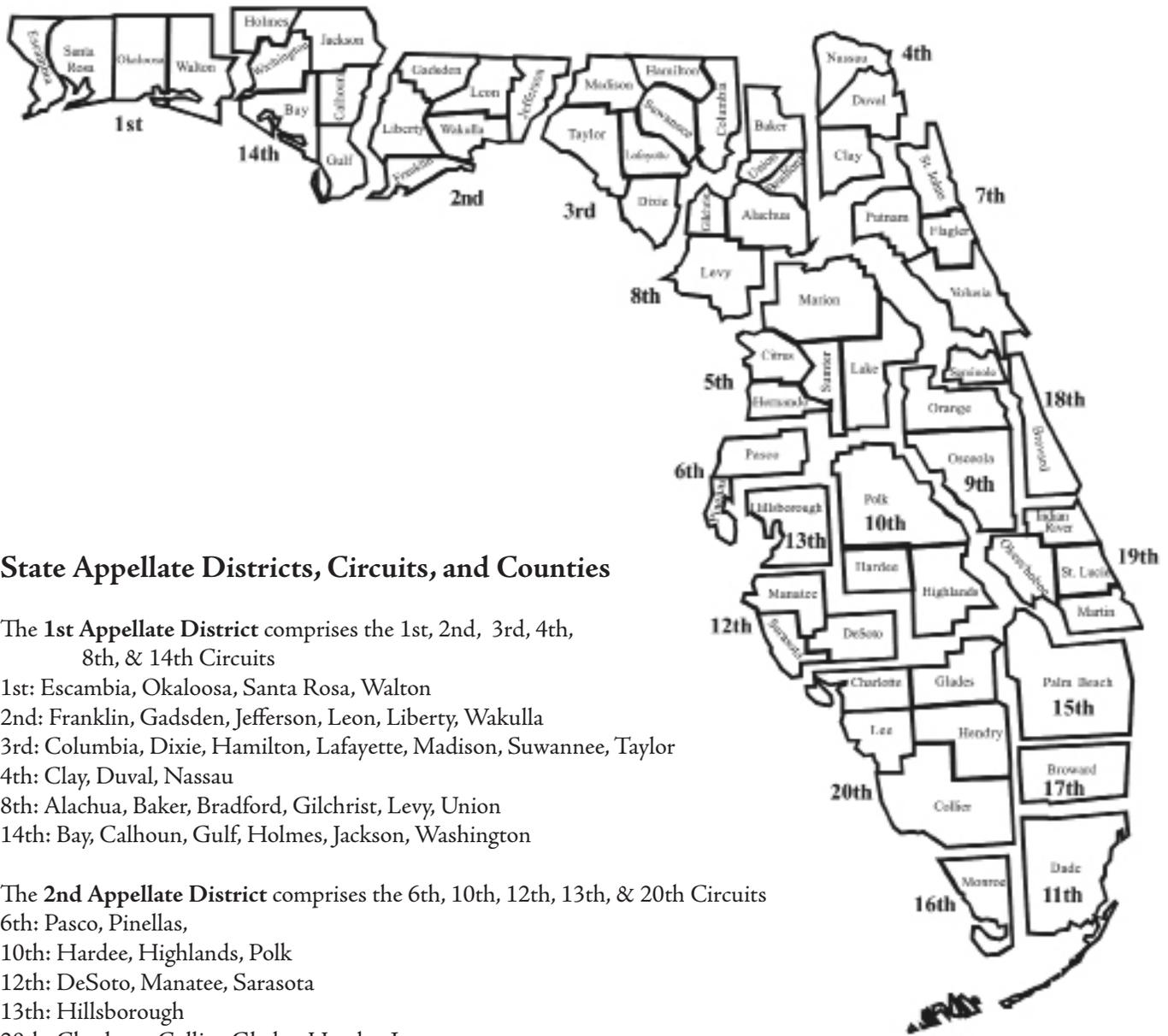
Marshals of the Supreme Court and the District Courts of Appeal

The supreme court and each of the five district courts of appeal have a marshal—a constitutional officer under Article V of the Florida Constitution. The DCA marshals' responsibilities are similar to those of the trial court administrators: the operational budget, purchasing, court facilities and grounds, contracts, personnel, and security. The supreme court marshal is responsible for the security of court property, justices, and employees; the management of the buildings and grounds; and administrative, logistical, and operational support of the supreme court. In addition, the supreme court marshal has the power to execute the process of the court throughout the state.



State Courts Administrator Elisabeth H. Goodner.

MAP OF FLORIDA'S COURT JURISDICTIONS



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
2002	2	2	0	0%	62
2004	4	4	0	0%	62
2006	2	2	0	0%	62
2008	-1	-1	-1	n/a	61
2010	1	0	0	n/a	61

Circuit

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
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
2009	45	29	0	0%	599
2010	40	37	0	0%	599
2011	40	26	0	0%	599

County

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
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
2009	68	39	0	0%	322
2010	54	53	0	0%	322
2011	55	54	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 typically complex, such as capital murder cases, receive a higher weight, while cases that are generally 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.

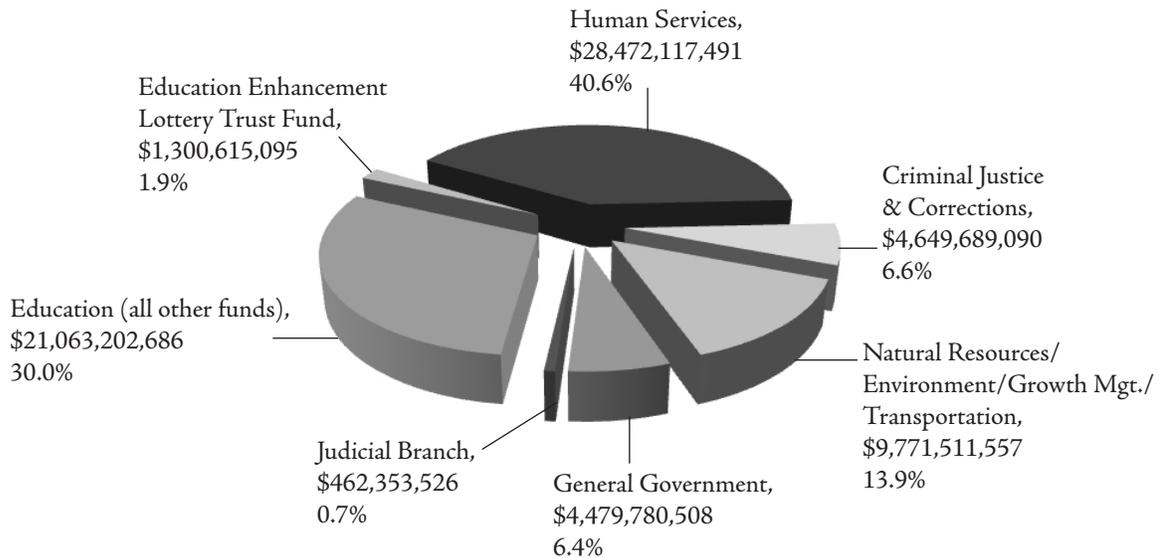
The need for additional judgeships remains high for two reasons: an absence of funding for previously certified judgeships and overall increases in caseloads. If judicial workload continues to exceed capacity and the judicial need deficit is not addressed, likely consequences may be case processing delays, less time devoted to dispositions, and potentially diminished access to the courts.

In a February 2011 opinion, the Florida Supreme Court certified the need for 26 additional circuit judges and 54 additional county court judges. However, the Florida Legislature did not approve funding for any new judgeships this year ([take this link to the opinion.](#))

FLORIDA'S BUDGET

2010-2011 Fiscal Year Appropriations

(For an accessible version of this information, follow [this link](#).)



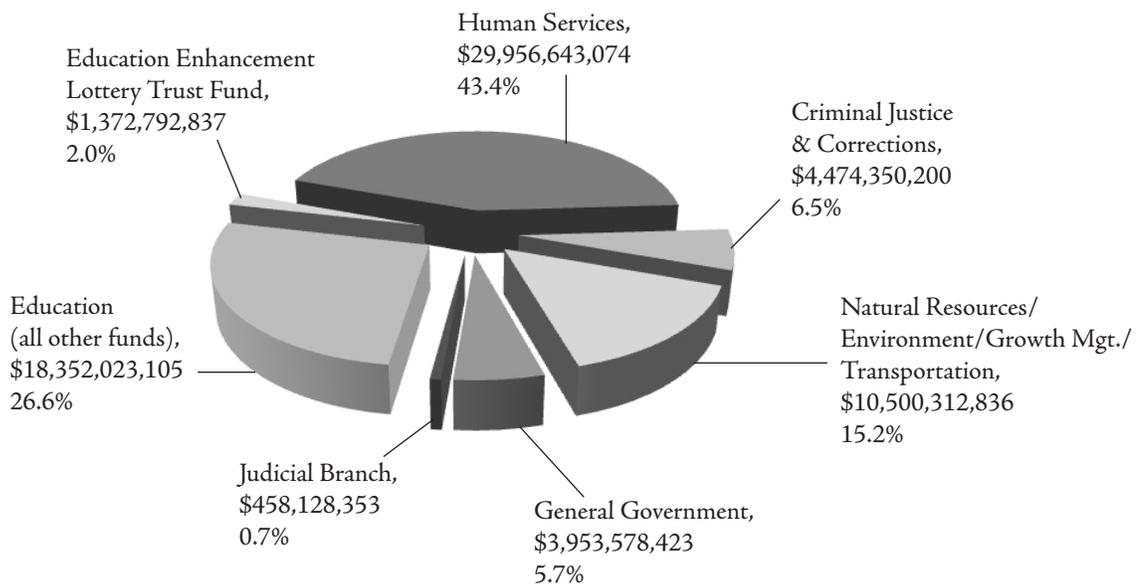
Total: \$70,199,269,953

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

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

2011-2012 Fiscal Year Appropriations

(For an accessible version of this information, follow [this link](#).)



Total: \$69,067,828,828

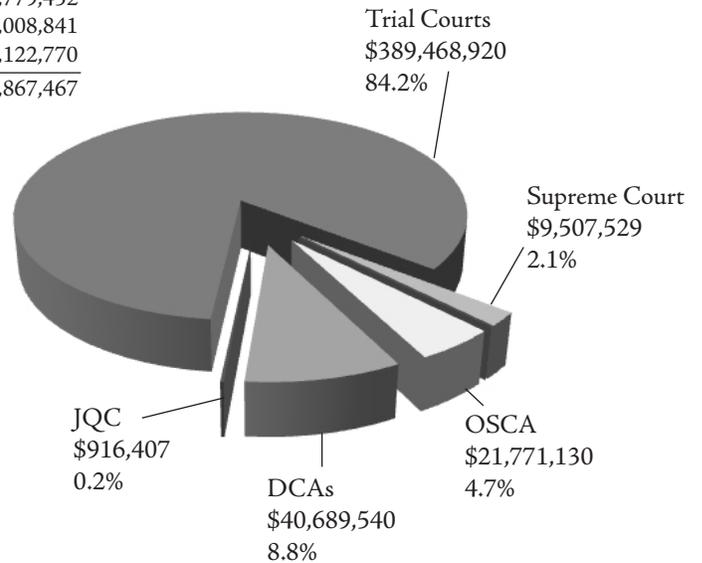
This total includes those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, SB 2000, less vetoes.

STATE COURTS SYSTEM APPROPRIATIONS

Justice System Appropriations 2010-2011 Fiscal Year

(For an accessible version of this information, follow [this link.](#))

State Courts System	\$462,353,526
Justice Administration Executive Direction	\$86,122,802
Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Program	\$31,108,174
Clerks of Court	\$451,380,312
Clerks of Court Operations Corporation	\$1,734,000
State Attorneys	\$391,196,292
Public Defenders Judicial Circuit	\$192,061,318
Public Defenders Appellate	\$13,779,432
Capital Collateral Regional Counsel	\$7,008,841
Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsels	\$36,122,770
Total	\$1,672,867,467



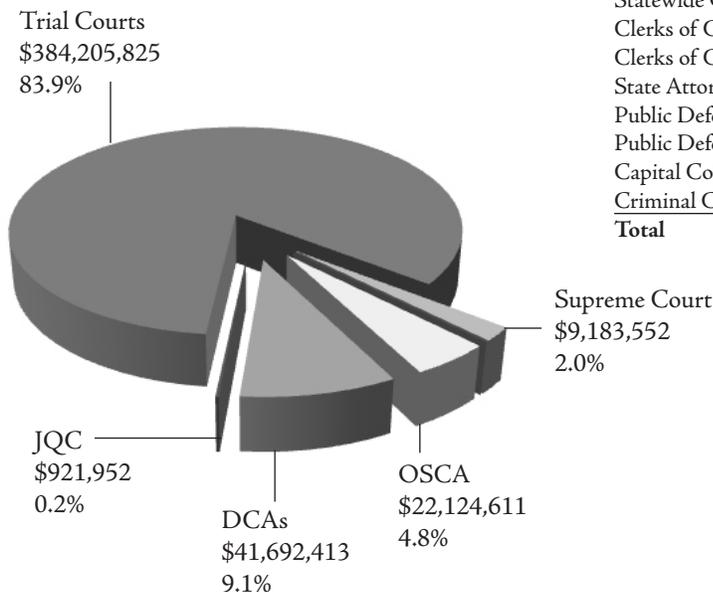
State Courts System Total: \$462,353,526

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

Justice System Appropriations 2011-2012 Fiscal Year

(For an accessible version of this information, follow [this link.](#))

State Courts System	\$458,128,353
Justice Administration Executive Direction	\$86,576,288
Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Program	\$31,653,538
Clerks of Court	\$445,430,312
Clerks of Court Operations Corporation	\$1,640,119
State Attorneys	\$406,938,753
Public Defenders Judicial Circuit	\$198,191,229
Public Defenders Appellate	\$13,944,646
Capital Collateral Regional Counsel	\$7,039,505
Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsels	\$34,689,077
Total	\$1,684,231,820



State Courts System Total: \$458,128,353

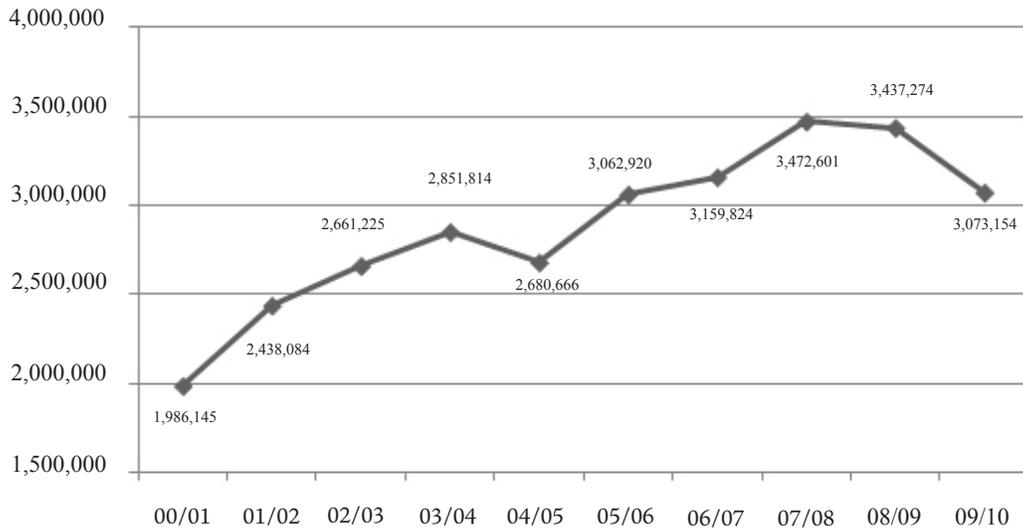
Note: This total reflects those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, SB 2000, less vetoes.

FILINGS

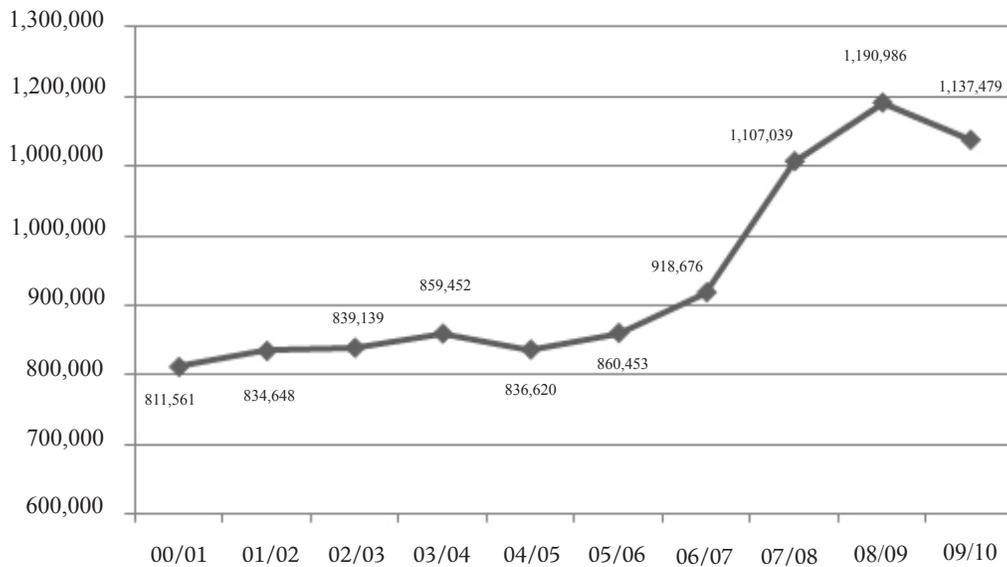
Filings, Florida's Trial Courts FY 2000/01 to 2009/10

(For an accessible version of these filings, follow this link.)

County Courts



Circuit Courts

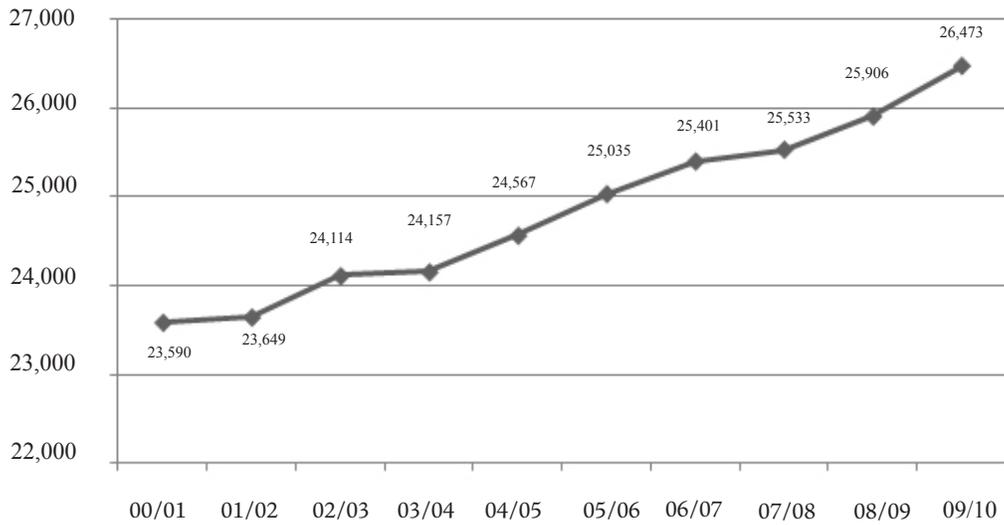


FILINGS

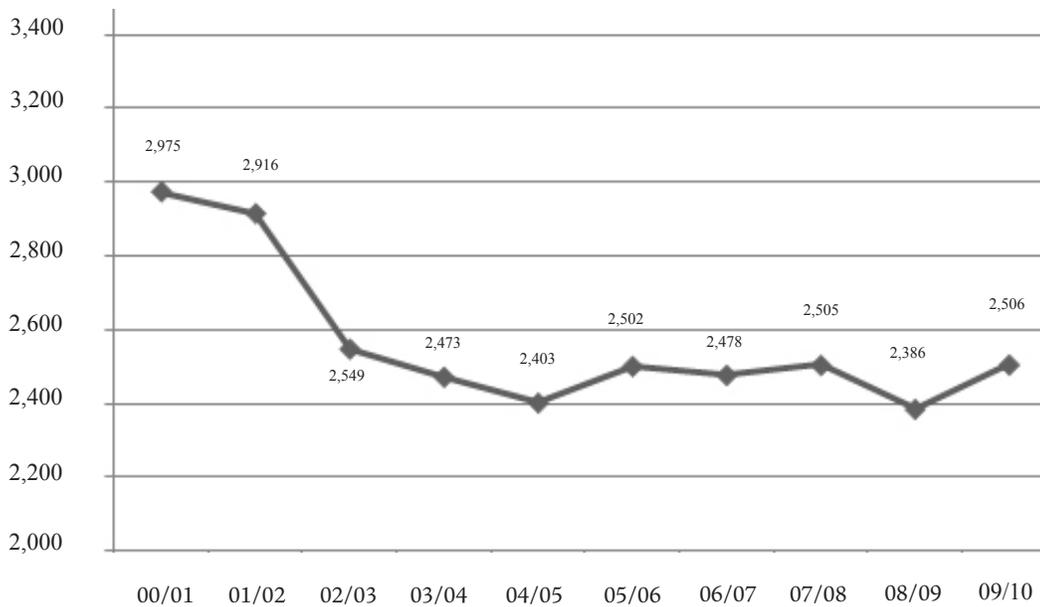
Filings, Florida's Appellate Courts FY 2000/01 to 2009/10

(For an accessible version of these filings, follow [this link.](#))

District Courts



Supreme Court



DCA FILINGS BY CASE CATEGORY

Notice of Appeal and Petition FY 2009-10

(For an accessible version of these filings, follow this link.)

* Criminal post conviction filings include notice of appeal only.

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
All	Administrative	2,173
All	Civil	5,343
All	Criminal	10,350
All	Criminal Post Conviction*	5,336
All	Family	1,393
All	Juvenile	1,208
All	Probate/Guardianship	203
All	Workers' Compensation	467
		26,473

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings	DCA	Case Category	Total Filings	DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
1	Administrative	1,459	3	Administrative	186	5	Administrative	121
	Civil	1,090		Civil	1,017		Civil	766
	Criminal	2,363		Criminal	885		Criminal	2,015
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,069		Criminal Post Conviction*	815		Criminal Post Conviction*	996
	Family	210		Family	178		Family	383
	Juvenile	177		Juvenile	301		Juvenile	277
	Probate/Guardianship	20		Probate/Guardianship	45		Probate/Guardianship	27
	Workers' Compensation	467						
		6,855			3,427			4,585
						Total		26,473
2	Administrative	142	4	Administrative	265			
	Civil	1,099		Civil	1,371			
	Criminal	2,840		Criminal	2,247			
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,398		Criminal Post Conviction*	1,058			
	Family	281		Family	341			
	Juvenile	296		Juvenile	157			
	Probate/Guardianship	44		Probate/Guardianship	67			
		6,100			5,506			

TRIAL COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT AND DIVISION

FY 2009-10

(For an accessible version of these filings, follow this link.)

* 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 represent only those civil traffic infraction filings involving a judge or hearing officer.

Circuit	County	Division	Total Filings
All	All	Adult Criminal	201,785
All	All	Civil	490,092
All	All	Family Court*	347,049
All	All	Probate	98,553
All	All	County Adult Criminal	933,753
All	All	County Civil**	2,139,401
			4,210,633

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 represent only those civil traffic infraction filings involving a judge or hearing officer.

Circuit	Division	Total Filings	Circuit	Division	Total Filings	Circuit	Division	Total Filings
1	Adult Criminal	9,438	8	Adult Criminal	4,432	15	Adult Criminal	9,480
	Civil	12,100		Civil	4,223		Civil	37,932
	Family Court*	16,091		Family Court*	7,805		Family Court*	16,963
	Probate	4,138		Probate	2,066		Probate	7,282
	County Adult Criminal	28,002		County Adult Criminal	21,911		County Adult Criminal	78,330
	County Civil**	37,686		County Civil**	31,870		County Civil**	230,665
	107,455		72,307		380,652			
2	Adult Criminal	4,648	9	Adult Criminal	16,447	16	Adult Criminal	1,350
	Civil	6,527		Civil	45,656		Civil	2,156
	Family Court*	6,762		Family Court*	29,488		Family Court*	1,567
	Probate	3,020		Probate	4,701		Probate	454
	County Adult Criminal	16,498		County Adult Criminal	62,831		County Adult Criminal	4,305
	County Civil**	30,930		County Civil**	139,446		County Civil**	8,640
	68,385		298,569		18,472			
3	Adult Criminal	2,736	10	Adult Criminal	10,149	17	Adult Criminal	16,731
	Civil	2,107		Civil	14,691		Civil	59,610
	Family Court*	4,915		Family Court*	17,049		Family Court*	30,973
	Probate	997		Probate	4,178		Probate	8,726
	County Adult Criminal	7,925		County Adult Criminal	37,662		County Adult Criminal	81,286
	County Civil**	13,336		County Civil**	42,685		County Civil**	306,332
	32,016		126,414		503,658			
4	Adult Criminal	12,120	11	Adult Criminal	24,291	18	Adult Criminal	8,959
	Civil	22,414		Civil	81,558		Civil	21,662
	Family Court*	24,726		Family Court*	39,504		Family Court*	16,869
	Probate	4,673		Probate	9,896		Probate	4,426
	County Adult Criminal	63,639		County Adult Criminal	142,205		County Adult Criminal	46,400
	County Civil**	128,413		County Civil**	588,862		County Civil**	68,368
	255,985		886,316		166,684			
5	Adult Criminal	11,382	12	Adult Criminal	6,759	19	Adult Criminal	6,020
	Civil	21,507		Civil	17,968		Civil	16,378
	Family Court*	18,940		Family Court*	13,236		Family Court*	10,645
	Probate	6,359		Probate	5,896		Probate	3,938
	County Adult Criminal	33,595		County Adult Criminal	26,912		County Adult Criminal	27,908
	County Civil**	52,549		County Civil**	40,700		County Civil**	39,768
	144,332		111,471		104,657			
6	Adult Criminal	18,821	13	Adult Criminal	13,693	20	Adult Criminal	9,661
	Civil	32,281		Civil	29,717		Civil	36,813
	Family Court*	23,851		Family Court*	27,414		Family Court*	16,945
	Probate	8,457		Probate	6,352		Probate	6,283
	County Adult Criminal	67,359		County Adult Criminal	66,733		County Adult Criminal	49,176
	County Civil**	79,959		County Civil**	154,398		County Civil**	69,036
	230,728		298,307		187,914			
7	Adult Criminal	9,891	14	Adult Criminal	4,777	Total		4,210,633
	Civil	19,722		Civil	5,070			
	Family Court*	16,685		Family Court*	6,621			
	Probate	5,062		Probate	1,649			
	County Adult Criminal	52,535		County Adult Criminal	18,541			
	County Civil**	54,316		County Civil**	21,442			
	158,211		58,100					

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT, COUNTY, & DIVISION

FY 2009-10

(For an accessible version of these filings, follow this link.)

* 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 represent only those civil traffic infraction filings involving a judge or hearing officer.

Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	
1	Escambia	Adult Criminal	5,099	Leon	Adult Criminal	3,147	Madison	Adult Criminal	275
		Civil	4,166		Civil	4,861		Civil	219
		Family Court*	7,550		Family Court*	4,531		Family Court*	423
		Probate	2,384		Probate	2,218		Probate	82
		County Adult Criminal	13,847		County Adult Criminal	10,922		County Adult Criminal	982
		County Civil**	14,576		County Civil**	20,212		County Civil**	3,126
			47,622			45,891			5,107
	Okaloosa	Adult Criminal	2,196	Liberty	Adult Criminal	83	Suwannee	Adult Criminal	616
		Civil	3,409		Civil	48		Civil	450
		Family Court*	4,403		Family Court*	122		Family Court*	1,203
		Probate	1,027		Probate	33		Probate	168
		County Adult Criminal	5,739		County Adult Criminal	257		County Adult Criminal	1,239
		County Civil**	11,914		County Civil**	499		County Civil**	1,803
			28,688			1,042			5,479
	Santa Rosa	Adult Criminal	1,353	Wakulla	Adult Criminal	356	Taylor	Adult Criminal	317
Civil		2,248	Civil		502	Civil		190	
Family Court*		3,023	Family Court*		626	Family Court*		514	
Probate		502	Probate		128	Probate		125	
County Adult Criminal		5,206	County Adult Criminal		1,168	County Adult Criminal		1,322	
	County Civil**	7,288		County Civil**	1,880		County Civil**	1,754	
		19,620			4,660			4,222	
Walton	Adult Criminal	790	3 Columbia	Adult Criminal	1,101	4 Clay	Adult Criminal	1,520	
	Civil	2,277		Civil	873		Civil	3,177	
	Family Court*	1,115		Family Court*	1,823		Family Court*	3,457	
	Probate	225		Probate	442		Probate	530	
	County Adult Criminal	3,210		County Adult Criminal	3,017		County Adult Criminal	5,899	
	County Civil**	3,908		County Civil**	4,374		County Civil**	12,263	
		11,525			11,630			26,846	
2 Franklin	Adult Criminal	221	Dixie	Adult Criminal	185	Duval	Adult Criminal	9,711	
	Civil	452		Civil	167		Civil	18,024	
	Family Court*	289		Family Court*	355		Family Court*	19,828	
	Probate	62		Probate	95		Probate	3,880	
	County Adult Criminal	914		County Adult Criminal	607		County Adult Criminal	55,003	
	County Civil**	854		County Civil**	1,051		County Civil**	113,027	
		2,792			2,460			219,473	
Gadsden	Adult Criminal	641	Hamilton	Adult Criminal	184	Nassau	Adult Criminal	889	
	Civil	520		Civil	115		Civil	1,213	
	Family Court*	971		Family Court*	430		Family Court*	1,441	
	Probate	505		Probate	57		Probate	263	
	County Adult Criminal	2,670		County Adult Criminal	586		County Adult Criminal	2,737	
	County Civil**	5,684		County Civil**	930		County Civil**	3,123	
		10,991			2,302			9,666	
Jefferson	Adult Criminal	200	Lafayette	Adult Criminal	58	5 Citrus	Adult Criminal	1,020	
	Civil	144		Civil	93		Civil	2,501	
	Family Court*	223		Family Court*	167		Family Court*	2,145	
	Probate	74		Probate	28		Probate	843	
	County Adult Criminal	567		County Adult Criminal	172		County Adult Criminal	4,697	
	County Civil**	1,801		County Civil**	298		County Civil**	5,329	
		3,009			816			16,535	

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT, COUNTY, & DIVISION

Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings
Hernando	Adult Criminal	2,292	St. Johns	Adult Criminal	1,185	9 Orange	Adult Criminal	13,249
	Civil	4,383		Civil	3,960		Civil	34,917
	Family Court*	3,597		Family Court*	3,186		Family Court*	22,320
	Probate	1,811		Probate	683		Probate	3,820
	County Adult Criminal	5,241		County Adult Criminal	5,476		County Adult Criminal	50,160
	County Civil**	11,749		County Civil**	10,770		County Civil**	114,316
	29,073		25,260		238,782			
Lake	Adult Criminal	3,168	Volusia	Adult Criminal	6,525	Osceola	Adult Criminal	3,198
	Civil	6,857		Civil	11,778		Civil	10,739
	Family Court*	5,124		Family Court*	9,285		Family Court*	7,168
	Probate	1,662		Probate	3,459		Probate	881
	County Adult Criminal	10,585		County Adult Criminal	38,642		County Adult Criminal	12,671
	County Civil**	17,026		County Civil**	35,447		County Civil**	25,130
	44,422		105,136		59,787			
Marion	Adult Criminal	4,089	8 Alachua	Adult Criminal	2,700	10 Hardee	Adult Criminal	308
	Civil	6,431		Civil	2,594		Civil	238
	Family Court*	7,121		Family Court*	4,923		Family Court*	684
	Probate	1,709		Probate	1,472		Probate	116
	County Adult Criminal	11,111		County Adult Criminal	16,430		County Adult Criminal	2,147
	County Civil**	14,504		County Civil**	21,889		County Civil**	1,911
	44,965		50,008		5,404			
Sumter	Adult Criminal	813	Baker	Adult Criminal	426	Highlands	Adult Criminal	935
	Civil	1,335		Civil	299		Civil	1,777
	Family Court*	953		Family Court*	596		Family Court*	2,098
	Probate	334		Probate	186		Probate	980
	County Adult Criminal	1,961		County Adult Criminal	1,286		County Adult Criminal	2,764
	County Civil**	3,941		County Civil**	2,194		County Civil**	4,780
	9,337		4,987		13,334			
6 Pasco	Adult Criminal	4,373	Bradford	Adult Criminal	431	Polk	Adult Criminal	8,906
	Civil	11,256		Civil	332		Civil	12,676
	Family Court*	7,916		Family Court*	631		Family Court*	14,267
	Probate	2,697		Probate	104		Probate	3,082
	County Adult Criminal	16,096		County Adult Criminal	1,303		County Adult Criminal	32,751
	County Civil**	21,546		County Civil**	4,463		County Civil**	35,994
	63,884		7,264		107,676			
Pinellas	Adult Criminal	14,448	Gilchrist	Adult Criminal	132	11 Miami-Dade	Adult Criminal	24,291
	Civil	21,025		Civil	172		Civil	81,558
	Family Court*	15,935		Family Court*	356		Family Court*	39,504
	Probate	5,760		Probate	63		Probate	9,896
	County Adult Criminal	51,263		County Adult Criminal	631		County Adult Criminal	142,205
	County Civil**	58,413		County Civil**	631		County Civil**	588,862
	166,844		1,985		886,316			
7 Flagler	Adult Criminal	789	Levy	Adult Criminal	549	12 DeSoto	Adult Criminal	503
	Civil	3,018		Civil	648		Civil	511
	Family Court*	2,057		Family Court*	971		Family Court*	770
	Probate	566		Probate	168		Probate	85
	County Adult Criminal	4,173		County Adult Criminal	1,892		County Adult Criminal	1,531
	County Civil**	4,625		County Civil**	2,079		County Civil**	1,461
	15,228		6,307		4,861			
Putnam	Adult Criminal	1,392	Union	Adult Criminal	194	Manatee	Adult Criminal	2,724
	Civil	966		Civil	178		Civil	7,446
	Family Court*	2,157		Family Court*	328		Family Court*	6,087
	Probate	354		Probate	73		Probate	1,594
	County Adult Criminal	4,244		County Adult Criminal	369		County Adult Criminal	12,971
	County Civil**	3,474		County Civil**	614		County Civil**	16,174
	12,587		1,756		46,996			

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT, COUNTY, & DIVISION

Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings
Sarasota	Adult Criminal	3,532	15 Palm Beach	Adult Criminal	9,480	Okeechobee	Adult Criminal	555
	Civil	10,011		Civil	37,932		Civil	778
	Family Court*	6,379		Family Court*	16,963		Family Court*	1,095
	Probate	4,217		Probate	7,282		Probate	187
	County Adult Criminal	12,410		County Adult Criminal	78,330		County Adult Criminal	2,022
	County Civil**	23,065		County Civil**	230,665		County Civil**	2,197
		59,614			380,652			6,834
13 Hillsborough	Adult Criminal	13,693	16 Monroe	Adult Criminal	1,350	St. Lucie	Adult Criminal	2,794
	Civil	29,717		Civil	2,156		Civil	8,902
	Family Court*	27,414		Family Court*	1,567		Family Court*	5,324
	Probate	6,352		Probate	454		Probate	1,922
	County Adult Criminal	66,733		County Adult Criminal	4,305		County Adult Criminal	13,940
	County Civil**	154,398		County Civil**	8,640		County Civil**	20,631
		298,307			18,472			53,513
14 Bay	Adult Criminal	3,056	17 Broward	Adult Criminal	16,731	20 Charlotte	Adult Criminal	1,757
	Civil	3,528		Civil	59,610		Civil	4,838
	Family Court*	3,757		Family Court*	30,973		Family Court*	2,820
	Probate	987		Probate	8,726		Probate	1,646
	County Adult Criminal	13,583		County Adult Criminal	81,286		County Adult Criminal	4,740
	County Civil**	13,013		County Civil**	306,332		County Civil**	7,372
		37,924			503,658			23,173
Calhoun	Adult Criminal	164	18 Brevard	Adult Criminal	5,477	Collier	Adult Criminal	1,650
	Civil	105		Civil	11,616		Civil	9,458
	Family Court*	311		Family Court*	9,886		Family Court*	3,898
	Probate	54		Probate	2,584		Probate	1,769
	County Adult Criminal	538		County Adult Criminal	28,301		County Adult Criminal	10,327
	County Civil**	811		County Civil**	31,813		County Civil**	18,267
		1,983			89,677			45,369
Gulf	Adult Criminal	299	Seminole	Adult Criminal	3,482	Glades	Adult Criminal	191
	Civil	363		Civil	10,046		Civil	141
	Family Court*	299		Family Court*	6,983		Family Court*	225
	Probate	83		Probate	1,842		Probate	54
	County Adult Criminal	511		County Adult Criminal	18,099		County Adult Criminal	711
	County Civil**	467		County Civil**	36,555		County Civil**	1,255
		2,022			77,007			2,577
Holmes	Adult Criminal	310	19 Indian River	Adult Criminal	1,335	Hendry	Adult Criminal	548
	Civil	189		Civil	3,056		Civil	691
	Family Court*	488		Family Court*	2,174		Family Court*	803
	Probate	107		Probate	1,008		Probate	111
	County Adult Criminal	853		County Adult Criminal	4,085		County Adult Criminal	3,330
	County Civil**	1,451		County Civil**	7,603		County Civil**	2,736
		3,398			19,261			8,219
Jackson	Adult Criminal	681	Martin	Adult Criminal	1,336	Lee	Adult Criminal	5,515
	Civil	482		Civil	3,642		Civil	21,685
	Family Court*	1,179		Family Court*	2,052		Family Court*	9,199
	Probate	295		Probate	821		Probate	2,703
	County Adult Criminal	2,227		County Adult Criminal	7,861		County Adult Criminal	30,068
	County Civil**	4,263		County Civil**	9,337		County Civil**	39,406
		9,127			25,049			108,576
Washington	Adult Criminal	267						
	Civil	403						
	Family Court*	587						
	Probate	123						
	County Adult Criminal	829						
	County Civil**	1,437						
		3,646						

COURT CONTACTS FOR 2011-2012

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

Chief Justice CHARLES T. CANADY (850) 488-6130
Clerk Thomas D. Hall (850) 488-0125
Marshal Silvester Dawson (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 ROBERT T. BENTON, II (850) 487-1000
Clerk Jon S. Wheeler (850) 488-6151
Marshal Stephen M. Nevels (850) 488-8136
Website <http://www.1dca.org>

2nd DCA

Chief Judge MORRIS SILBERMAN (813) 272-3430
Clerk James R. Birkhold (863) 499-2290
Marshal Jo Haynes Suhr (863) 499-2290
Website <http://www.2dca.org>

3rd DCA

Chief Judge LINDA ANN WELLS (305) 229-3200
Clerk Mary Cay Blanks (305) 229-3200
Marshal Alan Sadowski (305) 229-3200
Website <http://www.3dca.flcourts.org>

4th DCA

Chief Judge MELANIE G. MAY (561) 242-2068
Clerk Marilyn Beuttenmuller (561) 242-2000
Marshal Glen Rubin (561) 242-2000
Website <http://www.4dca.org>

5th DCA

Chief Judge RICHARD B. ORFINGER (386) 947-1510
Clerk Pamela R. Masters (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 TERRY D. TERRELL (850) 595-4464
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.leoncountyfl.gov/2ndCircuit/>

3rd Judicial Circuit

Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor counties
Chief Judge LEANDRA G. JOHNSON (386) 719-2012
Court Administrator Sondra Lanier (386) 758-2163
Website <http://www.jud3.flcourts.org>

4th Judicial Circuit

Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties
Chief Judge DONALD R. MORAN, JR. (904) 630-2295
Court Administrator Joe Stelma (904) 630-1655
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 J. THOMAS MCGRADY (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 WILLIAM A. PARSONS (386) 257-6091
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 MARTHA ANN LOTT (352) 374-3646
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) 836-2051
Website <http://www.ninthcircuit.org/>

10th Judicial Circuit

Hardee, Highlands, and Polk counties
Chief Judge WILLIAM BRUCE SMITH (863) 534-4653
Court Administrator Nick Sudzina (863) 534-4686
Website <http://www.jud10.org>

11th Judicial Circuit

Miami-Dade County
Chief Judge JOEL H. BROWN (305) 349-5720
Court Administrator Sandra Lonergan (305) 349-7000
Website <http://www.jud11.flcourts.org>

COURT CONTACTS FOR 2011-2012

12th Judicial Circuit

DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties

Chief Judge ANDREW D. OWENS, JR. (941) 861-7946

Court Administrator Walt Smith (941) 861-7800

Website <http://www.jud12.flcourts.org/>

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) 747-5464

Court Administrator Jan Shadburn (850) 814-6849

Website <http://www.jud14.flcourts.org>

15th Judicial Circuit

Palm Beach County

Chief Judge PETER D. BLANC (561) 355-1721

Court Administrator Barbara L. Dawicke (561) 355-1872

Website

<http://15thcircuit.co.palm-beach.fl.us/web/guest/cadmin>

16th Judicial Circuit

Monroe County

Chief Judge DAVID J. AUDLIN, JR. (305) 292-3433

Court Administrator Holly Elomina (305) 295-3644

Website <http://www.keysCourts.net>

17th Judicial Circuit

Broward County

Chief Judge PETER M. WEINSTEIN (954) 831-5506

Court Administrator Kathleen Pugh (954) 831-7740

Website <http://www.17th.flcourts.org>

18th Judicial Circuit

Brevard and Seminole counties

Chief Judge ALAN A. DICKEY (407) 665-4048

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 STEVEN J. LEVIN (772) 223-4827

Court Administrator Tom Genung (772) 807-4370

Website <http://www.circuit19.org>

20th Judicial Circuit

Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties

Chief Judge JAY B. ROSMAN (239) 533-9154

Court Administrator Richard Callanan (239) 533-1712

Website <http://www.ca.cjis20.org>

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Court Improvement Chief

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