

FLORIDA STATE COURTS

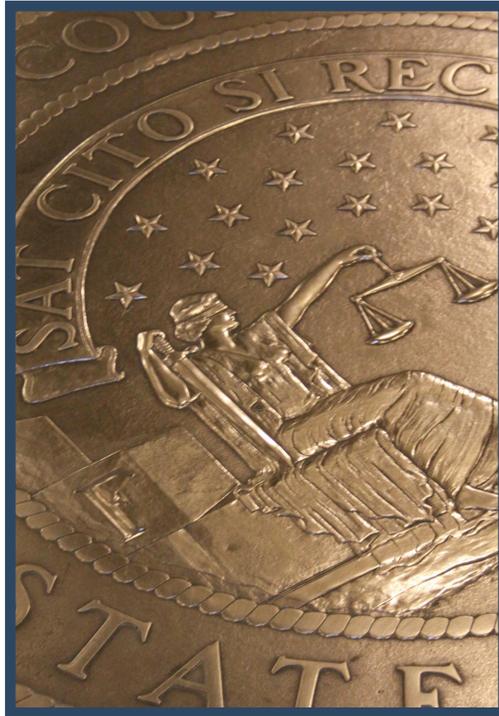


2011–2012

Annual Report

THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

Annual Report, July 1, 2011—June 30, 2012



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



Temporarily housed in the Florida Supreme Court Library, the Lifetime Achievement Award, from The Florida Bar's Government Lawyer Section, has been bestowed upon only four people since it was established in 1996. The most recent honoree is Peggy Quince, to whom it was awarded in 2008, when she served as Florida's chief justice.

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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

When I speak to civic groups visiting the Supreme Court, I am sometimes asked about court funding, especially in recent years.

I'm always glad to take the question. During my two-year tenure as Florida chief justice, I thought about court funding every day. And I firmly believe that it is a subject that needs to be considered by all thoughtful and responsible citizens.

The importance of the subject stems from the simple truth that court funding is not about judges or courtrooms. Rather, it is about individuals, families and businesses who need the courts' help to achieve justice and resolve disputes. We must be there to meet that need when they come – as hundreds of thousands do every year.

So I was glad to take questions about court funding, even in tough times, when cash-flow problems forced us to arrange a series of midyear budget “loans” with approval of the governor and Legislature just to make payroll and keep our doors open.

That was during my first year as chief justice. The cash-flow problems we struggled with were caused not by excessive or irresponsible spending but rather by volatility in the source of our funding – filing fees, especially foreclosure filing fees.

When I made my second “State of the Judiciary” address at the annual Bar Convention in the summer of 2012, I was very happy to report that Florida courts were in a better position than a year earlier.

The judiciary still needs help in regaining resources lost since the recession began but, nonetheless, significant progress was achieved in the spring of 2012. Firstly, the Legislature approved adequate and sufficient funding for the courts for the fiscal year that began July 1, 2012. But that wasn't all. Lawmakers also took a critically important first step of restructuring the sources of funding for the judicial branch. Our funding for fiscal year 2012-13 is based on general revenues.

For me, any discussion of court funding must include an expression of my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to so many people, in all three branches of government. Of course, I am grateful to the members of the Legislature and to Governor Scott, for their support and assistance as our entire government worked to deal with the economic downturn. I am also thankful to the state and local leaders of The Florida Bar who work tirelessly to support our courts and the rule of law, which is the foundation for our society and our democracy.

I extend my deep gratitude to the leaders of the Trial Court Budget Commission and the District Court of Appeal Budget Commission as well as State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner and her staff. Their diligence and energy are nothing short of remarkable.

Finally, I am grateful to all the men and women who work in our courts for their commitment to use our resources as efficiently as possible. I believe their stewardship is evident at every level of our system.

While I thought about court funding every day of my tenure as chief justice, it was not the only thing I thought about or that the courts worked on. This annual report illustrates some of the new initiatives and ongoing programs

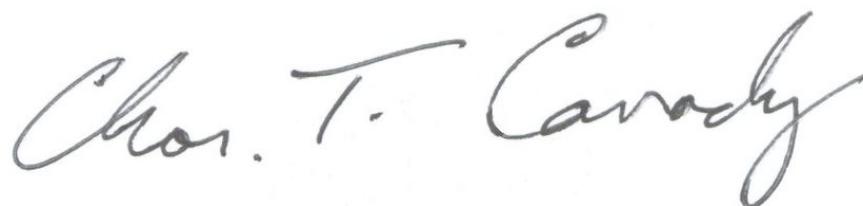


that Florida courts have put in place to carry out our mission of justice. It would be impossible for me to mention them all and I will limit myself to just a few highlights:

- ♦ As our society increases its reliance on electronic and digital channels of communication, the courts must – and will – keep pace. Florida’s e-filing portal launched nearly two years ago and courts in most of the 67 counties are now able to accept documents filed electronically through the portal. The ability to file cases electronically in every court in the state will be a priority until it is a complete reality.
- ♦ In addition to sparing the state millions of dollars in prison costs, Florida’s problem-solving dockets – drug court, mental health court, and veterans treatment court – are achieving positive outcomes not only for offenders, but also for their families and for society. Like traditional courts, problem-solving courts hold offenders accountable for their acts. But they also connect offenders with the treatment and rehabilitation services they need to get back on the right track. The courts monitor progress made by the offenders and make adjustments as needed. In this report, you can read about Florida’s Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program, its forensic hospital diversion pilot program, and its veterans courts, which address concerns that are distinct to veterans who are in need of substance abuse and/or mental health services.
- ♦ The Florida Innocence Commission released its final report in June after two years of comprehensive study of the causes of wrongful convictions. The judges, lawyers, law enforcement leaders and legal scholars who served on the commission identified several specific causes for wrongful convictions as well as a significant general contributing factor: the underfunding of the criminal justice system in our state. The Commission also came up with concrete recommendations for the Legislature to consider.

Also in this report, you can learn how Florida’s courts are organized, from your county court to the Florida Supreme Court. You will also find statistics about the numbers and the types of cases that come into Florida’s courts for resolution – you may be surprised by the volume, especially in light of the fact that our branch receives less than 1 percent of the state budget!

Finally, I am very happy to note that in this report you will be able to read about Florida’s new chief justice – Ricky Polston, who became the top judicial officer in Florida when my two-year term ended on June 30, 2012. I assure you we will all be extremely well-served with Chief Justice Polston as our leader for the next two years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Char. T. Canady". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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.



FLORIDA'S SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

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 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.

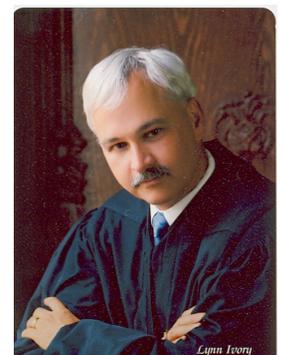
Justice Quince and her husband, attorney Fred L. Buckine, have two daughters, Peggy LaVerne and Laura LaVerne.

Ricky Polston

Justice

Justice Polston was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in October 2008, and he advanced to chief justice on July 1, 2012.

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.

FLORIDA'S SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

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.

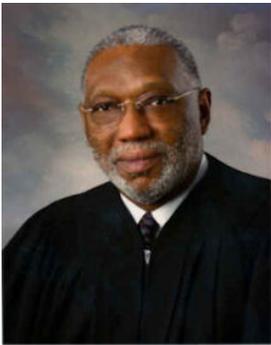
Born in Havana, Cuba, Justice Labarga was a young boy when he ventured to Pahokee, Florida, with his family. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in 1976, and, three years later, he earned his law degree, also from the University of Florida. He spent three years as an assistant 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 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



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.

2011 – 2012: The Year in Review

Chief Justice Canady frequently remarks that the last five years have been an “extraordinarily difficult time in the state’s history.” Indeed, encountering shortfalls each of these years, the legislature has faced “unprecedented challenges trying to balance the budget,” he has observed. When preparing the 2011 – 2012 budget, for example, lawmakers were up against a \$3.83 billion deficit. And this year, when developing the 2012 – 2013 budget, the legislature was working with a \$2.2 billion deficit.

Fortunately, despite these considerable shortfalls, the court system’s legislative appropriations for the 2011 – 12 fiscal year did not suffer much reduction; nor were allocations reduced for 2012 – 13. At the same time, however, while the chief justice “very much appreciates the work the legislature has done to meet the needs of the court system,” he often emphasizes that “We have a pretty lean system,” and he warns that “We don’t have a lot of room to maneuver” without causing harm to the people we serve. (To illustrate the court system’s “leanness,” he points out that Florida has only 4.5 judges per 100,000 people: “We rank 45th among the states,” he notes.) Another sign of the branch’s leanness is that, while judicial workload continues to increase—especially given the ongoing backlogs in the foreclosure dockets—the legislature has not approved new judgeships since 2006. Meanwhile, palpable still is the strain of having lost nearly 300 support staff positions several years back (support personnel assist with the sorts of issues that don’t demand the immediate involvement of a judge, thereby freeing up judges to handle more critical concerns).

Yet, even with all of these challenges, Chief Justice Canady stresses that “We’re operating in a way that is efficient. We do a good job with the resources we have.” State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner echoes this assessment, pointing out that even though the economic hard times persist, the court system, which is always seeking ways to be even better and more efficient, continues to make strides, especially in performance enhancement.

The *2011 – 2012 Florida State Courts Annual Report* documents these strides in the context of the branch strategic plan’s five long-range issues—that is, the five high-priority areas that the branch must address over the long term in order to advance 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*. ([Take this link to the branch’s 2009 – 2015 long-range plan.](#))

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 era of heightened workloads and bridled resources, Florida’s judicial branch is particularly sensible of the need to crystallize and fortify its governance structure and to bolster its independence as one of the three coequal branches of government. To meet these goals, branch leaders have worked tirelessly to stabilize court funding and to establish a more efficient architecture for making decisions and setting policy for the court system.

Stabilizing State Courts System Funding

In fiscal years 2007 – 08 and 2008 – 09, during the earliest days of the recession, most every entity that depends on state funding suffered significant cuts in Florida. The state courts, whose funding was predominantly general revenue-based, sustained a 10 percent reduction in funding along with a loss of 282 positions. Since then, however, even within the persistent context of menacing fiscal conditions and general revenue shortfalls, the budget for the court system has been relatively stable. This stability can be directly attributed to the existence of the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund—a funding strategy that had long been championed by judicial branch leaders as a way to protect the court system from cuts to its budget and personnel, especially in the face of continued descents in state general revenue. Lawmakers established the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund in a special session in January 2009, passing legislation that increased court fine revenues and that directed the increase into the new trust fund.

During the regular session that spring, the legislature, responding to the anomalous rise in foreclosure filings, decided to fill the shortfall in the state budget by shifting the courts off of general revenue to trust fund revenue and by subsidizing the court trust fund with revenue generated by an increase in foreclosure filing fees. It instituted a sliding scale formula, and, before long, foreclosure filings had become the source of more than 75 percent of the trust fund revenue for the courts.

For a little over a year, while foreclosure filings were flourishing, the trust fund boasted a bountiful cash balance. But foreclosure filings quickly proved to be a highly volatile funding source. In October 2010, the courts began encountering cascades of questionable paperwork from the so-called “foreclosure mill” law firms. In response to this crisis, most of the major mortgage lenders imposed a voluntary moratorium on foreclosures, which caused foreclosure filings to drop abruptly from a high of almost 40,000 a month to under 9,000 a month. Because of this drop in foreclosure filings—which constituted the trust fund’s predominant revenue stream—the trust fund began experiencing sizable shortfalls; in short, trust fund revenue was no longer sufficient to support the branch’s legislative appropriations. Indeed, in order to sustain court operations and make payroll without layoffs or furloughs, Chief Justice Canady had to secure \$33 million in emergency funding in 2010 – 11, and \$121.7 million in 2011 – 12, from the governor and legislature.



In all but its 1868 constitution, Florida has incorporated an express provision guaranteeing people’s right of access to the courts. However, recurrent cash flow problems can cripple court efficiency and disrupt day-to-day operations, thereby jeopardizing this constitutional right of access. In order to keep the courts open, branch leaders, along with the governor and lawmakers, recognized that this funding crisis had to be addressed. Toward that end, in spring 2011, the legislature directed the branch to provide it with recommendations on how to stabilize court and clerk funding; the chief justice established the Revenue Stabilization Workgroup, composed of an equal number of judges and clerks of court, and charged it with determining suitable, less precarious revenue streams for the court system’s and clerks’ trust funds.

After careful analysis and out-of-the box thinking, the workgroup submitted its report and recommendations on November 1, 2011. Among its observations, the report emphasizes that the courts and clerks of court typically generate funds that are more than adequate to support court operations. However, a significant portion of these revenues is used to fund other (i.e., non-core court) state entities and programs. In fiscal year 2010 – 11, for instance, one billion dollars of Article V revenue (e.g., filing fees, fines, court costs) was collected and remitted to five general categories: \$432 million was directed to the clerks, and almost \$228 million was directed to the courts—but then \$196 million went to general revenue; close to \$116 million went to other agencies’ trust funds; and \$38 million went to non-court related purposes. The workgroup recommended that the current trust fund structure be maintained but that the revenues generated by the courts and clerks should initially be distributed to fund the legislatively-authorized budgets of the courts and clerks. ([Take this link to the report.](#))

Chief Justice Canady, for whom stabilizing court funding has been the “highest priority” since the gavel passed to him on June 30, 2010, said that this restructuring of the branch’s funding sources “is going to move us forward into a fiscal year where we will have less uncertainty.” Added State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner, this solution “will address the cash flow problem for the short term.”

For fiscal year 2012 – 13, lawmakers appropriated \$446.3 million to the court system—analogous to the prior year’s budget.

However, rather than modifying the trust fund’s revenue streams, the legislature opted for a different kind of solution to the funding crisis. Because of its size, general revenue can better withstand the volatile nature of the foreclosure filing fees, so lawmakers decided to direct the greater part of the mortgage foreclosure filing fees away from the court’s trust fund, to general revenue, and then to return to using general revenue as the primary funding source for the courts. So, the court budget went from being 90 percent trust-funded and 10 percent general revenue-funded in fiscal year 2011 – 12 to being 26 percent trust-funded and 74 percent general revenue-funded in fiscal year 2012 – 13.

Chief Justice Canady, for whom stabilizing court funding has been the “highest priority” since the gavel passed to him on June 30, 2010, said that this restructuring of the branch’s funding sources “is going to move us forward into a fiscal year where we will have less uncertainty.” Added State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner, this solution “will address the cash flow problem for the short term.”

The “priority issue this year,” Ms Goodner emphasized, is the foreclosure backlog: as of June 2012, the courts had approximately 377,000 real property/mortgage foreclosure cases pending before the courts statewide. To address this issue, the courts developed the Foreclosure Backlog Reduction Initiative, designed to provide the trial courts with resources dedicated to the disposition of the existing backlogged cases and the prevention of additional backlogged mortgage foreclosure cases (specifically, the resources would be used for senior judge days, general magistrates, case managers, and operating funds to assist in processing foreclosure cases). For fiscal year 2012 – 13, the legislature allocated \$4 million to the courts (and \$2 million to the clerks of court) for this program. According to Kris Slayden, manager of OSCA’s Resource Planning and Support Services Unit, it is envisioned as a multi-year project—ideally, four consecutive years: “Because foreclosure cases are still coming in the door,” she pointed out, “efficiencies will increase dramatically if resources are continued over time.” This initiative is modeled after a successful 2010 – 11 court program, for which the courts received \$6 million (and the clerks, \$3.6 million) to hire senior judges and case managers to tackle the backlog; beginning with a backlog of 462,339 cases in June 2010, the courts were able to dispose of 201,500 cases that year.

State Courts Revenue Trust Fund Revenues March 2009 - Estimated June 2013

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

Trust Fund Created

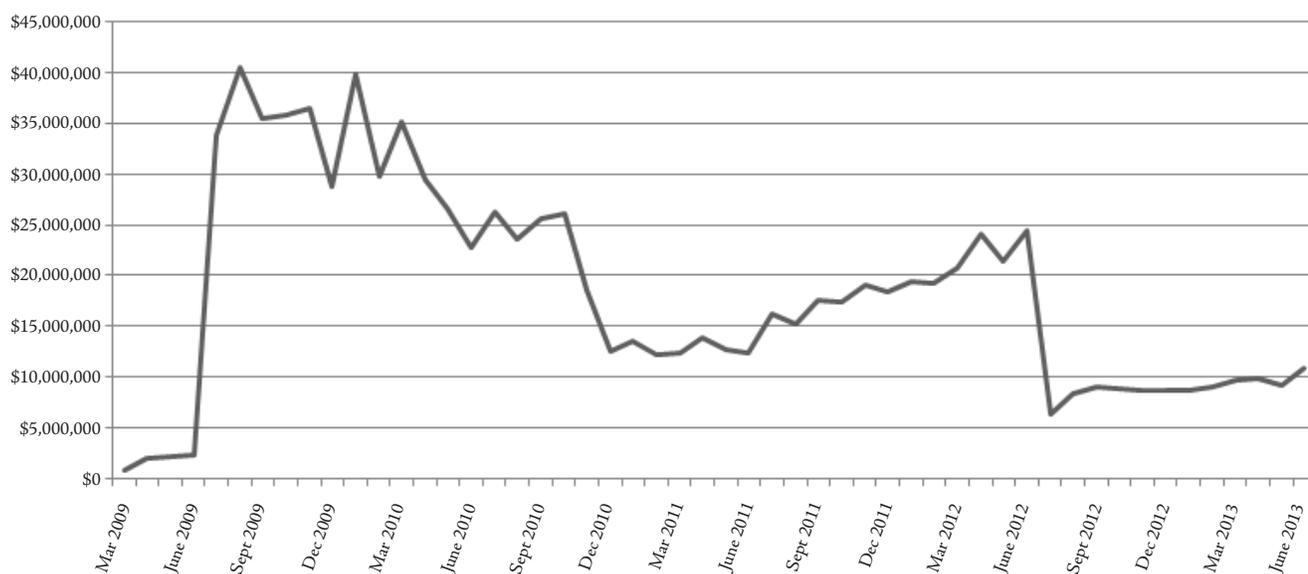
The State Courts Revenue Trust Fund was created in January 2009. In July 2009, the trust fund began growing suddenly and sharply after lawmakers began subsidizing it with revenue generated by an increase in foreclosure filing fees.

Foreclosure Filings Dropped

In October 2010, after many mortgage lenders imposed a voluntary moratorium on foreclosure filings due to questionable paperwork, foreclosure filings dropped precipitously. The drop in these filings, which constituted the trust fund’s predominant revenue stream, created significant revenue shortfalls.

General Revenue/Trust Fund Swapped

On July 1, 2012, certain foreclosure filing revenues were redirected from the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund to general revenue, resulting in decreased revenue flows into the trust fund. Those funds were replaced with general revenue for the state courts system.



Note: Revenues as reported in the Dept. of Revenue Consolidation Report and by OSCA’s Finance & Accounting Unit. Fiscal year 2012 - 13 revenues are based on actual July 2012 revenues, with the remaining months based on the results of the July 11, 2012, Article V Revenue Estimating Conference.

Judicial Governance and the Judicial Management Council

“The judicial branch will be governed in an effective and efficient manner.” With these words, the judicial branch’s 2009 – 2015 long-range plan enunciates the first goal of issue #1, *Strengthening Governance and Independence*. The plan recommends three strategies for achieving this goal, the first of which is to “reform and strengthen the governance and policy development structures of the judicial branch”: “A more permanent and streamlined framework for decision-making and setting policy would benefit the branch as well as court system users and provide for greater consistency and continuity of administration,” the plan declares.

Responding to this recommendation, then Chief Justice Peggy A. Quince, in an October 2009 administrative order, stated that it is “appropriate and timely for the judicial branch to undertake a study of its present governance structure.” In addition to calling attention to the above recommendation of the long-range plan, the chief justice named several other issues that prompted her interest in re-examining the judicial branch’s internal governance structure: specifically, the branch’s historically diffuse governance and administrative structure; the effects of the shift, from the local to the state level, of the greater responsibility for court funding; the growing complexity of issues coming before the courts; and the need to develop and implement responsive, consistent, and timely court policies. To address these issues, she established the Judicial Branch Governance Study Group; she appointed Justice Ricky Polston to chair this 11-member body, which included representation from each of the four tiers of court (two supreme court justices, two DCA judges, three circuit court judges, and two county court judges, as well as two Florida Bar representatives).

The administrative order directed the study group to perform an in-depth analysis of the branch’s current governance system and, based on its findings, to draft a report that included an examination of the structure and functions of the present governance system and an evaluation of its efficiency and effectiveness; recommendations of actions or activities that would improve the governance of the branch; and recommendations of any changes to the current structure that would improve the effective and efficient management of the branch. ([This link goes to the administrative order.](#))

To carry out this in-depth study, the group took a thorough, three-pronged approach. The first prong consisted of in-person or phone interviews with more than 40 key court system experts (e.g., presiding and former justices, chairs of judicial conferences, chief judges, chairs of court committees, justice partners, professional court staff) about governance practices currently in place. Prong two was a web-based survey of a diverse sampling of 100 judges and 350 court staff about intra-branch communication. For the third prong, Justice Polston solicited comments regarding collaboration with court leadership on policy development, rulemaking processes, and legislative/funding issues from groups with a stake in the court system’s governance structure (e.g., members of select Florida Bar sections and rules committees, statewide business associations). Simultaneously, OSCA’s Strategic Planning Unit, which was providing staff support, researched the judicial branch governance structures of other states. Supported by a State Justice Institute grant, the study group hired consultants from the National Center for State Courts to help with the extensive data collection and with analyzing and synthesizing all the materials gathered; the consultants finalized the research results in a report to the study group.



Justice Ricky Polston chaired the Judicial Branch Governance Study Group, established in 2009 by then Chief Justice Quince to examine the judicial branch’s present governance structure and make recommendations about ways to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

Members of the study group were divided into subcommittees to make recommendations in response to the consultants' conclusions, and then the full group met in person to consider each subcommittee's recommendations. After spirited discussion, the study group revised the recommendations, voted (votes were unanimous on most topics), and approved the proposed recommendations. It submitted its final report to the supreme court in January 2011. ([This link goes to the study group's final report.](#))

The supreme court responded to the report in a per curiam opinion in February 2012. In *In Re: Implementation of Judicial Branch Governance Study Group Recommendations—Amendments to the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration*, the court begins by outlining the six categories of recommendations proffered by the study group: 1) the role and responsibilities of the supreme court and the roles, responsibilities,

The Judicial Management Council will be “part of a loop that will assist the Court with forward-looking vision, while the Court gets feedback from the trial and district courts, the chief judges, and the conferences.”

terms, and selection of the chief justice as well as the chief judges of the DCAs and trial courts; 2) the role of OSCA; 3) the role and structure of the Judicial Management Council; 4) the authority of the conferences of judges; 5) communication within the branch; and 6) legislative advocacy on behalf of the branch. The opinion then states, “We adopt many of the rule changes as suggested, adopt some suggested changes with modifications, and adopt other rule changes on our own motion.” ([Follow this link to the opinion.](#))

The most momentous changes involve leadership and communication issues. For instance, adopted amendments recognize the supreme court's authority to establish policy for the entire judicial branch; define more clearly and strengthen the leadership role and authority of the chief justice; define more clearly and strengthen the leadership role and authority of the chief judges of the trial courts and DCAs; and prescribe regular meetings between the chief justice and chief judges to discuss, exchange information about, and provide feedback on the implementation of policies and practices that have statewide impact.

Another rule change recreates the Judicial Management Council. This will actually be the judicial branch's fifth judicial management council (prior incarnations were operational from 1953 – 1980; from 1985 – 1995; from 1995 – 2004; and from 2006 – 2008). This council will have a more limited membership than its forebears (only 15 voting members): it will be chaired by the chief justice and will include another supreme court justice, representatives from each level of court, Florida Bar members, and public members; the state courts administrator will be a nonvoting member. It will also have more circumscribed charges than its precursors; meeting at least quarterly, the council will have five areas of responsibility: to identify potential crisis situations affecting the branch and develop strategies for addressing them; to identify and evaluate information that will assist in improving the performance and effectiveness of the branch; to develop and monitor progress related to the branch's long-range planning endeavors; to review the charges of the various court and Florida Bar commissions and committees, recommend consolidation or revision, and propose a method for coordinating their work; and to address issues that the court brings to the council. As articulated in the per curiam opinion, the council will be “part of a loop that will assist the Court with forward-looking vision, while the Court gets feedback from the trial and district courts, the chief judges, and the conferences.”

The opinion emphasizes that the rule changes adopted by the supreme court “are intended to strengthen the governance and policy development structures of the Florida judicial branch, improve the effective and efficient management of the branch, and enhance communication within the branch”—ultimately enabling the branch to better fulfill its mission and achieve its vision.

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.

According to preliminary data, in fiscal year 2011 – 12, approximately 4 million complaints and petitions were filed in Florida's trial and appellate courts; in the same timeframe, approximately 3.9 million cases were settled. Ranging from simple traffic citations to complex civil disputes with multiple parties to involved and protracted criminal proceedings, these cases were disposed of through various dispute resolution methods—e.g., diversion, mediation, plea, and adjudication by trial.

Managing large caseloads and administering the resources and personnel needed to oversee the various case types is a challenge under any circumstances—and especially so against the backdrop of an enduring economic crisis that has led to increased workloads and curtailed resources. Nonetheless, the judicial branch has continued its efforts to improve the administration of justice through its implementation of a variety of technology advances, performance and accountability measures, court improvement initiatives, and alternative dispute resolution practices.

Technology

This year, the branch progressed in its work to build a comprehensive electronic courts structure. This ambitious undertaking includes the development of a statewide electronic filing solution (e-filing) for the trial and appellate courts. It also includes the integration of e-filing with other automated court processes. Through these and other technology modernization efforts, the judicial branch demonstrates its commitment to improving the efficiency of the court system and to facilitating the public's access to the courts and court information.

Florida Courts Technology Commission

A scion of the Court Technology Users Committee, the Florida Courts Technology Commission (FCTC) was established in 1995 to advise the supreme court on issues connected with the use of technology in the judicial branch. The commission's primary responsibility is to coordinate and review recommendations concerning court policy matters that involve the use of technology. The commission also sets the technology policies and standards by which all court committees and workgroups must abide.

To address its far-ranging responsibilities, the commission is organized into more than a dozen committees, subcommittees, and workgroups, each assigned to a specific work area. During fiscal year 2011 – 12, for instance, six committees continued to devote considerable attention to the heterogeneous issues related to implementing statewide e-filing and developing the electronic courts structure (the E-Filing Committee, the Appellate Courts Technology Committee, the ePortal Subcommittee, the Technical Standards Subcommittee, the Trial Court Integrated Management Solution Subcommittee, and the Funding Subcommittee). Other FCTC groups presided over matters relating to Access to Court Records, Education and Outreach, Reports, Rules and Access, Compliance, and the Manatee County Pilot Project.

Leading the FCTC for the last five years, during some of the headiest technological growing pains the world has witnessed, was Judge Judith L. Kreeger, Eleventh Circuit. Before chairing this commission, Judge Kreeger served as an FCTC member as well as on numerous other court technology-focused committees; among them, she chaired the Committee on Access to Court Records, and she was a member of the Committee on Privacy and Court Records, the Judicial Management Council's Ad Hoc Workgroup on Electronic Access to Court Records, and the legislature's Study Committee on Public Records. Her term as chair of the FCTC recently expired, and now Judge Lisa Taylor Munyon, Ninth Judicial Circuit, is chairing the commission. Nonetheless, Judge Kreeger will continue to be an integral part of the FCTC, as she is chairing two subcommittees: Compliance as well as Education and Outreach. State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner presented her with a plaque from Chief Justice Canady, commemorating her years of service.

E-Filing

One of the primary components of a fully-realized electronic courts structure, e-filing refers to the electronic delivery of court records and supporting documents from lawyers and litigants to the clerks of court. Another attribute of e-filing is electronic access:



Judith Kreeger

Judge Judith L. Kreeger, Eleventh Circuit, chaired the Florida Courts Technology Commission from 2007 – 2012. Still a member of the commission, she is now chairing two of its subcommittees: Compliance and Education and Outreach.



Judge Lisa Taylor Munyon, Ninth Circuit, was recently appointed chair of the Florida Courts Technology Commission.

lawyers are able to view and retrieve court documents for their cases from any computer with Internet access. E-filing is extolled as a way to reduce costs for the courts and the clerks, improve case processing and case management, and enhance attorneys' and litigants' courtroom experience and their access to the courts without significantly increasing their costs to use the courts.



The branch has been working to automate the process for filing court documents since 1979, when the supreme court adopted its first rules governing e-filing (which, back then, signified filing by fax). The legislature bolstered these efforts when, in 2008, it mandated a transition to e-filing of court records and asked the supreme court to develop e-filing standards (the FCTC designed them, and the supreme court adopted them in July 2009). Among the standards is a conceptual model of an electronic filing portal: a statewide access point for the secure electronic transmission of court records to and from all Florida courts. The standards stipulate that the portal “maintain interfaces with other existing statewide information systems”—which created challenges for developers because, according to FCTC estimates, Florida’s courts have more than 1,300 separate case management information systems (trial court technology is one of several court elements that continue to be supported by local, rather than state, funding; as a result, over the years, information systems throughout the state have developed independently of one another, without any overarching strategies or principles).

In fall 2009, Florida’s Court Clerks and Comptrollers association reported that it had created a portal the branch could use. The supreme court and the clerks established the E-Filing Authority, a public entity that owns the portal and makes the business decisions; then the E-Filing Authority and the association negotiated a development agreement providing that the association would design, develop, implement, operate, upgrade, support, and maintain the portal (in keeping with FCTC standards). At that point, the courts and clerks were able to address technical matters: OSCA’s Information Systems Services Unit (ISS) turned its attention

to creating an e-filing data envelope for each trial court division; each clerk of court began to develop an e-filing plan for each division; and clerk technology staff with each circuit court embarked on building an interface with the portal and providing the necessary codes for the association to program.

At last, in January 2011, the portal went live. By March 2012, clerks in all 67 Florida

counties and chief judges in two appellate courts had submitted their plans, and received FCTC approval, for electronic filing in some or all of their divisions. Currently, for the five civil divisions (circuit civil, county civil, probate, family, and juvenile dependency), clerks in 52 counties are able to accept documents electronically through the portal (five other counties have local e-filing systems that are linked to the portal and will eventually migrate). Also, four counties are accepting criminal e-filings on existing cases.

Between January 2011 and October 31, 2012, more than 233,000 filings, and more than 325,000 documents, had been e-filed through the portal (the portal is currently averaging more than 23,000 filings, and more than 32,000 documents, each month). Moreover, nearly 18,000 attorneys are registered to use the portal. In addition, 19 counties have been approved, in at least one court division, to discontinue the local requirement that attorneys also file a hard copy of the document(s) when filing electronically through the portal. As more counties are able to accept e-filings in more divisions, the pace at which electronic documents are submitted will surely increase. In fact, the supreme court recently stepped up the pace considerably by establishing a phased-in implementation of mandatory e-filing by attorneys. ([Take this link to the supreme court opinion.](#))

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Not unexpectedly, practitioners have experienced some bumps along the road as they transition to functioning in an electronic environment, but, on the whole, the attorneys and clerks who have been e-filing almost universally agree that accessing and filing court documents electronically is easy, reliable, efficient, convenient, time-saving, and cost-effective. The E-Filing Authority is also pleased with the progress. Declared Orange County Clerk of Court Lydia Gardner, former chair of the E-Filing Authority, “We are ahead of many other states and doing so at a fraction of the cost. Florida’s Clerks, as a whole, are moving more uniformly and more expediently toward full e-filing than is seen in most other states.” ([For more information on e-filing, follow this link.](#))

Electronic Florida Appellate Courts Technology Solution

Anticipating the inevitability of e-filing through the portal, Florida’s appellate courts began preparing for the migration into a digital environment several years ago. Recognizing that e-filing is just one feature in a nexus of automated court processes that the branch has been working to implement, the DCAs have kept their focus on the bigger picture, seeking to implement software applications that will interface with the portal and will support the seamless integration of e-filing with other automated court processes such as case management, document management, and workflow management. The culminating product is the Electronic Florida Appellate Courts Technology Solution, or eFACTS, which is being developed by ISS and is currently being piloted by the supreme court and the Second DCA.

Based in SharePoint, a highly versatile Microsoft web application platform, eFACTS builds on SharePoint’s capacity as an electronic document management and workflow system: eFACTS captures electronic as well as scanned paper documents, storing them in a secure environment; it facilitates the logical organization of these documents and automatically imports the data into a new case management system; and it enables users to locate, retrieve, and work on the documents they need, when they need them. In addition, given SharePoint’s state-of-the-art collaboration tools, multiple users can view and modify the same documents simultaneously (SharePoint keeps track of the different versions created by different users). eFACTS also offers electronic judicial voting and full-text searches. With eFACTS, users can also use their mobile tablet devices to vote remotely and to review cases easily, securely, wherever and whenever they want. Eventually,

parties will be able to use the portal to e-file their documents to the supreme court and the five DCAs, and clerks of court will use the portal to transmit electronically the trial court records for these appellate court cases.

This past June, eFACTS went into production for the supreme court, which has been using the voter module and the working documents library and is now testing e-filing through the portal. OSCA staff have conducted eFACTS and workflow process training.

eFACTS has also facilitated the move toward making the electronic record the official record in appellate courts. A 2010 supreme court administrative order paved the way for this sweeping change by allowing Florida’s appellate courts to accept court records of trial court proceedings that are made or maintained in electronic form, thereby eliminating the need to duplicate the transmission and use of both paper and electronic records.

This order also grants the chief justice or chief judge the administrative authority to dispense with the requirement that paper copies be submitted with digital documents. “Eventually, paper will be irrelevant in the appellate courts,” predicts Ms Denise Overstreet, applications and data base manager with OSCA’s ISS Unit. ([Take this link to the administrative order.](#))

The Electronic Florida Appellate Courts Technology Solution (eFACTS) has also facilitated the move toward making the electronic record the official record in appellate courts. A 2010 supreme court administrative order paved the way for this sweeping change by allowing Florida’s appellate courts to accept court records of trial court proceedings that are made or maintained in electronic form, thereby eliminating the need to duplicate the transmission and use of both paper and electronic records.



New Technology Applications

While big technology innovations like the portal, e-filing, and eFACTS have, understandably, been getting the lion’s share of publicity, the OSCA’s ISS has also been working on a range of other IT projects that, though less prominent, still have significant

impacts on the court system and the people who work in it. Among these innovations are several projects that have all been devised to simplify and expedite certain automated processes that court personnel, and occasionally judges, have to perform, thereby saving time and energy for more demanding tasks.

The Time and Attendance Application provides time-keeping and leave-keeping functionality for staff in the supreme court, the five DCAs, the 20 circuits, and OSCA. Recently, staff from OSCA's ISS, Personnel, and Finance and Accounting Units teamed up to work on upgrading, re-engineering, and enhancing the application. The application is being moved to the latest versions of the Microsoft platform and installed in OSCA's virtualized/clustered environment, making it easier to maintain and ensuring that users can access the application when they need it. Enhancements will include timekeeping for OPS (temporary) staff, changes to more readily accommodate annual leave liability calculations, improved security features, and integration with the state's web-based personnel information system.

The Contracts Application was designed to enable staff to add scanned images of all court-related contracts to its database, thereby eliminating the need for hard copies. Recently updated, the application now lets OSCA's Finance and Accounting Unit record its contract invoice payment information and directly correlate its payments with the contracts. Through another major update, the application now complies with a legislative mandate requiring all state government entities to integrate their contracts applications with the state's accounting system. The goal is transparency: the state aims to make all contracts available for public viewing.

Finally, ISS is developing the Judicial Education Service Center, an interactive online system based in the latest Microsoft platform. This new web application will have both an internal and an external component. Primarily supporting OSCA's Court Education Section, which manages education programs and events for the entire branch, the internal component of the application will collect seven categories of data sought by Court Education staff (specifically, participant, program, faculty, facility, registration, evaluation, and financial data). All data will be searchable, and the system, which will also generate reports, lists, and correspondence on demand, will readily provide staff with the information they need. The external component of the system will support external users: through a web-based portal, judges and court personnel will easily be able to register for programs, submit evaluations of courses, and track their education requirements. This new application represents a major advance: the supreme court mandated that all judges earn continuing judicial education credit 25 years ago (1987), and the database that the Court Education Section has been using dates back almost that far.

Performance and Accountability

In general, but with an even greater sense of urgency during periods of curtailed resources, the judicial branch aspires to develop and implement operating policies that utilize public resources thoughtfully, responsibly, and measurably. Indeed, one of the goals of the strategic plan's long-range issue #2 emphasizes that "The State Courts System will utilize public resources effectively, efficiently, and in an accountable manner." Since the late 1990s, the supreme court has authorized two commissions to address this goal: the Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability and the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability. Specifically, these commissions were established to recommend policies and procedures to improve court operations through the development of comprehensive performance measurement, resource management, and accountability programs.

Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability

In 2005, then Chief Justice Barbara Pariente directed the Commission on DCA Performance and Accountability (DCA P&A) to review appeals of child dependency and parental termination of rights (TPR) cases to improve the timeliness of dispositions, thereby minimizing the harmful effects on children involved in these cases. After studying the issue, sampling case dispositions in each of the five DCAs, and getting assistance from the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability regarding the appointment of lawyers and the transcription of proceedings, the commission submitted *Delay in Dependency and Termination of Parental Rights Cases* to the supreme court in 2006. After reviewing the report, the supreme court asked the DCA P&A to propose



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

timelines and rule changes that would expedite these cases. The commission filed a supplemental report the following year, and, in response, in a 2009 per curiam opinion, the supreme court adopted timeframes for these cases (i.e., the standard amount of time that should be spent on a particular stage of a case) and tasked the commission with monitoring the processing of these cases. ([This link goes to the opinion.](#))

To fulfill its charge, the commission, chaired by Judge William A. Van Nortwick, First DCA, worked with the DCA clerks and OSCA staff to develop statistical reports designed to help DCA judges and court personnel assess the efficiency with which they are processing dependency and TPR cases. The reports, which monitor eight different dependency/TPR timeframes, provide the percentage of cases that fall within the recommended timeframes for each district and also link court personnel to more detailed case information that helps them identify the cause of delays and that suggests actions to reduce these delays.

In August 2011, after monitoring the data for a year, the DCA P&A released *Performance Monitoring Report: Dependency and Termination of Parental Rights Appeals*. This report indicates that the DCAs are meeting the overall performance goal of 195 median

Branch leaders see the Trial Court Integrated Management Solution (TIMS) as part of the court system's technology modernization effort, envisioning a time in the not-too-distant future when TIMS, along with electronic filing and the Florida Appellate Courts Technology Solution project, will work together to constitute a comprehensive electronic courts structure.

days from final judgment (lower tribunal date rendered) to final disposition by the appellate court: data reveal 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 for Answer Brief to Conference/Oral Argument, with substantial improvement by most districts since 2007. Furthermore, in four of the eight timeframes being measured, the number of cases meeting the performance goal also increased—and these increases seem to be directly linked to the courts' changes in practice. Although the data suggest that there is still room for improvement, they also highlight the DCAs' efforts to expedite their processing

of these cases, despite the complexity of the issues involved and the loss of court resources over the last five years. ([Take this link to the performance monitoring report.](#))

Judge Van Nortwick recently remarked that, in the year that has passed since those initial data were released, the DCAs are continuing to make improvements in meeting the required timeframes for dependency/TPR appeals. While noting that the courts are not yet meeting the timeframes that relate to the filing of the record and briefs, he stressed that the timeframes that are within the courts' control are being met, saying that this reflects how much the courts are doing to meet these ambitious timeframes. He added that the new data also serve to remind the DCAs of where they still need to make improvements.

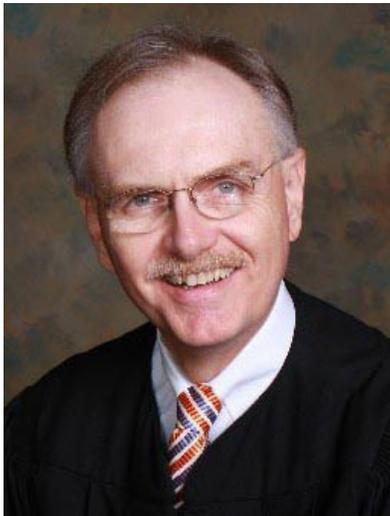
Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability

Chaired by Chief Judge Terry D. Terrell, First Circuit, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability (TCP&A) has continued to cultivate and carry out strategies for moving cases more efficiently and effectively through court processes and for supporting performance monitoring and resource management. Since 2010, one of the commission's most ambitious projects has been the Trial Court Integrated Management Solution, or TIMS—an infrastructure that will capture and report case and court activity information within and across all 20 circuits. In short, TIMS is a standardized, statewide solution for automating two major trial court functions: case processing (within which are six sub-functions: case intake, document management, case management/tracking, case scheduling, court procedures, and resource management) and performance monitoring.

The TCP&A is working on this complex, multi-year initiative in collaboration with the Florida Courts Technology Commission (FCTC), the Court Statistics Workload Committee, the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, and a gamut of project partners and subject matter experts. TIMS is unfolding in three phases.

The first phase, which began in summer 2011 and is spearheaded by the TCP&A, involves the formidable task of identifying the standardized case and workload information needed to process cases, manage resources, and monitor performance both at the local

and statewide reporting levels. To anatomize the information needed, the commission established six workgroups, one for each of six court divisions (criminal, civil, family, probate, civil traffic, and problem-solving courts). The findings of these workgroups will be used to develop a court data model that establishes standardized data definitions to identify and track the information needed to move cases efficiently and effectively through the court system.



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

Since trial court technology is one of three court elements that continue to be supported by local rather than state funding, case management information systems across Florida have developed independent of one another over the years, resulting in a considerable number of separate systems across the branch. One of TIMS' many benefits is that it will integrate the various systems by providing a uniform language that all jurisdictions can use to effectively communicate key caseload and workload information. Indeed, every effort is being made to assimilate the existing case maintenance/management systems already in use in the trial courts: by building upon current court and clerk resources, both technological and staffing, TIMS will minimize the need for new resources or new funding sources.

The second phase, which was launched in fall 2011, is overseen by the FCTC and involves a technical assessment to determine the most feasible technological approach to creating the system. The third phase focuses on implementation planning: with the help of a technical assistance grant, OSCA contracted with the National Center for State Courts to engineer a high-level implementation and funding strategy for developing and maintaining TIMS.

case management conference decisions, third party neutral findings, and the discovery phase; this information will help judges work more efficiently and effectively. Additionally, TIMS will improve each court's ability to produce meaningful reports that can be used to monitor and improve court operations. In sum, by providing better and more accurate information to judges and court personnel, TIMS will improve case processing, reduce delays, and minimize long-term costs.

TIMS promises to be extraordinarily useful, both for those within the court system and for many outside it. Most palpably, on the local level, TIMS will be able to assist judges, court staff, court administrators, clerks, and others on the front line by providing them with the information they need to process cases swiftly and smoothly. For instance, judges will have the enhanced ability to view case histories, including key events in requests for continuances,

More globally, as the "backbone" of a statewide integrated data system, TIMS will elicit uniform and comparable data from across the state that can be used to inform the policy decisions of the supreme court for the management of the entire court system. For instance, TIMS will provide state-level information that could be used by the Trial Court Budget Commission to make decisions about resource allocations to the circuits; and the TCP&A could use the information generated by TIMS to bolster its efforts to monitor performance measures, thereby supporting the branch's efforts to ensure the effective delivery of services in each circuit. TIMS will also readily provide the kind of data that state officials and policy makers often request of the branch—for instance, data on real property mortgage foreclosures or Jimmy Ryce proceedings.

TIMS project team members acknowledge the extreme challenges of building a system that can improve case management, enhance the court system's ability to manage and account for its resources, and facilitate a more complete and accurate reporting of court performance. Even so, they anticipate that certain limited aspects of the system—such as the judicial interface sub-system, which focuses directly on the needs of judges and managers involved in the adjudication of cases—may be ready for implementation within a few years—while cautioning that the initiative's more far-reaching goals might not be implementable for five to 10 years (pending funding, naturally).

Despite its many challenges, branch leaders stress the significance of undertaking this forward-looking project. They see TIMS as part of the court system's technology modernization effort, envisioning a time in the not-too-distant future when TIMS, along with electronic filing and the Florida Appellate Courts Technology Solution project, will work together to constitute a comprehensive electronic courts structure.



Court Improvement: Family Court

Separation and divorce, child support, child abuse, termination of parental rights, delinquency, dependency, family violence, substance abuse, mental illness—these are some of the most complex and personal matters that a family might ever have to endure. Yet these matters often end up being addressed in the courts. Since 1988, when it launched its first family court initiative, the judicial branch has been working with its statewide and community partners to develop integrated, comprehensive approaches to handling these sensitive cases. Through developing and implementing innovative practices and programs associated with family court, drug court, and veterans court, and through working to address the underlying problems that lead to the repeated incarceration of people with mental illnesses, the branch endeavors to resolve the disputes that perturb families in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective way.

In 2008, under then Chief Justice Peggy A. Quince, the judicial branch created the statewide, multidisciplinary Dependency Court Improvement Panel to address deficiencies discovered during Florida’s second federal Child and Families Services Review (these reviews are conducted by the Children’s Bureau, an arm of the US Department of Health and Human Services). The Florida Department of Children and Families is responsible for addressing most of the shortcomings 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; the panel, with support from OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement (OCI), was established to help implement this work plan. Chaired until recently by Judge Jeri B. Cohen, Eleventh Circuit, and now chaired by Judge Katherine G. Essrig, Thirteenth Circuit, the Dependency Court Improvement Panel has been working diligently to improve courtroom practice and decision-making in dependency cases.



Judge Katherine G. Essrig, Thirteenth Circuit, chairs the Dependency Court Improvement Panel.

Among its considerable achievements to date, the panel developed a model shelter hearing benchcard, family time (visitation) protocols, stability practices, safety tools, materials geared toward involving children in the court processes that affect them, and judicial checklists for physical, mental, and dental health. Panel members also regularly offer regional trainings as well as judicial education program courses on dependency-related issues. In addition, in spring 2011, the panel significantly revised the *Dependency Benchbook*—seen by many as the crown of the group’s work. Based on state-of-the-art science and child welfare knowledge, the benchbook supports judges and magistrates who address the safety, permanency, and well-being of children involved in Florida’s court system. The revised version takes a family-centered approach to improving court practice—an approach that focuses on judicial leadership and oversight; substantive and timely hearings; promising practices covering a wide range of current, relevant topics; family engagement; and collaboration among all key partners in the dependency system. ([Take this link to the Dependency Benchbook.](#))

In fiscal year 2011 – 12, the panel updated the benchbook, refreshing its statutory citations and adding colloquies for adoption, manifest best interest, dependency consent, and termination of parental rights hearings. Also new to the benchbook is a Notice of Dependent Child in Your Jurisdiction form, developed by Judge Lynn Tepper, Sixth Judicial Circuit. In addition, based on the recommendations of a court-sponsored ad hoc visitation workgroup established in January 2012, the visitation protocols were updated to place particular emphasis on issues connected with visitation safety, frequency, quality, and individualization.



Over the course of the year, the Dependency Court Improvement Panel also continued to strengthen its statewide Model Courts Project. With the support of Chief Justice Canady, the project was inaugurated in January 2011. Altogether, 17 of Florida’s judicial circuits have a model court, each of which is paired with a team of broad-based child welfare stakeholders. Using the *Dependency Benchbook* as a foundation, model court judges employ cutting-edge court practices and provide off-the-bench judicial leadership to build strong community partnerships. The OCI supports the model courts by facilitating

judicial networking and educational opportunities, providing liaisons to work directly with each model court, and linking judges to national technical assistance resources.

Recognizing that periodic gatherings offer opportunities to discuss challenges and share successes, model courts participants aim to get together twice a year. In 2011, they re-assembled for a Model Courts All-Sites Meeting in September. On day one, the 47 judges and magistrates in attendance discussed some of the challenges they have been encountering (e.g., building stakeholder buy-in, overcoming the lack of resources) and then brainstormed together, generating some useful, low- or no-cost responses to these concerns; also on the agenda was a presentation on visitation. On the second day, 148 stakeholders joined the meeting, and six judges gave presentations on the most common model courts concerns: visitation, concurrent planning, children in court, crossover coordination, independent living court, and child safety. The presentations were followed with a breakout session, during which attendees further considered these issues and continued to work together to develop solutions. ([This link goes to information on the Model Courts Project.](#))

This Model Courts All-Sites Meeting segued seamlessly into the Department of Children and Families' annual Dependency Summit, giving model courts participants a chance to build on the conversations they had just started. The theme of the 2011 summit was Pathway to Independence: Family Accountability – Community Strength. Altogether, 86 judges and magistrates were present (sponsored by a federal Court Improvement Program grant), and judges/magistrates offered 12 of the summit workshops.

Meanwhile, both locally and nationally, OCI staff continue to participate in other information-sharing dialogues aimed at enhancing the well-being of families involved in the dependency court process. For instance, in December 2011, staff participated in a national summit in Washington, DC, on Child Welfare, Education and the Courts: A Collaboration to Strengthen Educational Successes and Youth in Foster Care. In attendance from all 50 states and several US territories were teams of representatives from the state courts and from child welfare and education agencies. Among the many workshops were four opportunities for the members of each state's team to meet—with the goal of developing a statewide action plan. The Florida team's action plan focused on three concerns: data and information sharing; performance measures, specifically around enrollment and school stability; and cross-training. Representatives of the OCI, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, and the Guardian ad Litem Program actually created a forum to discuss issues like these several years ago: in 2007, these groups began to hold monthly collaboration meetings to exchange information about trainings, policies, and procedures of mutual relevance and to share practices being developed across the state that affect children and families involved in the child welfare system. Since the national summit, participants also use this opportunity to continue working on the action plan.

The colloquy advanced further when OCI staff attended the nation-wide Court Improvement Program Meeting in June 2012. Sponsored by the Children's Bureau, this meeting focused on issues of children's well-being, school stability, and trauma, as well as



The American Bar Association conducts a training at the supreme court on Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Attorneys. In the past, the basis for returning children to their homes was case plan compliance; however, this workshop is founded on the premise that children should be returned to their homes when safety is achieved.

on ways to incorporate continuous quality improvement (CQI) principles and approaches into all court improvement efforts. In short, CQI refers to a process of identifying, describing, and analyzing the strengths and challenges of a situation or phenomenon (e.g., judicial leadership, youth involvement in court) and then testing, implementing, and learning from solutions, revising as needed. Each state that receives court improvement program grants is now required by the Children's Bureau to update its strategic plan to reflect significant accomplishments to date and to highlight ways in which staff are working to enhance CQI principles and approaches, and OCI is currently working on this project.

Technology is also being harnessed to facilitate information-sharing that can make the dependency court process more efficient and can help children and families achieve better outcomes. The Florida Dependency Court Information System (FDCIS), another feature of the Model Courts Project, is a web-based case management system developed by OCI staff that provides judges, magistrates, and court personnel with resources to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of court events. The system utilizes data

OSCA staff also produced a graphic novel-styled court guide to help teenagers understand and navigate the dependency court process. My Future Depends on It! answers many common questions about foster care and the reunification process. Poignantly illustrated by a local college student/artist, the document is available both online and in hard copy and is being distributed with other youth guides to case managers, child protective investigators, and guardians ad litem to give to teenagers when a new dependency case is opened. By law, children are parties to a dependency case, and the goal in developing this publication is to help them understand their case and have a voice in the process.

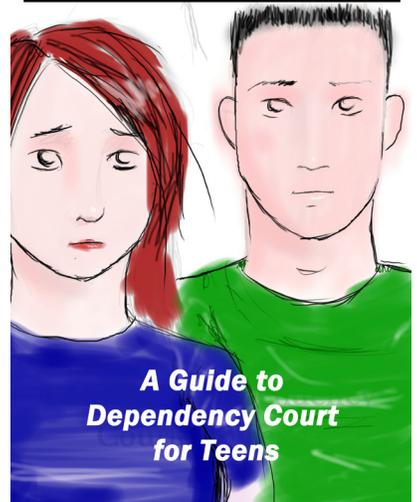
exchanges with various agencies (e.g., the Department of Children and Families, the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, the Department of Juvenile Justice), thereby both eliminating duplicate data entry as well as enriching the breadth and depth of dependency case knowledge. By ensuring that critical information is available prior to hearings, FDCIS supports the branch's endeavors to facilitate informed decision-making. The system also allows users to run reports on various federal performance measures (e.g., Child Safety Report, Achievement of Permanency Report, Number of Judges per Case Report, and Time to Permanent Placement Report). These reports help the branch gauge its progress in the discrete events in the dependency court process, highlighting both the successes and areas that need attention. The system is about to be rolled out in the First Circuit and will eventually be available to all dependency court judges and personnel. ([Take this link to learn more about FDCIS.](#))

Finally, in fiscal year 2011 – 12, the OCI released several new publications. With the assistance of several magistrates and judges, a hearing officer, The Florida Bar, and the Florida

Department of Revenue, OCI staff produced *Florida's Child Support Benchbook*, which features information on a variety of child support issues, including establishing, and disestablishing, paternity; establishing support orders; collecting and enforcing support; modifying child support orders; and addressing child support matters in different kinds of court cases. ([Follow this link to the Child Support Benchbook.](#))

OCI staff also produced a graphic novel-styled court guide to help teenagers understand and navigate the dependency court process. *My Future Depends on It!* answers many common questions about foster care and the reunification process. Poignantly illustrated by a local college student/artist, the document is available both online and in hard copy and is being distributed with other youth guides to case managers, child protective investigators, and guardians ad litem to give to teenagers when a new dependency case is opened. By law, children are parties to a dependency case, and the goal in developing this publication is to help them understand their case and have a voice in the process. ([This link goes to the graphic novel on the dependency court process.](#)) OCI staff also recently completed a graphic-styled novel on the delinquency process. Similarly illustrated, *What's Going to Happen to Me? A Guide to Delinquency Court for Teens* is the story of a teenager who was arrested for misdemeanor

My Future Depends On It!



theft, dealing in stolen property, and felony drug charges; as the story unfolds, readers discover what delinquency court is all about. This graphic novel is now available both online and in hard copy. ([Take this link to the graphic novel on the delinquency process.](#))

In addition to making significant strides in the dependency division of family courts, the branch has created some important resources for the domestic violence court division. For instance, using as a template their web-based *Domestic Violence Virtual Court*, released in 2009, OCI staff recently rolled out their *Domestic Violence Case Management Training*. This virtual courtroom experience presents video scenarios and relevant materials related to the case manager's role in a civil domestic violence injunction case. The case manager views the video segments and materials for each stage in a domestic violence case, and then he/she is called on to answer questions about the case manager's role in the process and the appropriate procedures. Participants get immediate feedback, suggesting why their answers may or may not have been the most appropriate. ([To find out more about OCI's virtual court offerings, take this link.](#))

OCI staff have also been working to produce or update several other domestic violence-related resources. For example, they are working on a video training as well as a promising practices guide on batterer compliance; producing a stalking violence checklist; constructing a benchcard on elder abuse for inclusion in their *Domestic Violence Benchbook*; and updating their *Domestic Violence Injunction Case Management Guidelines*. Many of these materials will be available online in the near future. ([For these and other DV resources, follow this link to the court system's DV homepage.](#))

Court Improvement: Problem-Solving Courts and Initiatives

In 1989, Florida established the first drug court in the country in Miami-Dade County, spurring the national drug court movement. Not long after, other kinds of problem-solving dockets began to flourish using the drug court model. Problem-solving dockets are designed to assist individuals with specific needs and problems (e.g., substance abuse, mental health disorders) that are not being addressed, or cannot be addressed adequately, in traditional courts. Today, the US has more than 1,000 problem-solving courts. Although most problem-solving court models are relatively new, studies already show that this approach to differentiated case management has a positive effect on the lives of participants, their families, and their victims.

The primary problem-solving courts in Florida are drug court, mental health court, and veterans treatment court. The state's drug courts have expanded considerably beyond the first embodiment, which was adult felony drug court: Florida has 106 drug courts (including five DUI courts) operating in the felony, misdemeanor, juvenile, and dependency divisions of the court; one additional drug court is in the planning stages. Florida also has 27 mental health courts in operation as well as eight veterans treatment courts—with another two in the planning stages.

Drug Court

Florida's drug courts, which recently marked their twenty-third anniversary, comprise a 12 to 18-month process in which nonviolent substance-abusing and addicted individuals 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 unique, responding to the needs, priorities, and resources of its local community, most drug courts share certain features: they require participants to maintain ongoing interaction with the court (in fact, drug court judges typically have a direct role in addressing the participant's problems and helping to modify his/her behaviors); they take a less adversarial approach than traditional criminal justice processing; they require participants to undergo frequent and random alcohol and drug tests, rewarding them for positive behavior and sanctioning them for shirking their obligations; they work collaboratively with community and state partners, offering a range of treatment and rehabilitation services; and they are designed to facilitate positive outcomes not only for participants, but also for victims and society (by reducing recidivism, reducing



In honor of National Drug Court Month, Chief Justice Canady reads the Florida Supreme Court proclamation acknowledging the continuing successes of the Florida drug court program and recognizing the practitioners and participants who help reduce drug usage and crime and make drug courts work.

the risk of injury for law enforcement officers, and creating safer communities, for example). These elements have become standard in most problem-solving courts.

Drug courts have been praised for reducing recidivism, improving public safety, restoring productive citizens, reuniting families, and saving lives. They also save public money—a prospect that contributed to the interest, several years ago, in expanding the number of post adult-adjudicatory drug courts in the state. Funded with \$18.6 million in federal stimulus dollars that the legislature appropriated to the court system in 2009, Florida's Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program, now in its third year, has been redirecting a considerable population of nonviolent drug offenders from prison into effective treatment and diversion programs, thereby saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

The expansion drug courts have already saved the state money. Florida's Department of Corrections estimates that the cost of housing a nonviolent offender in prison is \$53.34 per day. Expansion drug courts, on the other hand, cost, on average, only \$20 per day. Thus far, the expansion drug courts have spared the state more than \$14 million in prison costs alone. And because drug court graduates have lower recidivism rates than former prisoners, the program will reap long-term cost savings as well.

The program has eight participating counties: Broward, Escambia, Hillsborough, Marion, Orange, Pinellas, Polk, and Volusia. Since March 2010, the program has been operational in all eight counties, and as of June 30, 2012, 1,700 offenders had been admitted—and 388 had graduated (the treatment typically takes between 12 and 18 months to complete, so the number of graduates will continue to climb).

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Among the stipulations for receiving the federal stimulus funding for the drug court expansion program, participating drug courts have had to comply with exacting state and federal reporting requirements involving the collection of a spectrum of client-level data (e.g., arrest, offense, and sentencing information; demographics; progress in treatment; drug test results; and incentives and sanctions). Initially, OSCA staff constructed a provisional, web-based system to facilitate the data collection; at the same time, they began seeking a comprehensive, "off the shelf" case management system that could be customized to collect the required data efficiently and securely. Last year, OSCA contracted with a vendor to adapt its system to the branch's specific drug court needs.

The system, called the Florida Drug Court Case Management System, was tested in Escambia County last December, and later that month, drug court managers and case managers from the eight expansion drug court counties received training on it. Recently, OSCA began implementing the system in additional adult drug courts statewide. Gradually, the system will be enhanced to manage cases from the other types of drug and problem-solving courts as well, like juvenile and family dependency drug courts, DUI courts, mental health courts, and veterans courts.

This case management system will benefit the state's drug courts as well as the court system as a whole. On the local level, case managers will have access to information that will help them manage their cases more efficiently, and they will be able to generate reports and statistical analyses at will to monitor program operations. More generally, the system will provide uniform and comparable data that can be used to inform the supreme court's policy and budget decisions. And it will also enable the branch to perform local and statewide evaluations of drug court, providing the state with a reliable measure of the effectiveness and efficiency of these problem-solving dockets.

In fact, for several years, the supreme court, with the support of the OSCA Drug Court Team, has been working to carry out a global evaluation of Florida’s drug court program. With technical assistance from the National Center for State Courts, OSCA developed a plan for evaluating drug courts across the state, and with a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, OSCA selected a research organization to spearhead the project. The first phase, which began in March 2011, consisted of an online assessment of all 49 of Florida’s adult felony drug courts to determine which ones best implement the 10 key components of drug court and drug court best practices. OSCA then selected five adult drug courts for a comprehensive evaluation that includes a process, outcome, impact, and cost effectiveness analysis (the five drug courts are in Duval, Escambia, Lee, Monroe, and Volusia Counties, and the evaluation is based on data collection, site visits, and interviews).

Although some local jurisdictions have assessed their own drug courts, this is the first time the court system is undertaking a statewide evaluation that looks at all aspects of the drug court program—for instance, how the various drug courts operate, what processes they use, what are their retention and recidivism rates, which elements of drug court are related to successful outcomes, and how drug court compares with traditional sentencing options for offenders who enter the criminal justice system. The court system will use the statewide evaluation to determine the successes of drug court and potentially fortify its requests for funding support.

Mental Health Initiatives

Mental health diversion programs, mental health dockets, and mental health courts grew out of circumstances similar to those that prompted the development of drug courts: repeat offenders in need of treatment services. As community resources for people with serious mental illnesses have shrunk in response to the ongoing economic crisis, the courts have been seeing more repeat offenders with untreated mental illnesses. Florida’s jails and prisons are not designed, equipped, or funded to accommodate these offenders; the drug court model, however, offers a viable alternative. Like drug courts, mental health courts hold offenders accountable while connecting them to the treatment services they need to address their mental health issues. Monitoring and treating them in a mental health court is more effective, more efficient, and less costly than the remedies available through traditional justice system approaches.

In addition to promoting the establishment of mental health dockets across the state, Miami-Dade County Judge Steven Leifman, who chairs the supreme court’s Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Courts, has also been advocating on behalf of developing safe, effective, and cost-efficient alternative placement options for people adjudicated incompetent to proceed or not guilty by reason of insanity.

Judge Leifman points out that Florida’s current forensic treatment system does not prevent individuals from becoming involved in the justice system—and, once they are involved in the justice system, this treatment regimen does not reduce recidivism in jails, prisons, and state hospitals. Moreover, the current system is costly: it costs



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

One of the advantages of this model of competency restoration is that, unlike state facilities, this program keeps in the program—rather than in jail—those individuals who are awaiting trial once their competency has been restored; as a result, these individuals are less likely to lose their ability to maintain normal psychological functioning and be declared incompetent to proceed again.

approximately \$613 million annually to house people with mental illnesses in Florida’s prisons and forensic treatment facilities—and an additional \$500 million each year to house people with mental illnesses in local jails. These expenditures are forecast to increase by as much as a billion dollars each year over the next decade.

Instead of continuing to funnel taxpayer dollars into a broken system, Judge Leifman has been championing a fundamental redesign of public service systems to provide more effective, less costly treatment and prevention in the community. Key to this redesign is a decrease in the demand for some of the most costly services provided in state forensic hospital settings. This decrease would

come from the establishment of pilot programs around the state that divert certain individuals—specifically, those who are charged with less serious offenses and who do not pose public safety risks—from placement in state forensic facilities to placement in locked, community-based competency restoration and community reintegration services.

His advocacy led to the creation, in August 2009, of a 10-bed, community-based forensic commitment program called the Miami-Dade Forensic Alternative Center—a legislature-funded collaborative effort between the Eleventh Judicial Circuit and the Department of Children and Families. This facility serves nonviolent second and third degree felons found by the court to be incompetent to proceed. In addition to competency restoration services, this program offers a continuum of care during the commitment period and after re-entry into the community: program staff continue to monitor individuals to ensure that treatment and support services are maintained. One of the advantages of this model of competency restoration is that, unlike state facilities, this program keeps in the program—rather than in jail—those individuals who are awaiting trial once their competency has been restored; as a result, these individuals are less likely to lose their ability to maintain normal psychological functioning and be declared incompetent to proceed again. In addition, this program restores competency more quickly than state facilities (103 instead of 146 days)—and it also costs significantly less (\$229 as opposed to \$333 per bed day).

Judge Leifman continues to advocate for the passage of bills that will support the expansion of community-based diversion and re-entry initiatives—an approach that, in addition to saving taxpayer dollars, will also significantly redirect the state’s financial priorities from the incarceration of nonviolent offenders to their rehabilitation.

Veterans Treatment Court

The US is home to approximately 21 million veterans, and Florida has the third largest population in the country, with over 1.65 million veterans. Once they return home, veterans often continue to “carry” with them the aftershocks of war. For veterans of recent US military operations, the most evident injuries are joint and back disorders and other musculoskeletal ailments. However, war often takes a severe psychological toll as well: in addition to experiencing depression, veterans often suffer from two so-called “signature injuries”: traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder—all of which are risk factors for substance abuse. Some veterans returning home from war find it difficult to re-assimilate into the community—and veterans with untreated substance abuse or mental health issues may find it even harder to return to their home lives; these challenges can sometimes lead to criminal activity. Like drug court and mental health court, veterans treatment court holds offenders answerable for their wrongdoing while linking them with treatment services that address the complex needs associated with substance abuse, mental illness, and concerns unique to the traumatic experience of war.

Founded in 2008 in Buffalo, NY, veterans treatment court utilizes the drug court model, but it also relies emphatically on the use of mentors—other veterans in the community who volunteer to support defendants with one-on-one time and attention. In addition, veterans treatment courts leverage resources from the US Department of Veterans Affairs to serve these offenders’ treatment needs.



Marine veteran Judge Ted Booras, Fifteenth Circuit, has been presiding over the circuit’s veterans court since its inception in November 2010.



The Fifteenth Circuit's Veterans Court Team designed this flag.

Veterans dockets strive to identify, as early as possible, those veterans who are suffering from neurological and psychological injuries; to introduce veterans to an ongoing process of recovery designed to help them become stable, employed, and substance-free while continuing mental health care through community/peer counseling groups or the VA; to reduce veterans' contacts with the criminal justice system; and to reduce costs associated with criminal case processing and re-arrest.

Florida inaugurated its first veterans treatment docket in 2010. Now with eight in operation and six in the planning stages, these dockets are already showing great promise. Indeed, state lawmakers recently passed legislation to encourage more courts to develop special dockets and diversion programs for their veterans. Named in honor of the Okaloosa County judge who was a brigadier general with the Army Reserves and established one of the state's first veterans dockets, the T. Patt Maney Veterans Intervention

Act provides that the chief judge of each circuit may establish court dockets under which judges may sentence veterans and service members who are convicted of a criminal offense and who suffer from certain military service-related disorders (i.e., mental illness, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse disorder, or psychological problems) in a manner that addresses the disorders through services tailored to each participant's individual needs. The legislation also allows for the creation of misdemeanor and felony pretrial diversion programs.

Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Courts

For more than a decade, the supreme court has been seeking to develop branch-wide strategies for improving the manner in which the justice system responds to cases involving individuals with serious mental illnesses and substance abuse issues. Toward that end, it instituted the Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Court in 1998 and the Mental Health Subcommittee in 2006. Then in 2010, Chief Justice Canady merged the two, creating the Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Courts.



The Seventeenth Circuit launched its veterans treatment court on May 7, 2012. Pictured here (l – r) are Chief Judge Peter Weinstein; Will Gunn, general counsel for US Veterans Affairs; and Veterans Court Judge Edward Merrigan, an 18-year Army veteran.

During its 2010 – 2012 term, the task force, chaired by Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, made significant headway in its four areas of responsibility. First, it recommended ways to transform Florida's mental health system (e.g., through a phased-in redesign of the forensic competency restoration system, strengthening community collaboration, and additional education for judges and court staff). Second, it offered suggestions for advancing Florida's drug courts (it proposed ways to promote them, addressed the training and education needs of judges and court staff, and supported the statewide evaluation of all types of drug courts). Third, it provided guidance to OSCA on issues related to the implementation of the Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program (it encouraged legislation that expanded the qualifying criteria, and it supported statewide training and technical assistance for post-adjudicatory drug court expansion staff). And, last, it made recommendations on the most effective ways to serve veterans with mental illnesses and substance abuse issues who become involved in the criminal justice system (through developing strategies and recommendations for implementing veterans programs in courts across the state).

After completing its term on June 30, 2012, the task force was renewed for another two-year period. ([This link goes to the administrative order reauthorizing the task force.](#))

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Among its suggestions for processing cases more effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner, the long-range plan recommends that the court system “continue to explore and implement effective alternative dispute resolution processes.” By promoting communication—and thereby facilitating problem-solving—between parties, by conserving judicial time, and by helping the branch use public resources responsibly, mediation and other alternative dispute resolution methods help to improve the administration of justice.

Initially animated by grassroots, community-based efforts, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in Florida has its roots in Dade County’s first citizen dispute settlement center, established in 1975. ADR was brought under the umbrella of the Florida court system in 1988. Since then, the branch has developed the most comprehensive court-connected mediation program in the nation.



Janice Fleischer, chief of OSCA’s Florida Dispute Resolution Center, is one of the trainers at a county mediation training program at the Fifteenth Circuit.

Former Chief Justice Joseph Boyd and Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte, former dean of the FSU College of Law, lent support to this effort when, in 1986, they established the Florida Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) as the first statewide center for ADR education, training, and research.

Housed in the supreme court building, the DRC sponsors an annual conference for mediators and arbitrators; provides county mediation training to volunteers; assists the local courts throughout the state, as needed; and provides staff assistance to four supreme court mediation boards and committees (the Supreme Court Committee on ADR Rules and Policy, the Mediator Ethics Advisory Committee, a mediator grievance board, and a grievance board for certified mediation training programs). The DRC also certifies mediators and mediation training programs in five areas (county, family, circuit, dependency, and appellate). Currently, more than 6,300 supreme court-certified mediators serve the state and its citizens.

Fiscal year 2011 – 12 ushered in several notable ADR-related achievements designed to educate mediators and to protect consumers of the process. In response to a petition by the Committee on ADR Rules and Policy, the supreme court amended Florida Rule of Civil Procedure 1.720 to clarify the concept of “full authority to settle without further consultation,” thereby ensuring that those with the power to make decisions are present at mediations. The revised rule, which took effect on January 1, 2012, defines a “party representative having full authority to settle” as “the final decision maker with respect to all issues presented by the case who has the legal capacity to execute a binding settlement agreement on behalf of the party.” The court also added a new subdivision to the rule, “Certification of Authority,” which states that, “Unless otherwise stipulated by the parties, each party, 10 days prior to appearing at a mediation conference, shall file with the court and serve all parties a written notice identifying the person or persons who will be attending the mediation conference as a party representative or as an insurance carrier representative, and confirming that those persons have the authority required....” In addition, the rule provides for sanctions if a party fails to appear or fails to file a certificate of authority. Mediators particularly appreciate the amended rule: in the past, if they discovered a party didn’t have authority to settle during the course of a mediation, there was little they could do because of the confidentiality of the mediation; now mediators are no longer being put in this position. In effect, the amended rule encourages all parties in a mediation to make the process as productive as possible. ([Take this link to the supreme court decision.](#))

In addition, the DRC built a new Disciplinary Proceedings and Sanctions webpage, from which viewers can link to the Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators, get information on filing a grievance (readers can download the grievance form and get instructions for completing it), and readily access the “Sanctions—Imposed” and “Sanctions—Consensual Agreement” sites. Viewers can also make use of the Mediator Search database to find mediators in their geographic region and also to see whether a particular mediator has been sanctioned or decertified. ([This link goes to the Disciplinary Proceedings and Sanctions page.](#))

Finally, in addition to offering three well-attended trainings for county court volunteer mediators, the DRC welcomed over 850 participants to the 2011 Florida Dispute Resolution Center Conference (the conference is generally an annual event, but budgetary constraints and a travel freeze necessitated the cancellation of the 2010 conference). Titled “We’re Back,” the day-and-a-half-long program featured three plenary sessions (The Neurophysiology of Conflict; an Ethics Plenary; and Multiculturalism and Mediation: Where Are We Now?). It also offered participants three generous sets of workshop choices—more than 40 sessions in all—on diversity/cultural awareness, mediator ethics, domestic violence, and a host of other enriching educational possibilities. Mediators who attended the entire conference were eligible for up to 12.7 continuing mediator education hours.



Fifteen elementary school students who are studying conflict resolution skills in the Florida State University Schools, Second Circuit, were inspired to create this colorful, peace-promoting “quilt.”

**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 emphasizes, “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

Drawing on an array of pedagogical tools and styles, and aiming to make efficient and effective use of limited funding and staff resources, many entities within the state courts system offer high-quality education and training opportunities to the men and women who work in the judicial branch. Among them, the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity—with the help of the 26 Diversity Teams (one in each circuit and appellate court) as well as the ever-growing number of judges who have become certified diversity trainers—ensures that diversity awareness training is locally available for judges and court personnel. Also on the local level, judges and court personnel devise methods for offering a variety of innovative, low- or no-cost trainings for their workforce; the recent, circuit-driven, continuing court interpreter education programs immediately come to mind. In addition, several OSCA units develop benchguides and other helpful educational materials and regularly coordinate or offer trainings and continuing education events. For instance, the Office of Court Improvement is steadily expanding its repertoire of live and online trainings, publications, and videos for family court and drug court judicial officers and staff. And the Florida Dispute Resolution Center orchestrates a statewide conference each year, giving mediators and arbitrators a



Justice Jorge Labarga chairs the Florida Court Education Council.

chance to earn continuing education credits in mediator ethics, cultural diversity, domestic violence education, and other topics of relevance to their practice. Elsewhere in this annual report, readers can learn more about these endeavors.



This section, however, 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 sustains these ventures. Chaired by Justice Jorge Labarga and vice-chaired by Judge Mark Shames, Sixth Circuit, the council, with the support of two OSCA units—the Court Education Section and the Publications Unit—offers continuing education through live programs, both statewide and local, and through distance learning events, 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 have to satisfy additional requirements. Each year, the council works with the leaders of the various Florida judicial conferences and colleges to ensure that judges 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 make sure its respective judges are able to satisfy their continuing education mandate. Through representation on the FCEC, each conference helps to develop educational policy, and each conference, with the assistance of OSCA's Court Education Section, also coordinates its own live education programs every year. Although budgetary constraints curtailed some of the live programs in the 2011 – 12 fiscal year, the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida and the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges were able to offer their annual education programs in summer 2011 (both had record attendance: 293 county judges and 496 circuit judges attended their respective programs). And the Florida Conference of District Court of Appeal judges held its annual education program last fall; at the same time and place, the appellate clerks and marshals held their annual education program.



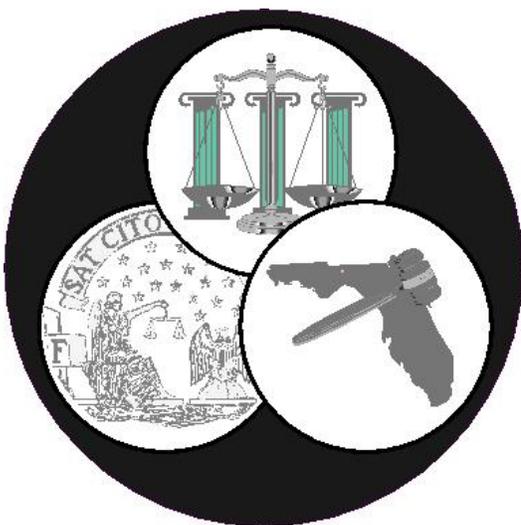
This year's Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies had a record number of attendees: over 300 judges, magistrates, and child support enforcement hearing officers participated. Pictured here are some of the judges who are attending a session entitled Probate Potpourri.

Moreover, the Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies was given authorization to take place this year (fiscal woes forced its cancellation last year). The June program had a record number of attendees: 303 judges, magistrates, and child support enforcement hearing officers participated, as did four German judges who attended (at their own expense) as observers. Additional FCEC-sponsored programs included the DUI Traffic Adjudication Lab, offered last winter, and, with the support of the OSCA's Publications Unit, a distance learning course for bar referees in which more than 90 judges participated. Also available to judges was a series of National Judicial College webcasts on a host of legal topics.

New judges were also able to participate in education programs developed to address their specific needs. During their first year of judicial service, trial court judges who are new to the bench are required to complete the Florida Judicial College, an intensive, two-phase, 10-day program (beginning in fiscal year 2012 – 13, all new magistrates and hearing officers will be required to attend both phases of the Florida Judicial College as well). The first phase, a pre-bench program in January, explores the art and science of judging through a series of orientation sessions, a mock trial experience, and a trial skills workshop; the second phase, two months later, focuses on more substantive and procedural matters. Also, for judges new to the appellate bench, the New Appellate Judges Program was offered this spring.

In order to be able to meet the demands of offering hundreds of hours of continuing judicial education instruction each year, court education leaders rely substantially on the time and dedication of a roster of judges who generously agree to serve as faculty. Judges who want to teach other judges are required to participate in a faculty training course that, in a small-group setting (trainings are typically capped at 16 participants), introduces them to adult education principles and teaches them how to create participatory

learning activities. In these day-and-a-half-long programs, which are offered at least once each year, judges learn how to do a needs assessment, create learning objectives, team teach, reach different kinds of learners, and plan a successful course. And they have the opportunity to work with some of the court system's most experienced and gifted judicial faculty, who share practical and anecdotal tips about what works well and what is likely to miss the mark. Last winter, the FCEC sponsored a Faculty Training Specialty Program, and it also offered its first Florida Judicial College Graduate Faculty Training—a faculty enrichment event designed for teachers of the second phase of the new judges program. Through supporting regular faculty trainings and enrichment courses, the FCEC demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that its education programs are needs-based, student-driven, and worthwhile and that its faculty are meaningfully responding to the needs of the learners.



Education for Court Personnel

Like judges, court personnel should “have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve and perform at the highest professional levels,” Long-Range Issue #3 advises. To meet this goal, the FCEC, through its Florida Court Personnel Committee and with the support of OSCA’s Court Education Section, continues to develop and promote education and training opportunities for the employees who work in Florida’s court system.

Efforts to build a fruitful education program for court personnel began in 2006, when the FCEC hired a consultant to perform an education needs assessment of six categories of court personnel and to make recommendations about their training needs and the most effective methods for addressing them. Not long after, the council established the Florida Court Personnel Committee, chaired by Judge Kathleen Kroll, Fifteenth Circuit, to create a blueprint for meeting these educational needs. For the last four years, the FCEC has been providing funding and support for numerous statewide educational initiatives for court personnel groups, and local courts and personnel groups have also been granted funding assistance for education programs that they have developed.

In fiscal year 2011 – 12, the council provided some funding for two statewide programs: one for the Judicial Assistants Association of Florida and one for the Florida Trial Court Staff Attorneys Association. The FCEC also awarded support for training programs in eight circuits. These local programs covered a wide range of topics, among them, preventing harassment, managerial training, customer service, communicating effectively in a court environment, court performance measurement, diversity and cultural awareness, and a labor and employment law update.

In addition, in February, the FCEC significantly augmented its educational programming efforts with its launch of the Florida Court Personnel Institute: a three-track, day-and-a-half-long program tailored specifically to the needs of court employees. Organized around the theme of Communications and Interpersonal Skills, the institute brought together 87 court employees from across the state, representing most all areas of court personnel employment. Altogether, 31 court staff participated in the first track, Fundamentals for Court Leads and Seniors, which delved into administrative and management topics; 44 participated in the second track, which comprised sessions on Communications and Interpersonal Skills, Everyday Ethics for Court Personnel, and Handling Challenging Situations; and 12 were enrolled in the third track, a Train the Trainer program that taught participants how to train others to become instructors. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: court personnel relished the chance to meet and share ideas with their counterparts around the state, and they appreciated this opportunity to enhance their professionalism.



Altogether, 87 people attended the inaugural Florida Court Personnel Institute, a three-track, day-and-a-half-long program tailored specifically to the needs of court employees. Pictured here are participants in the third track, a Train the Trainer program that teaches participants how to train others to become instructors.

Funding permitting, the FCEC aims to make the institute an annual event; the Florida Court Personnel Committee is already planning for the 2012 – 13 institute, which it hopes to expand to include 120 court employees this time. Funding has also been awarded to subsidize 11 programs organized by various personnel groups for the 2012 – 13 fiscal year: FCEC funding will support three statewide programs—for judicial assistants, ADA coordinators, and trial court staff attorneys—and eight circuit-based programs, which are offering training on topics like leadership, workplace communication, and ethics.

Together, the Florida Court Personnel Institute and the funding for court personnel groups are designed to be complementary approaches for making education and training opportunities available to the greatest possible number of court employees across Florida.

Publications and Other Self-Learning Resources

To supplement the scope of training and educational offerings for judges and court employees, Long-Range Issue #3 recommends that the branch expand its collection of self-learning resources and electronic/online tools. To achieve this goal, the FCEC supported judicial and staff efforts to develop new court education publications, update existing ones, and enlarge the online Court Education Resource Library.

The FCEC's Publications Committee, with the assistance of OSCA's Publications Unit, worked tirelessly to update and to add to its catalog of online publications. The committee's most recent publication is 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 addresses 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 people with spoken language interpreters; and interpreters for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Fifteen court employees attended a Florida Court Personnel Faculty Training at the supreme court last June. Here, instructor Rose Patterson, chief of OSCA's Office of Court Improvement, gives tips on assessing learner needs.



In addition, the Publications Committee updated the following: the *Judicial Administration Benchguide*, the *Contempt Benchguide*, *An Aid to Understanding Canon 7*, the *Judicial Ethics Benchguide*, the *Fundamentals for Family Court Judges* online program, the Topical Index of the *Opinions of the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee*, and the *Acting as a Bar Referee* course materials. Moreover, on a quarterly basis, the committee continued to produce its cumulative and indexed *Domestic Violence Case Law Summaries* and its *Traffic-Related Appellate Opinion Summaries*.

Ongoing Publications Committee projects include a general magistrates manual (a judge's guide on the practices, procedures, and appropriate use of magistrates and hearing officers) and a *New Employee Manual* (staff are working with OSCA's Personnel Services Section on this guide; though created for OSCA staff, it is being designed to serve as a template for circuits and DCAs that want to create their own employee manual). The committee is also updating its *Pandemic Influenza Benchguide*, its *Criminal Benchguide for Circuit Judges*, its *Fundamentals Manual for Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officers*, and the *Small Claims Benchguide* developed by Judge Peter Evans, Palm Beach County.

In addition, for many of its benchguides, the committee has recently hyperlinked the Florida statutes, Florida rules of court, Florida Administrative Code, some Florida Supreme Court opinions, and federal regulations. It has also hyperlinked most of the Florida legal citations found in the benchguides. This hyperlinking is certainly expediting the benchguide user's research. Finally, the Court Education Resource Library continues to flower, providing links to myriad publications and other materials prepared by the Publications Committee as well as various OSCA units; materials from live court education programs and other educational events; and useful articles, curricula, handbooks, and reports from other state and national organizations. The Publications Committee has been actively promoting the use of the resource library through articles in the state courts system newsletter, email announcements, handouts at various court committee meetings, and information pages included in court education program materials. The committee is also adapting a subscription service that will significantly enhance efforts to promote the branch's online resources.

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.” These are the words that introduce Long-Range Issue #4, and they are immediately succeeded by the constitutional imperative that “The courts shall be open to every person for redress of any injury, and justice shall be administered without sale, denial or delay.” “Inherent in this mandate,” the long-range plan continues, “is the precept that our courts are neutral bodies that will interpret the law fairly, and will ensure equal treatment of all parties.”

The very next paragraph, however, acknowledges that “There are obstacles that litigants face...in seeking access to the courts.” Among the impediments to which the long-range plan calls attention are cultural and attitudinal biases, language and communication hurdles, and physical and electronic obstructions.

The judicial branch is committed to actively identifying and ameliorating the barriers that exist: through its endeavors to promote diversity awareness, expand the pool of qualified court interpreters, and facilitate architectural and electronic access for people with disabilities—and through its actions to keep the courthouse doors open, even in emergencies—the judicial branch aspires to provide all people with meaningful access to Florida's courts and to treat all people fairly and respectfully.

Emergency Preparedness

At the most fundamental level, court access is a reality only when the courthouse doors are open and the courts are operational. If a court must be shut down in response to a disaster of any sort—whether it be nature-inflicted or human-generated—then court access, and thus justice, are denied.

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, catalyzed the development of branch-wide policies and procedures for anticipating and managing court emergencies. Within two months of the terrorist attacks, then Chief Justice Charles Wells created the Work Group on Emergency Preparedness, directing it to “develop a plan for the State Courts System to better respond to emergency situations.” The workgroup was given 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.

Since then, 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 has designated an emergency coordinating officer, a court emergency management team, and a public information officer. In addition, the court system established a Unified Supreme Court/Branch Court Emergency Management Group that recommends policy for, prepares for, and responds to emergencies both in the supreme court building and in courts across the state. Finally, the judicial branch has opened lines of



The Unified Supreme Court/Branch Court Emergency Management Group recommends policy for, prepares for, and responds to emergencies both in the supreme court building and in courts across the state.

communication with executive branch agencies as well as with local and statewide emergency management and first responder agencies in order to expedite responses to threats and emergencies as well as to foster the coordination of resources. The emergency preparedness measures that Florida's courts have instituted since 9/11 have been nationally recognized as a model of teamwork and intergovernmental collaboration.

Emergency management means being prepared both for nature-made exigencies (tropical storms, hurricanes, tornados, floods, pandemics, and the like) as well as for human-made disasters (oil spills, biohazards, extended information systems outages, and military or terrorist attack-related incidents, for instance). Not surprisingly, the emergencies that afflict Florida tend to be weather-inspired (indeed, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Florida is the most hurricane-prone state in the country; historically, 40 percent of the hurricanes that have struck the US hit the Sunshine State).

This year, as a result of Tropical Storms Debby and Isaac, for the first time since the disastrous 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, numerous Florida courts had to close (in most cases, for no more than two or three days), and some had to activate their continuity of operations plans. Court emergency management team members understand that the continuity of operations

plan is an ever-evolving document, and they treat occasions like these as opportunities to review their plan and make any necessary adjustments to ensure that their court is prepared to respond to emergencies, recover from them, and mitigate against their impacts. These modifications also equip them to provide critical services in an environment that is threatened, diminished, or incapacitated.

The court system is serious about its responsibility to keep updating and improving its emergency preparedness plans and to remember the important lessons learned from its earlier hurricane disasters: the need for a branch-wide emergency plan; the need for unambiguous, on-the-ground leadership before, during, and after an emergency; the need for a reliable means of communication when power is lost, telephone services are discontinued, and cell phone service is either non-existent or unreliable; and the need for cooperation among all the stakeholders. Even in halcyon days of peace and mild weather, the branch continues its efforts to prepare Florida's courts to respond deliberately to any crisis.

Fairness and Diversity Awareness

"Florida's courts will treat all people fairly and with respect," Long-Range Issue #4 emphasizes in one of its three goals. Ultimately, the judicial branch seeks to create an environment that is free of bias—one in which judges, court personnel, attorneys, and litigants treat each other with courtesy, dignity, and impartiality.

Since the 1980s, the supreme court has created several diversity committees to help it work toward this goal: the Gender Bias Study Commission in 1987; the Racial and Ethnic Bias Study Commission in 1989; the Committee on the Court-Related Needs of Elders and Persons with Disabilities in the early 90s; and the Commission on Fairness in 1997. More recently, in 2004, the court established the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity "to advance the State Courts System's efforts to eliminate from court operations bias that is based on race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, financial status, or any characteristic that is without legal relevance."

During the course of its four two-year terms—the first half, chaired by Judge Gill Freeman, and the second half, chaired by Judge Scott Bernstein, both of the Eleventh Circuit—the committee scored some significant achievements: it created an online court diversity information resource center; produced a report on *Promoting and Ensuring the Diversity of Judicial Staff Attorneys and Law Clerks* and has been implementing its recommendations; coordinated, and prepared a report on the findings of, a comprehensive outreach project on *Perceptions of Fairness in the Florida Court System*; supported the provision of local diversity and sensitivity awareness programs for judges and court staff; established 26 diversity teams (one for each circuit court and DCA and one for the supreme court/OSCA)

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to bolster court-wide education programs as well as outreach and public education efforts; coordinated the development of a court-specific survey instrument for evaluating all state court facilities to determine their accessibility to people with disabilities; sparked the development of local initiatives to strengthen court-community relationships; produced practical educational materials to help judges, court staff, and lawyers recognize, respond to, and understand their role in eliminating bias in the courtroom; and worked with the Florida Court Education Council to identify and recommend resources for implementing fairness and diversity training for judges and court personnel at the local and state levels. ([This link goes to the branch's Fairness and Diversity Resource Center.](#))

In the 2011 – 12 fiscal year, despite the enduring fiscal constraints, the standing committee continued to work with the trial courts and DCAs, as well as with the voluntary bar associations, to support local initiatives that value differences and celebrate diversity and to offer local court diversity and sensitivity awareness education programs—particularly important now that, since January 1, 2012, approved courses in fairness and diversity training can be used to fulfill the four-hour ethics requirement that judges must satisfy every three years. The standing committee also facilitated networking relationships between the diversity teams and their local and voluntary bar associations, yielding grant-funding opportunities that subsidized diversity trainings as well as various initiatives and programs that encourage diversity.

In addition, to develop, implement, and enhance diversity programs and opportunities within the legal profession, members of the standing committee actively participated in numerous events hosted by The Florida Bar, Florida law schools, local bar associations, and other law-related organizations. Members also did outreach to Florida law schools and law student representatives to lay the groundwork for presenting workshops together on fairness and diversity topics. Moreover, standing committee members made a host of presentations on, and participated in a profusion of fairness and diversity activities dedicated to, eliminating bias from the justice system.



Eleventh Circuit Judge Scott Bernstein chairs the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity.

In his end-of-term report, Judge Bernstein asserted that “The courts continue to make enormous strides on matters of fairness and diversity.” Nonetheless, he noted, “There are a number of activities that might be undertaken to continue advancing the State Courts System’s efforts to eliminate bias from court operations.” Given the enduring financial challenges, he limited his suggestions to “practical and realistic recommendations” for the 2012 – 14 term. Specifically, he recommended that the standing committee be reauthorized; that it continue to encourage and support continuous learning and development on fairness and diversity topics—both with an internal focus (to ensure that all judges and court staff have opportunities to participate in fairness and diversity education programs) and with an external focus (to fortify the committee’s prior outreach efforts—with the goal of building education networks and developing partnership and collaboration opportunities); and that it develop a plan, for consideration by the supreme court, for reassessing perceptions of fairness and diversity in Florida’s court system.

In a July 2012 administrative order, the chief justice re-authorized the standing committee and enumerated its new responsibilities; Judge Bernstein will continue to serve as chair for the next two years. ([Take this link to the 2012 administrative order.](#))

Court Interpreters Program

Along with California, Texas, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois, Florida is one of six traditional “immigration states.” Together, these states are home to nearly 70 percent of all foreign-born people in the country. According to the most recent US Census figures, 19.2 percent of Florida’s household population is foreign born; 26.6 percent of Floridians speak a language other than English at home.

The judicial branch recognizes that language barriers can obstruct a party’s ability to participate effectively in court processes, and the long-range plan gives voice to 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. Our system of jurisprudence may be unfamiliar to citizens from other nations, and may present a level of complexity that is intimidating and frustrating,” observes the introduction to Long-Range Issue #4. In fiscal year 2011 – 12, the branch made significant progress in its efforts to reduce the

effect of language barriers to Florida’s courts: it devised new strategies for ensuring that Florida’s court interpreters perform at the highest professional levels; it produced a benchguide for judges and court staff who handle cases involving spoken and sign language interpreters; and it adopted operational standards and best practices for court interpreter services.

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. Chaired by Judge Ronald Ficarrotta, Thirteenth Circuit, the board is responsible for certifying, regulating, and disciplining court interpreters as well as for suspending and revoking certification. For its first major project, the board developed and implemented comprehensive certification guidelines; since July 2008, judges have been required, whenever possible, to appoint certified or duly qualified court interpreters for people with limited English proficiency.



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

To ensure that Florida’s courts have an adequate pool of capable and dexterous certified court interpreters, 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. Therefore, after focusing on certification guidelines, the board turned its attention to developing continuing education requirements that specify what interpreters must know to maintain certification and to earn continuing education credits as well as what continuing education providers must know to apply for program approval.

Continuing education was phased in on July 1, 2010—in time for members of the first “class” of certified court interpreters to renew their certification and begin earning their continuing education credits. Since then, more than three dozen continuing interpreter education programs have been approved. At first, all the programs were being offered by private entities. But, in fiscal year 2011 – 12, several circuits were inspired to create training opportunities

tailored to the specific needs of their court interpreters, and they developed, and got approval to put on, local continuing interpreter education programs, which they offered for free. The Seventh, Ninth, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth Judicial Circuits all designed their own programs, covering topics as diverse as juvenile delinquency, dependency, child support and family law, court interpreter ethics, and remote interpreting. [\(This link goes to the approved continuing interpreter education programs.\)](#)

This broad base of continuing education initiatives gives interpreters the chance to reinvigorate their knowledge, skills, and abilities; helps them carry out their duties fairly and efficiently; and supports their efforts to achieve the peak of personal and professional conduct.

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The judicial branch has also been working to create educational resources for judicial officers and court staff involved in Florida cases involving spoken language and sign language interpreters. One such resource is *The Florida Benchguide on Court Interpreting*. Published in January 2012 by the Publications Committee of the Florida Court Education Council, this benchguide focuses on 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 court interpreting services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In addition to supporting the development of educational opportunities and resources, the supreme court recently approved a variety of recommendations designed to “ensure the effective, efficient, timely, and uniform provision of court interpreting in Florida’s trial

courts.” In August 2010, the chief justice directed the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability to work on “the development of standards of operation and best practices for the major elements of the trial courts with a specific focus on court interpreting services.” The commission began by compiling an overview of court interpreting services across the state, from which it created circuit profiles; then it drafted a report that features standards of operation, best practices, and other recommendations for court interpreting services. In response to feedback from the trial courts and various stakeholder groups, it revised its report and submitted *Recommendations for the Provision of Court Interpreting Services in Florida’s Trial Courts* to the supreme court in January 2011.

In a December 2011 administrative order, the supreme court, in deference to the current fiscal climate, approved only those general recommendations, operational standards, and best practices that “have no significant fiscal impact and can be accomplished within existing resources.” These approved policies cover a broad range of topics—from pay and education issues to the creation of staffing models and the monitoring of performance to the judge’s responsibilities with regard to using interpreters. The administrative order defers the adoption of the other policies until the fiscal climate is less constrained. In the meantime, the supreme court directed the Trial Court Budget Commission to review court interpreter budgets to ensure that, as funding becomes available, the trial courts have a chance to seek the resources they need to implement those policies that had to be deferred. ([Take this link to the administrative order, which includes the approved policies.](#))

Though each of these measures, the judicial branch underscores its commitment to making sure that Florida’s linguistic minorities are afforded equal access in judicial processes.

Court Access for People with Disabilities

The disabilities community includes people with sensory difficulties (people who have low vision or are blind, hard of hearing, or deaf); mobility difficulties; cognitive difficulties (people who have dyslexia, ADHD, a brain injury, or a genetic disability, for instance); self-care difficulties; and independent living difficulties. According to the most recent census figures, 18.7 percent of the US population has some kind of disability—that’s 56.7 million people; in Florida, approximately one in five people has a disability. Moreover, since the nation’s population is aging, and since the risk of having one or multiple disabilities increases with successively older age groups, the number of people with disabilities is expected to increase in the coming years—of particular note to Florida, where 17.4 percent of the population is currently 65 or more. To ensure meaningful access to justice for all people, Long-Range Issue #4 urges the judicial branch to continue its endeavors to minimize the effects of physical and communication barriers to Florida’s courts.

Since the 1990 enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, each circuit and appellate court in Florida has designated at least one ADA coordinator to ensure that people with disabilities can effectively participate in court processes. Efforts were significantly galvanized in 2006, when then Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis, concerned about architectural barriers that hinder court access, appointed a Court Accessibility Subcommittee to oversee a multi-year,



This year, the Seventeenth Circuit hosted a Leadership Center for Independent Living program at its central courthouse; participating in this “teach and learn event” were 13 people with physical disabilities who are trying to make a leadership impact in their communities.

branch-wide court accessibility initiative. Subcommittee members developed a courts-specific survey instrument to identify architectural barriers in public areas of court facilities, worked with chief judges to create a Court Accessibility Team in each circuit and DCA, and provided regional training sessions to teach team members how to survey and evaluate their court facilities. After completing the survey, each team created a transition plan that identified its court's barriers, devised measures for addressing the problems, and determined who would be responsible for correcting the problems. Over the last few years, even with curbed funding at the state and local levels, Florida's courts have successfully eliminated many of the physical barriers that impeded access to justice.

While reducing architectural barriers, the judicial branch has also been working to eradicate impediments to electronic access. As an entity covered by Title II of the ADA, state courts are required by federal law to ensure equal access to all of their services, programs, and activities—and that means that communications via electronic information and information technologies must also be accessible to people with disabilities. Both the introduction of new technologies and the budget crisis of recent years have impelled the courts to rely more extensively on making information and services available online—energizing ADA coordinators to work with court technology staff to make their web-based communications as effective and accessible for people with disabilities as they are for others.

In the 2011 – 12 fiscal year, Florida's supreme court reinforced the mandate that all judicial branch entities ensure the accessibility of their electronic documents. In a September 2011 per curiam opinion, the court announced its adoption of Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.526, Accessibility of Information and Technology, stating, "We adopt new rule 2.526 to require any electronically transmitted document that is or will become a 'judicial branch record,' to be formatted in compliance with state and federal accessibility requirements. The new rule applies to all electronically transmitted 'court records' and 'administrative records,' i.e., records made or received in connection with the transaction of official business by any judicial branch entity." (In accordance with state law, Florida's courts currently adhere to the federal Section 508 Standards). This means that all electronic information—e.g., websites, web pages, or web-based enterprises; Word documents; PDF files; spreadsheets; emails; audio, video, and other multi-media presentations; and any other digitally-communicated documents—must be formatted in a way that makes it accessible to people with disabilities, including those who use assistive technologies. ([Take this link to the supreme court's Accessibility of Electronic Information and Information Technologies site.](#))

Since the supreme court adopted Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.526, Accessibility of Information and Technology, all electronic information—e.g., websites, web pages, or web-based enterprises; Word documents; PDF files; spreadsheets; emails; audio, video, and other multi-media presentations; and any other digitally-communicated documents—must be formatted in a way that makes it accessible to people with disabilities, including those who use assistive technologies.

To introduce the new rule and its ramifications to the people who work in the state courts system, the supreme court and OSCA staff hosted a webinar in which hundreds of judges, court technology officers, court managers, ADA coordinators, and court counsel participated from more than 60 sites around the state. Meanwhile, The Florida Bar created an online education program to introduce attorneys to the new procedures and standards for electronically transmitting digitally-accessible documents to Florida's courts. Moreover, on its Enhancing the Accessibility of Electronic Information web page, The Florida Bar is offering a host of information, references, and links to help attorneys comply with disability laws and rules. ([This link goes to The Florida Bar site.](#))

Among other court accessibility initiatives this year was an education program for appellate court marshals on the ADA and employment law, taught by a representative from the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In addition, ADA coordinators across the state continued their custom of bimonthly conference calls to learn about resources available to them, to find out about relevant news and events, to share solutions for challenging ADA-related situations, and to learn about topics of interest from guest presenters. In the 2011 – 12 fiscal year, they welcomed presentations on the newly-adopted Rule of Judicial Administration 2.526, post-traumatic stress disorder and other anxiety disorders, service animals, Florida's Centers for Independent Living, vocational rehabilitation services provided by The Able Trust, and ADA-related bills before the 2012 Florida legislature.

Throughout the year, individual circuits and DCAs continued to enhance their relationships with their local disability communities. This year, the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit deserves particular recognition for its successful hosting of Leadership Center for Independent Living, Broward County. Participating in this day-long, “teach and learn event” in the central courthouse were 13 people with physical disabilities who are trying to make a leadership impact in their communities; the program focused on an overview of the state courts system, ADA compliance in the courts, the differences between state and federal courts, and other government-related topics. The court administrator’s office had never organized an event like this—nor had it ever tested its ADA capabilities so rigorously before. To prepare itself for this program, court administration had a score of issues to consider, e.g., determining which courthouse entrance would best accommodate a large number of wheelchair-users (half the participants were wheelchair-users) and people who are blind; coordinating parking in the garage for the high-top accessible vans; ensuring enough elevators would be available for the simultaneous arrival of a number of people using wheelchairs; establishing a special security screening line; finding a courtroom with enough room for all the wheelchairs—and reconfiguring the furniture to best accommodate the leadership group. The event, called “a complete success,” not only gave the guests a better understanding of the judicial system, but it also gave the hosts some helpful feedback on their accessibility—what is working, what could use improvement. Already, the court administrator’s office and the leadership group are discussing the prospect of future events together.

Finally, court ADA coordinators are looking forward to a two-day, branch-wide, in-person education program, supported with funding from the Florida Court Education Council and coordinated by Ms Debbie Howells, the statewide court ADA coordinator. Scheduled for November 2012, the program, which anticipates more than 40 participants, will focus on topics like What’s New with Title II, Effective Communication in the Courtroom for Persons with Hearing Loss, Video Remote Interpreting, Recent Changes to the Accessible Building Code, Complaints and Grievances and Investigations, and an experiential learning activity called Walk a Mile in My Moccasins. ADA coordinators are thrilled about this program—their first opportunity for a statewide gathering and education event since 2005.

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.

Though each is clearly singular, the five issues that constitute the long-range plan are resonantly linked to and interdependent on one another. Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence falls last, however, because it is, in many ways, the culmination of the issues that come before it: when the judicial branch makes progress in achieving the goals outlined in the first four issues—Strengthening Governance and Independence, Improving the Administration of Justice, Supporting Competence and Quality, and Enhancing Court Access and Services—then it fosters the people’s trust and confidence in their court system.

Thus, the judicial branch seeks to fortify public trust and confidence by pursuing the goals defined in the long-range plan. But it also aims to cultivate that trust and confidence by personifying the core values that inform its vision—that “Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable.”

The branch aims to be *accessible* through its emergency management measures, established to keep the courts open, even in a crisis; through its undertakings to eliminate physical, communication, language, and cultural barriers; and through its embrace of new technologies that facilitate the electronic transmission of court records and ensure that court information is digitally available to the public (see long-range issues #2 and 4).

The branch endeavors to be *fair* through its support of a robust structure for providing judicial education and training, by which means Florida’s judges and court personnel advance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to administer the justice system impartially; through its commitment to initiatives that promote fairness and diversity awareness among judges and court staff; and through its efforts to empower all people to participate meaningfully and effectively in court processes (see long-range issues # 2, 3, and 4).

The branch tries to be *effective* through its dedication to establishing a permanent, stable source of funding; through its support of time-saving, cost-saving alternative dispute resolution methods; through its measures for monitoring performance and managing

its resources; through its spectrum of court improvement initiatives and its expansion of problem-solving dockets; and through its high-quality education and training opportunities that ensure that judges and court personnel can capably carry out the challenging work of the courts (see long-range issues # 1, 2, and 3).

The branch aspires to be *responsive* through its efforts to eradicate impediments to court access (e.g., language barriers, communication hurdles, cultural and attitudinal biases, architectural obstructions, proximity concerns) and through its comprehensive outreach initiatives, currently being implemented to design systems that automate case processing and monitor performance for the trial and appellate courts; to build an infrastructure that will support the seamless integration of e-filing with other automated court processes; and to develop innovative programs and practices associated with family court, drug court, mental health court, and veterans court (see long-range issues #2 and 4).

And the branch strives to be *accountable* through its commitment to engage in strategic planning and sustain its forward-looking vision; through its development of standards for monitoring and measuring court performance; through its implementation of dynamic and quantifiable court improvement initiatives; and through its support of problem-solving dockets, which produce positive outcomes while saving taxpayer dollars (see long-range issues #1 and 2).

The articles that follow underscore some of the additional enterprises that the branch has undertaken to enhance public trust and confidence.

Florida Innocence Commission

One man, given a life sentence for rape/kidnapping, was exonerated after 35 years. Another was exonerated after having spent 14 years on death row—11 months after he passed away from cancer. Over the last few years, as a result of DNA evidence, 13 convictions have been reversed in Florida. Clearly, despite the safeguards inherent in the criminal justice system, people can still be convicted of crimes they did not commit.

Wrongful convictions are expensive in every way: people who are wrongfully convicted lose time, freedom, and opportunities they can never get back; also paying a price are the crime victims, for they are subjected to continued participation in the criminal justice system; wrongful convictions are costly to the taxpayers as well, for they pay for the prosecution, trial, and appeal processes—and the high cost of compensation (in Florida, \$50,000 for each year that a wrongfully convicted person spent in prison). A further cost of wrongful convictions is the erosion of the public's trust and confidence in the justice system. All the while, the real perpetrators remain unpunished, free to continue their lawless behavior.

In July 2010, by administrative order, Chief Justice Canady established the Florida Innocence Commission to identify the common causes of wrongful convictions and to recommend strategies for eliminating or significantly reducing these causes. 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 had 25 members, representing the major constituents of the criminal justice system (judges, legislators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, civil attorneys, law enforcement officers, victim advocates, and legal scholars). Among its tasks, the commission was directed to identify the most common causes of conviction of the innocent; provide a forum for member-wide dialog about each type of cause; identify current Florida law enforcement procedures for each type of cause; and identify potential solutions for eliminating each type of cause. ([This link goes to the administrative order.](#))

Over the course of its term, which ended June 30, 2012, the commission met 13 times. During its two years in existence, the commission identified, scrupulously studied, and extensively discussed five primary causes for wrongful conviction: eyewitness



Lester A. Garringer, Jr., executive director of the Innocence Commission (on left), and Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., chair of the commission (third from left), chat with guest speaker William Cervone, state attorney for the Eighth Circuit, and commission member Bradley King, state attorney for the Fifth Circuit.

misidentification (this is the single greatest cause of wrongful convictions nationwide); false confessions (almost one-fourth of wrongful convictions involve a confession by a defendant who, through DNA evidence, was later excluded as the perpetrator); informants/jailhouse snitches; invalid scientific evidence (experts have demonstrated that certain techniques used to individualize a weapon or an element of a crime scene to a particular defendant are not based on sound scientific principles); and violations of professional responsibility (wrongful convictions have occurred as a result of prosecutorial misconduct; moreover, a review of convictions overturned by DNA testing revealed instances of sleeping, drunk, incompetent, or overburdened defense attorneys).



resources to keep pace with the volume and complexity of the cases before them. Conflict attorneys are currently undercompensated which will eventually lead to serious problems in ensuring that people who appear before the court have competent and adequate representation. If we are to uphold what I consider to be the goal of the justice system, that is to protect the innocent and punish the guilty according to the law, then we must be vigilant in ensuring that our system of justice is appropriately funded.”

In addition to sections on Eyewitness Identification, False Confessions, Law Enforcement Interrogation Techniques, Informants and Jailhouse Snitches, Improper/Invalid Scientific Evidence, Evidence Preservation, Professional Responsibility, and Funding the Criminal Justice System, the report delineates the commission’s recommendations, which include best practices, suggested

amendments to certain criminal rules, statutory changes, new or amended jury instructions, and detailed funding requests. Chief Judge Perry emphasizes that the report offers “a sound number of recommendations...that, if implemented, could lessen the likelihood of individuals enduring wrongful convictions in Florida. ([This link goes to the final report.](#))

While considering the topic of professional responsibility, the Innocence Commission became aware of another significant issue that may lead to wrongful convictions: the underfunding of the criminal justice system in Florida. “Lack of justice system funding leads to due process violations and wrongful convictions,” commission members found.

Education and Outreach

Galvanized by the dismal results of a recent nationwide civics assessment test—particularly in the context of the “daunting economic and policy challenges” this country faces—retired US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor exclaimed, “We need intelligent and engaged citizens....We must equip them by teaching them the knowledge and skills of informed and engaged citizenship.” Included in this learning process is instruction about the judicial branch. To be enlightened and responsible citizens, people must be informed about the courts. For knowledge about the courts tends to promote a more vital appreciation of the judiciary and its role as the guardian of the Constitution, studies have demonstrated.

The judicial branch takes very seriously its responsibility to help educate the public about the purpose and duties of the courts. In creating educational opportunities for learners of all ages, the branch works to foster more active, involved, and mindful citizens who understand the mission of the courts and grasp the fundamental principles of democracy. An added benefit is that these opportunities also help to boost people’s trust and confidence in the courts. This section illustrates some of the branch’s many initiatives to teach people about the justice system.

Judicial Campaign Conduct Forums

The Judicial Campaign Conduct Forums, established in 1998, are typically offered in the spring of election years in every circuit in which there is a contested judicial election. In these 90-minute sessions, judicial candidates learn about the requirements of Canon 7 of the *Code of Judicial Conduct*, which governs political conduct by judges and judicial candidates. The forums focus on the importance of integrity and professionalism among candidates for judicial office, the impact of campaign conduct on public trust and confidence in the justice system, and the sobering consequences of any breaches to the code.

The forums are coordinated by the supreme court, the trial court chief judges, the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee, and the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar. In addition to judicial candidates, the forums are open to campaign managers and their staff, local political party chairs, the presidents of local bar associations, the media, and the public. This year, 11 circuits held forums, which took place on April 26 and 27.

Annual Reporters Workshop

For more than 20 years, the supreme court has been hosting an annual Reporters Workshop, a two-day event designed to teach the basics of legal reporting to journalists who are new to the legal/courts “beat.” 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, attorneys, professors, and seasoned reporters.

The October 2011 workshop included sessions on Media and the State Courts, Now and Then; Judicial Elections and Merit Retention; The Florida Bar and Lawyer Regulation; Journalism in the World of Social Media; Libel Law and Defamation; Public Records; Covering High-Profile Court Cases: State of Florida vs. Casey Anthony; and Covering the Courts: A Candid Discussion with Judges. The public continues to get most of its information about the court system from traditional news sources, and this workshop provides reporters with a helpful introduction to covering justice system issues.



At the 2011 annual Reporters Workshop, David Royse, editor of New Service of Florida (on left), moderated a panel discussion on Covering the Courts, featuring (l – r) Judge Terry Lewis, Second Circuit; Justice Jorge Labarga; and Judge Nikki Ann Clark, First DCA.

Justice Teaching Initiative

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

Currently, 4,000 lawyers and judges have been trained to serve as resources for Justice Teaching, and all of the state’s public schools—as well as 359 of its private schools—have Justice Teaching volunteers. After participating in a Justice Teaching training session, volunteers have access to a plethora of tested, interactive strategies for involving students in energizing exchanges about the justice system and how it affects their lives. ([This link goes to the Justice Teaching website.](#))

Justice Teaching Institute

The Justice Teaching Institute is an annual program that gives 25 secondary school teachers from across the state an opportunity to explore, over a five-day period, the fundamentals of



In 2006, then Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis founded Justice Teaching, a law-related education initiative that aims to pair a legal professional with every elementary, middle, and high school in the state.

the judicial branch. Teachers who wish to participate in this demanding, highly interactive program must undergo a rigorous selection process. The institute was first offered in 1997, when then Chief Justice Gerald Kogan conceptualized it as part of the Florida Supreme Court’s Sesquicentennial Celebration; it is sponsored by the supreme court, subsidized by The Florida Bar Foundation, and coordinated by the Florida Law Related Education Association.

Taught primarily by the seven justices, two “mentor judges” (this year, Judge Michael Genden, Eleventh Circuit, and Judge Jonathan Gerber, Fourth DCA), and Ms Annette Boyd Pitts, executive director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, the institute delves into 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; and the constitutional issues underlying an actual case that is about to be argued before the court. The culmination of the program is the teachers’ own mock oral argument on the very case for which the justices themselves are readying.



Justice James E.C. Perry takes Justice Teaching Institute fellows on a lively “scavenger hunt” through the Florida Constitution.

When teachers return to their classrooms, most of them develop a courts unit for their students. And many facilitate training programs for other teachers at their school. Thus each iteration of the institute has a ripple effect, creating an ever-increasing number of opportunities for students to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the role and functions of the Third Branch. ([Take this link to learn more about the Justice Teaching Institute.](#))

In addition to the wide array of supreme court-based education and outreach initiatives, every circuit and appellate court in the state offers a variety of programs and activities that educate the public about the court system and enhance court-community relationships—endeavors like courthouse tours, citizen guides, Justice Teaching and other school outreach efforts, teen courts, Law Day and Constitution Day activities, moot court competitions, Take Your Child to Work Day, Girls State and Boys State activities, meet your judge programs, speakers bureaus, public opinion surveys, and media outreach efforts.

Visiting the Courts: Oral Arguments and Educational Tours and Programs

Tallahassee residents and guests to the capital city can choose from among a variety of ways to learn about the history and purpose of the state’s highest court and the fundamentals of Florida’s court system.

One of the most riveting ways to learn about the inner workings of the supreme court is to attend oral arguments—a “conversation” between the justices and the attorneys, during which the attorneys clarify the legal reasons for their position and answer questions posed by the justices. Oral arguments are held once a month, generally during the first full week of each month, from August through June. For most cases, arguments last approximately 40 minutes (20 minutes each side), and argument sessions typically comprise four cases. Visitors are welcome to observe oral arguments (the courtroom accommodates up to 165 visitors), and no

appointment is necessary. ([Take this link to the oral argument schedule.](#)) Those who cannot attend oral arguments or who wish to view archived ones can access them online via WFSU's *Gavel to Gavel*. ([This link goes to *Gavel to Gavel*.](#))

Visitors who are interested in learning about the supreme court building and its inhabitants past and present can participate in the Educational Tour Experience, a guided tour that brings the history of the court alive, captivating guests with intriguing facts about the building and the personalities that have animated it over the years. Accommodating groups of all ages—both student and citizen groups—this tour, which lasts 40 – 45 minutes, teaches visitors about the judicial branch, Florida's court system, the differences between trial and appellate courts, and the role of the justices and the appointment and retention processes. Alternatively, visitors who want to explore the building at their own pace can take a self-guided tour. Equipped with informational brochures, they can tour the public areas of the building (courtroom, library, rare book room, lower rotunda, portrait gallery, and lawyer's lounge).

Another supreme court-based educational opportunity is the Mock Oral Argument Experience—which tends to be the favorite activity of the student groups that visit the court. Students spend the first part of the 90-minute program learning about the judicial branch and Florida's court system. Then, led by a staff attorney or trained volunteer, the students—playing the part of justices, attorneys, the clerk, and the marshal—act out an oral argument on an age-appropriate hypothetical case (there are 18 cases from which to choose).

Altogether, in the 2011 – 12 fiscal year, the court led 90 educational tours and guided 95 student groups through the Mock Oral Argument Experience. Between them, the two education programs reached 6,708 participants.

Another popular student-focused activity is Making My Vote Count, designed for seventh grade classes. A joint venture offered by the supreme court, the Historic Old Capitol, and the Museum of Florida History, this educational program teaches students about the consequence and the individual responsibility of voting. Students participate in activities at all three locations, each of which focuses on its unique role in the election process from its branch perspective. Students learn about the history of elections in Florida and the importance of becoming involved, informed, engaged citizens who exercise their voting rights. Make My Vote Count is now transitioning to an online program; as a "virtual field trip" kind of experience, the program will be readily available to student classes across the state.

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. Through participating both in a mock trial and an oral argument, students gain a comprehensive understanding of the court system and Florida's third branch of government. ([Take this link for more information on these educational programs.](#))

Because of the vigor of its education and outreach initiatives, Florida's supreme court was one of 22 state entities and organizations from



Because of the strength of its outreach programs, Florida's supreme court was one of 22 state entities and organizations from across the country that were invited to participate in a Civics Education Fair at the most recent annual program of the Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators. Pictured here is the display the court set up at the fair.

across the country that were invited to participate in a Civics Education Fair at the most recent annual program of the Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators. The goal of the fair was to give the nation’s chief justices and state court administrators an opportunity to learn about the abundance and diversity of civics initiatives flourishing in the US—specifically the efforts to educate the country’s youth and adults about the role of the courts, how they work, and how they make decisions. Florida was singled out in particular for its Making My Vote Count and its Journey Through Justice Programs.



At the recent “Bring Your Child to Work Day,” Justice Barbara Pariente inspires a group of children of OSCA and supreme court employees to consider some constitutional issues that have ramifications for young people.

In addition to these supreme court-based education and outreach initiatives, every circuit and appellate court in the state offers a variety of programs and activities that educate the public about the court system and enhance court-community relationships—endeavors like courthouse tours, citizen guides, Justice Teaching and other school outreach efforts, teen courts, Law Day and Constitution Day activities, moot court competitions, Take Your Child to Work Day, Girls State and Boys State activities, meet your judge programs, speakers bureaus, public opinion surveys, and media outreach efforts. ([Follow this link to learn more about these activities.](#))



Justice Jorge Labarga and Justice Peggy Quince listen to arguments presented at a recent Florida State University College of Law moot court competition.

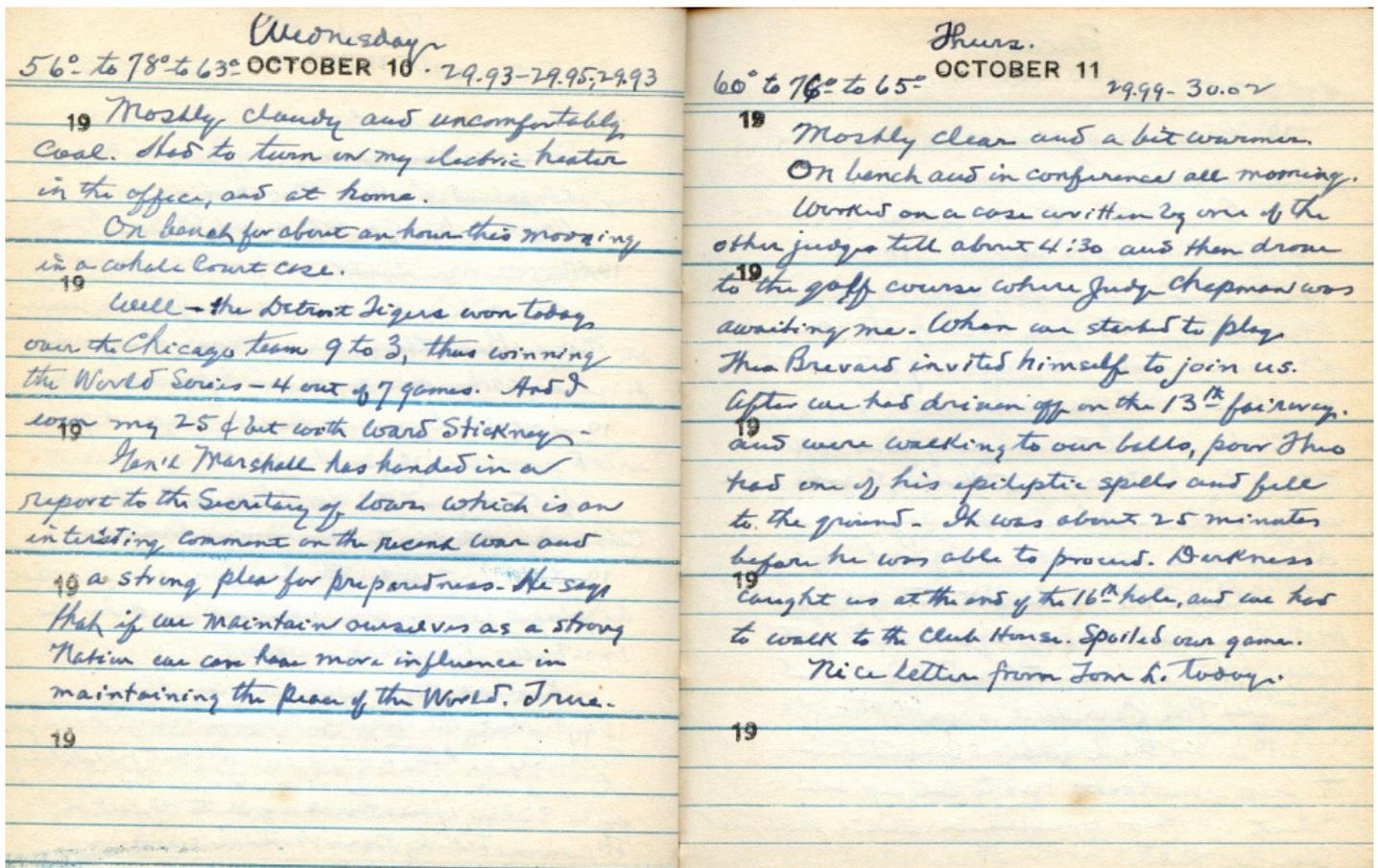
Florida Supreme Court Library

The oldest of Florida's state-supported libraries, the Florida Supreme Court Library was established in 1845. It was originally intended for use by the supreme court and the attorneys practicing before it, but it now serves the entire state courts system. The library also assists the general public and answers calls for support from law firms and other law libraries in the state and around the nation.

The library's print collection includes historical Florida primary legal resources, going back to the state's territorial period, as well as many updated treatises and other legal reference materials. The library has been designated a federal depository library for legal materials published by the Government Printing Office and also has an extensive collection of historical statute law of the United Kingdom and Canada.

Over the fiscal year, library staff created an additional storage area for its archival collections; this new area ensures the safe stewardship and efficient long-term use of these precious holdings. Library staff also inventoried many of the papers of several former justices: the inventory of the office files and opinion files of Justice Leander Shaw (on the supreme court bench from 1983 – 2003) was finished; also inventoried were the office files (both professional and personal papers) of Justice Gerald Kogan (on the bench from 1987 – 1998) and Justice Ben Overton (on the bench from 1974 – 1999); their opinion-related papers are in the process of being cataloged.

In addition, the five personal diaries of former Justice Armstead Brown (on the bench from 1925 – 1946) were transcribed and made available on the library's website. Discovered, preserved, and donated by Tallahassee attorney Julian Proctor, these diaries are a rare and remarkable primary resource that offers insight into the workings of the Florida Supreme Court in the 1940s, the home-front during World War II, and daily life in a considerably younger Tallahassee and Florida. Also captured are the musings of a man



A peek into two of former Justice Armstead Brown's 1945 diary entries reveals descriptions of the weather, some generic references to his work on the bench, a comment about the war, some anecdotes about his golf game, and a few words about the World Series (the Detroit Tigers vs. the Chicago Cubs that year—he was rooting for Detroit).

who contemplated, and reacted quite candidly to, some of his day's most pressing political issues, both national and international. Over the years, former supreme court justices and their families have donated many kinds of papers to the library—work products of the court, administrative papers, professional correspondence, the text of speeches, notes from their work on court committees and commissions, jottings from their work related to the legal profession, and even personal papers on their interests and hobbies. But never before has the library received a former justice's diaries, making this an especially distinguished treasure. After they were transcribed, the diaries—illustrated with photographs of events mentioned in, and quotations taken from, the daily entries—were displayed for several months in the supreme court building's rotunda display cases. ([Take this link 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 legislature, and the executive branch, OSCA's Publications Unit, under the direction of the supreme court, produces the Florida State Courts Annual Report each fall. ([This link goes to the annual reports.](#)) In addition, in the spring, summer, and winter, the Publications Unit 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 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.](#))

Transitions

Passing of the Gavel to Chief Justice Ricky Polston

In keeping with a 1926 constitutional amendment, the seven justices of the Florida Supreme Court select Florida's chief justice, who serves a two-year term. Chief Justice Charles T. Canady began his term as the judicial branch's chief administrative officer on July 1, 2010. On June 27, 2012, he passed the ceremonial gavel to Justice Ricky Polston, who, on July 1 of this year, became the court's fifty-fifth chief justice since Florida achieved statehood in 1845.

Justice Polston opted for a quiet, unassuming swearing-in ceremony in the courtroom: in attendance at the event were his family, his colleagues on the bench, and court staff. After emphasizing that his role is "purely and simply to act as a steward of the people of Florida," the new chief justice began by expressing his appreciation for Justice Canady's leadership: "Justice Canady has succeeded in not only getting appropriations from the legislature, but he also dealt with the cash shortages that we were faced with." He added that his predecessor "was able to steer our courts through extremely difficult times. He obtained the resources we needed even when he had to borrow them, and he remained a faithful steward of the public trust he'd been given."

Of the challenges that Chief Justice Polston anticipates over the next two years, he stressed that budget concerns are still foremost. To provide justice, the court system needs stable, reliable funding, he explained: "It will be most important to make sure the train is running and running on time. To do that, we need budget resources."

Court technology will also continue to be a challenge. Contemplating the various technology projects on which the courts are already headily engaged—among them, e-filing and the numerous initiatives to automate certain trial and appellate court processes

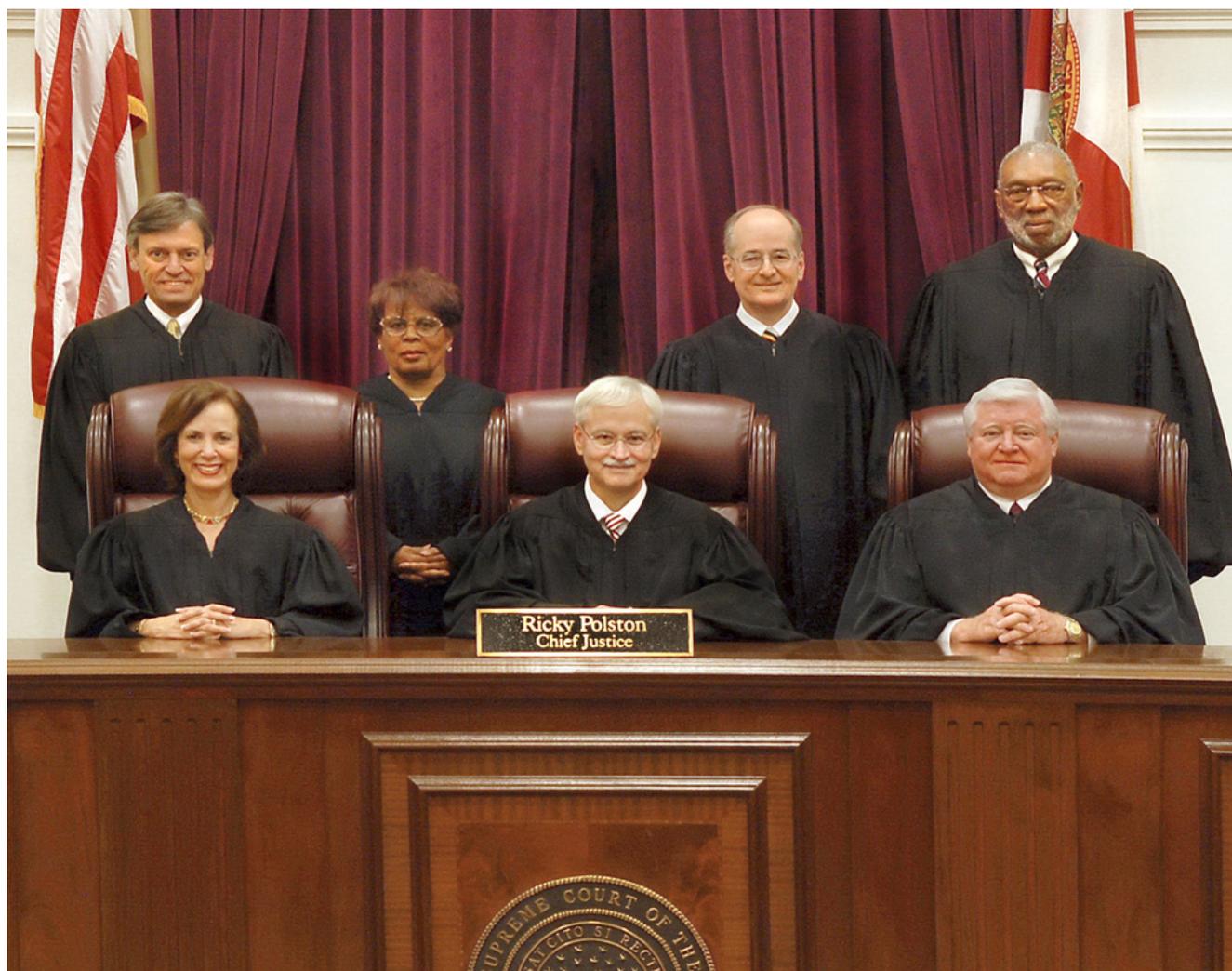


After administering the oath of office at the passing of the gavel ceremony, Chief Justice Charles T. Canady shares a lighter moment with soon-to-be Chief Justice Ricky Polston and his wife, Deborah Ehler Polston.

and services—Chief Justice Polston noted that he aspires “not to roll out new initiatives but to try to complete what we’ve got going on.” He recognizes the importance of bringing these projects to completion because they will significantly enhance the efficiency and accessibility of the courts.

The other challenge to which he called attention is the impending retirement of two longstanding court pillars: Clerk of the Court Tom Hall, who is set to retire in late 2013, and State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner, who will be retiring in late 2014. He spoke about “the huge void that these two very important people in our branch will leave.”

At the end of the ceremony, he circled back to the importance of responsible stewardship, which he described as “a bond of public trust that must flow both in and out of the courts of this state. Without this public trust, confidence in the courts inevitably would be diminished. I’m further committed that during my administration, the courts will be good stewards of the resources we’ve been given and of our mission to provide justice to all who seek redress.” He ended with an appeal to all who sat in the audience: “The challenges to the branch are serious; they are many. But with all of your help—and I’m asking for all of your help—I’m ready to be a faithful steward in this office. I look forward to it.”



On July 1, 2012, Chief Justice Ricky Polston became the fifty-fifth chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court. Seated (l – r) are Justice Pariente, Chief Justice Polston, and Justice Lewis; standing (l – r) are Justice Labarga, Justice Quince, Justice Canady, and Justice Perry.

The Office of the State Courts Administrator Marks Its Fortieth Year

Four decades ago, reforms to Article V of the state constitution, approved by more than two-thirds of Florida voters, brought greater consistency and uniformity to the judicial branch. The ultimate goal of these reforms was to ensure that litigants receive similar treatment under Florida law, regardless of where in the state they live or where their legal matter arose. This 1972 constitutional revision had a striking effect on the judicial branch: ramifications included the reorganization of Florida’s 16 different types of trial courts into a two-tier system of 20 circuit and 67 county courts; the institutionalization of a set of requirements drawn to ensure the qualifications and impartiality of judges; and the requirement that all judges’ salaries be paid by the state rather than by local governments. Because it clarified, streamlined, and consolidated the structure of the trial courts, creating uniform jurisdictions with definite geographic divisions, this Article V rewrite is generally credited with having instigated the process of unifying and shaping what is now known as the Florida State Courts System.



Chief Justice Polston and State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner at OSCA’s fortieth anniversary celebration.

In addition to initiating structural unification, these reforms also established a sturdy administrative framework for the court system, laying out clear lines of administrative authority and responsibility in the judicial branch. Specifically, the reforms designated the chief justice as the chief administrative officer of the entire court system, and they created the position of chief judge, making him/her responsible for the administrative supervision of his/her court.



Deputy State Courts Administrator Blan Teagle (left) and Community and Intergovernmental Relations Director Eric Maclure facilitate the “Touchstones in Time” feature of the fortieth anniversary program.

Even in 1972, in a version of Florida that was far less complex and sophisticated than it is today, the spectrum of the branch’s administrative duties was vast—far greater than a single sitting member of the state’s highest court could accomplish alone. Therefore, to support the chief justice in carrying out these responsibilities, the supreme court created the position of the state courts administrator (historically, many state supreme courts were recognizing the need for professional court management at about the same time; by 1977, the office had been established in 46 states).

At first, the state courts administrator’s office was charged with handling administrative matters for the appellate courts and developing a uniform case reporting system to capture information about activities of the judiciary. Over time, the duties of the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) expanded to include budgetary, intergovernmental, statistical, technological, educational, programmatic, and legal responsibilities related to the operations of, as well as ministerial duties for, the entire state courts system.

This year, OSCA marked its fortieth year of service to Florida’s State Courts, and, to commemorate the occasion, the office coordinated a special program to which all OSCA employees, past and present, were invited. Coming from all across Florida, close to 200 people attended the event, held in the supreme court courtroom last July. The program included a welcome and remarks by State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner; an overview of the 40 years of Florida state courts administration, with personal reflections by several judges who work closely with OSCA staff as well as by numerous former and current OSCA employees; a “Remember When...(Touchstones in Time)” game, replete with an option-finder for each audience member, that tested everyone’s knowledge of court and OSCA history—as well as people’s popular culture IQ—from the 40-year stretch; and remarks, and the presentation of a proclamation, by Chief Justice Ricky Polston.

The program concluded with cake and punch in the rotunda—and the opportunity for these colleagues and friends of many years to mingle, reminisce, and reflect on the resonance of Ms Goodner’s words: “What we have in common is a passion for justice. We could have taken other jobs and perhaps be rich by now, but we chose service to the public and service to Florida’s judicial branch through our work with the Office of the State Courts Administrator...”



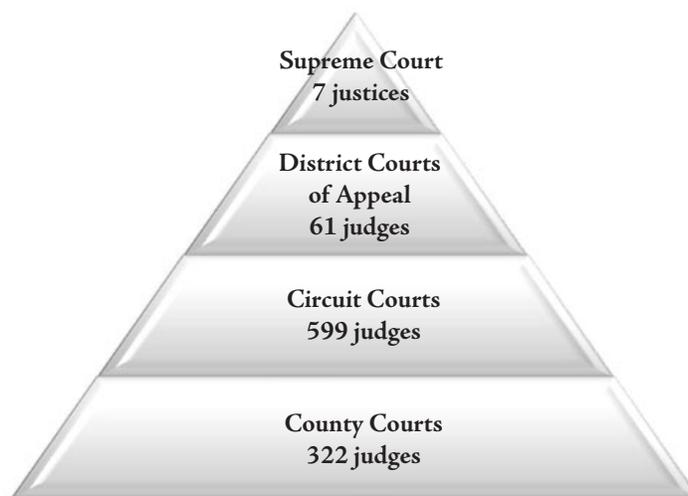
Current OSCA staff pose for a photo in the supreme court courtroom before the fortieth anniversary program begins.

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 and including \$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 courts 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 and produces administrative and judicial education publications; and provides technical support for the trial and appellate courts, including support for the state-funded computer infrastructure of Florida's courts system. For more information about OSCA, visit the Florida State Courts website at <http://www.flcourts.org/>



State Courts Administrator Elisabeth H. Goodner.

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.

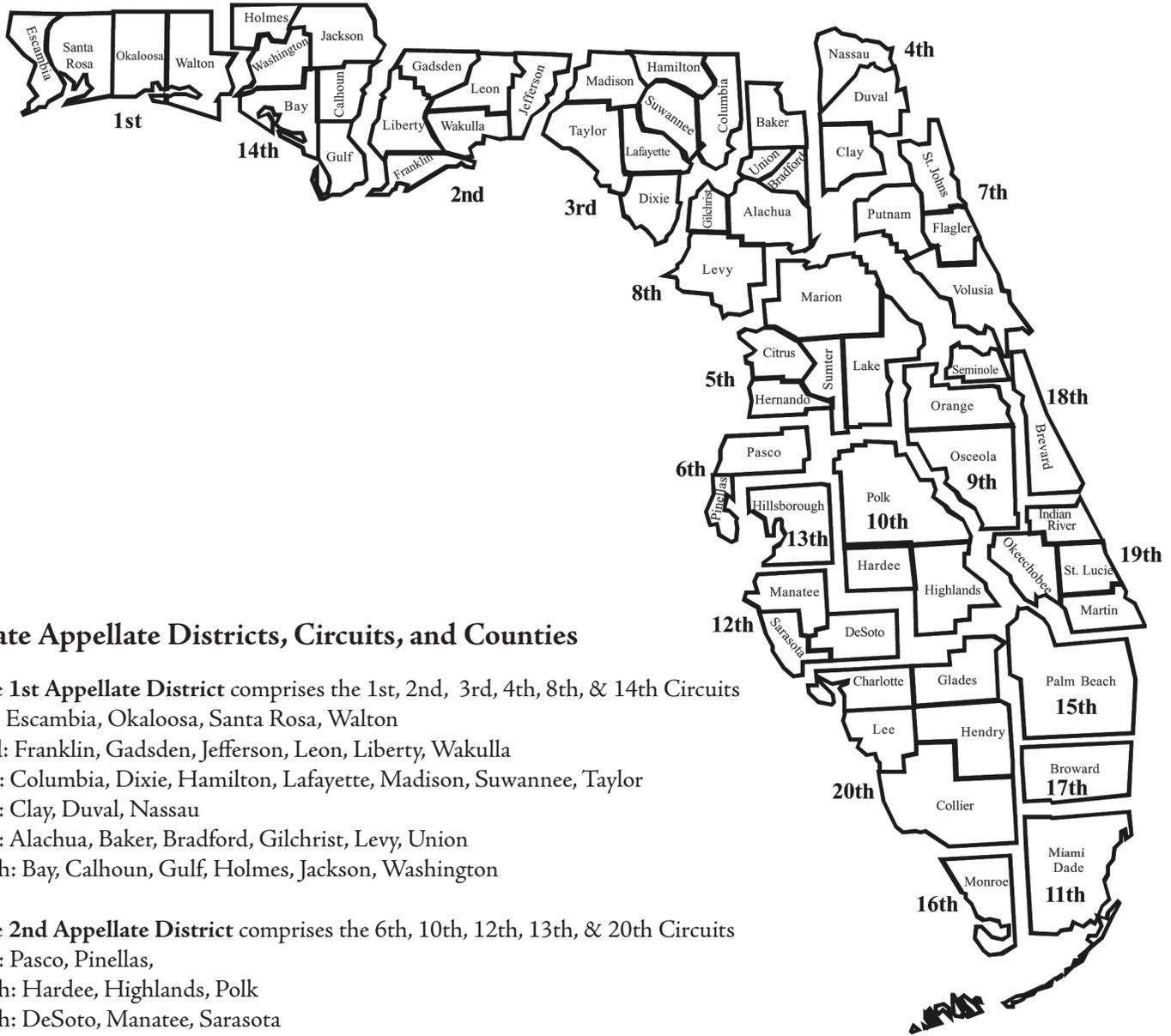
Trial court administrators have multiple responsibilities. They manage judicial operations such as courtroom scheduling, facilities management, caseflow policy, ADA policy, statistical analysis, inter-branch and intergovernmental relations, technology planning, jury oversight, public information, and 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.

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
2003	3	2	0	0%	62
2004	4	4	0	0%	62
2005	2	2	0	0%	62
2006	2	2	0	0%	62
2007	2	2	0	0%	62
2008	-1	-1	-1	n/a	61
2009	0	0	0	n/a	61
2010	1	0	0	n/a	61
2011	0	0	0	n/a	61
2012	2	1	0	n/a	61

Circuit

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
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
2012	31	23	0	0%	599

County

Session Year	Requested	Certified	Authorized	% Authorized (of those certified)	Total
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
2012	49	48	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.

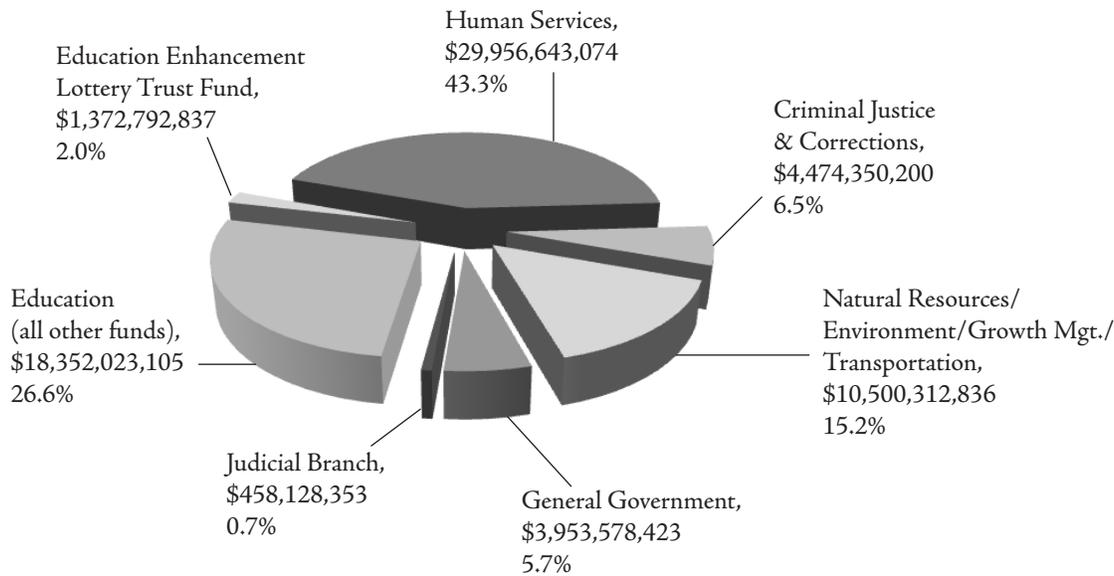
The need for additional judgeships remains high for several reasons: an absence of funding for previously certified judgeships, overall increases in judicial workload, and fewer support staff. If judicial workload continues to exceed capacity and the judicial need deficit is not addressed, likely consequences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

In a December 2011 opinion, the Florida Supreme Court certified the need for one additional DCA judge, 23 additional circuit judges, and 48 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

2011-2012 Fiscal Year Appropriations

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



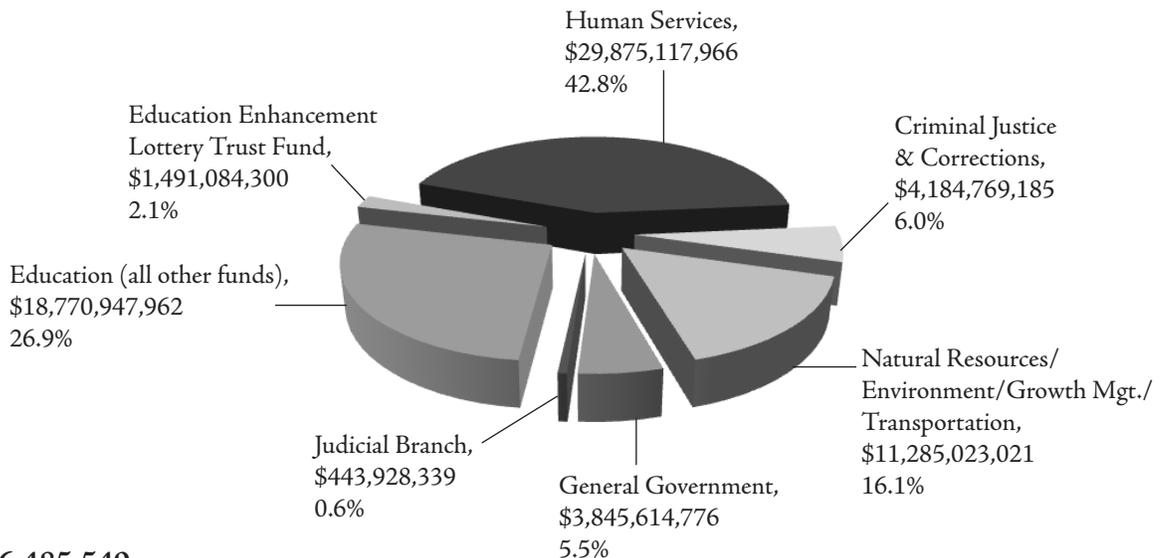
Total: \$69,067,828,828

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

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

2012-2013 Fiscal Year Appropriations

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



Total: \$69,896,485,549

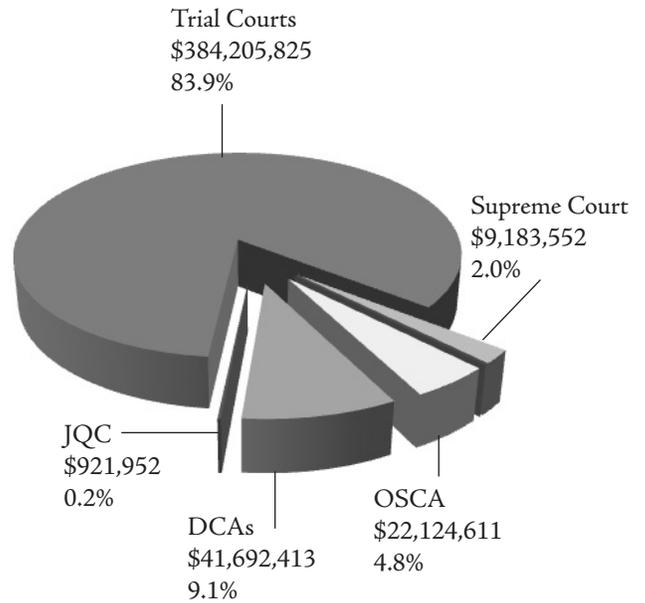
Note: This total includes those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, HB 5001, less vetoes.

STATE COURTS SYSTEM APPROPRIATIONS

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

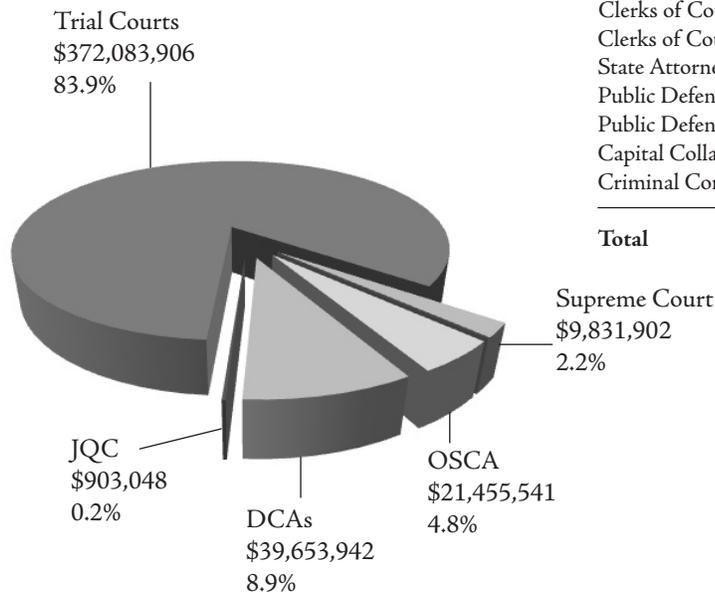
This total reflects those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, SB 2000, less vetoes.

Note: This total was reduced to **\$436,907,598** to reflect legislatively-approved adjustments (including the 3% mandatory pay reduction for employee contributions to the pension plan).

Justice System Appropriations 2012-2013 Fiscal Year

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

State Courts System	\$443,928,339
Justice Administration Executive Direction	\$86,759,552
Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Program	\$31,977,177
Clerks of Court	\$415,880,312
Clerks of Court Operations Corporation	\$1,614,884
State Attorneys	\$384,417,104
Public Defenders Judicial Circuit	\$184,520,895
Public Defenders Appellate	\$12,976,928
Capital Collateral Regional Counsel	\$6,959,070
Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsels	\$36,922,933
Total	\$1,605,957,194



State Courts System Total: 443,928,339

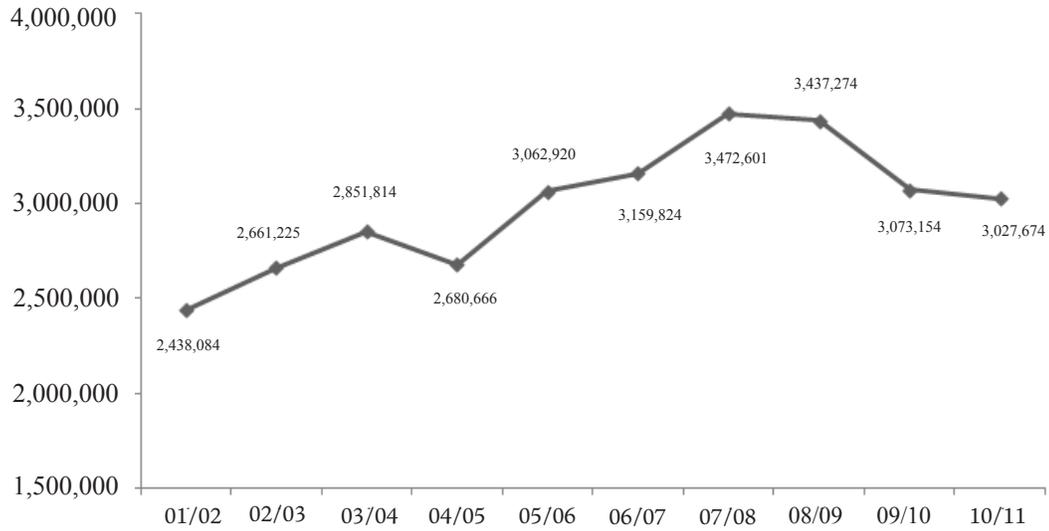
This total includes those issues that were funded in the General Appropriations Act, HB 5001, less vetoes.

FILINGS

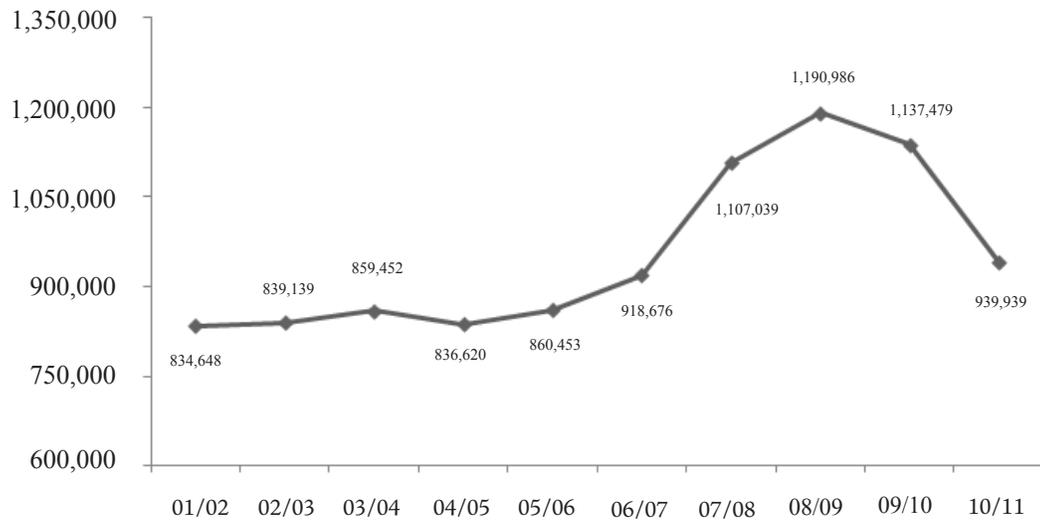
Filings, Florida's Trial Courts FY 2001-02 to 2010-11

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

County Courts



Circuit Courts

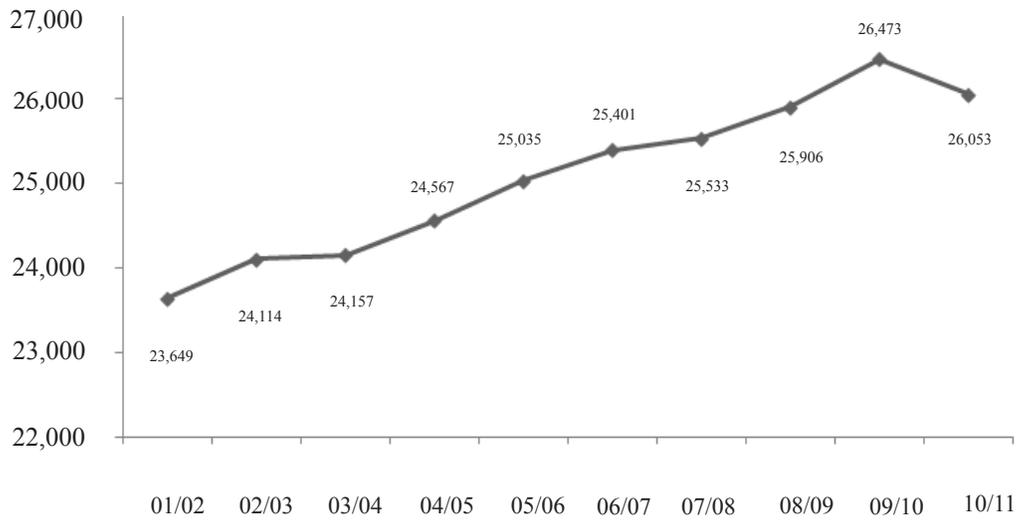


FILINGS

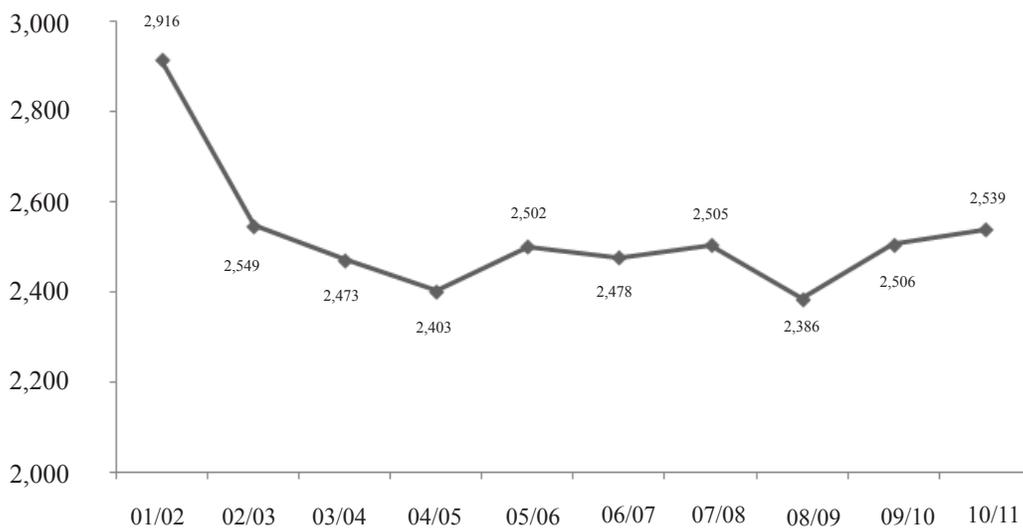
Filings, Florida's Appellate Courts FY 2001-02 to 2010-11

(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 2010-11

(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	1,822
All	Civil	5,911
All	Criminal	9,580
All	Criminal Post Conviction*	5,634
All	Family	1,338
All	Juvenile	1,200
All	Probate/Guardianship	218
All	Workers' Compensation	350
		26,053

DCA	Case Category	Total Filings	DCA	Case Category	Total Filings	DCA	Case Category	Total Filings
1	Administrative	1,234	3	Administrative	172	5	Administrative	82
	Civil	1,254		Civil	1,162		Civil	799
	Criminal	2,437		Criminal	782		Criminal	2,040
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,146		Criminal Post Conviction*	800		Criminal Post Conviction*	1,035
	Family	238		Family	181		Family	270
	Juvenile	188		Juvenile	296		Juvenile	185
	Probate/Guardianship	39		Probate/Guardianship	60		Probate/Guardianship	20
	Workers' Compensation	350						
		6,886			3,453			4,431
						Total		26,053
2	Administrative	102	4	Administrative	232			
	Civil	1,209		Civil	1,487			
	Criminal	2,583		Criminal	1,738			
	Criminal Post Conviction*	1,698		Criminal Post Conviction*	955			
	Family	292		Family	357			
	Juvenile	351		Juvenile	180			
	Probate/Guardianship	45		Probate/Guardianship	54			
		6,280			5,003			

TRIAL COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT AND DIVISION

FY 2010-11

(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	196,453
All	All	Civil	293,415
All	All	Family Court*	349,222
All	All	Probate	100,849
All	All	County Adult Criminal	888,892
All	All	County Civil**	2,138,782
			3,967,613

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	9,048	8	Adult Criminal	4,762	15	Adult Criminal	8,800
	Civil	7,103		Civil	3,105		Civil	23,008
	Family Court*	16,272		Family Court*	8,252		Family Court*	16,855
	Probate	4,255		Probate	2,118		Probate	7,525
	County Adult Criminal	29,626		County Adult Criminal	21,106		County Adult Criminal	76,050
	County Civil**	26,080		County Civil**	31,166		County Civil**	192,359
	92,384		70,509		324,597			
2	Adult Criminal	4,787	9	Adult Criminal	17,353	16	Adult Criminal	1,421
	Civil	5,060		Civil	24,185		Civil	1,328
	Family Court*	7,291		Family Court*	30,111		Family Court*	1,586
	Probate	3,077		Probate	4,921		Probate	449
	County Adult Criminal	14,841		County Adult Criminal	60,341		County Adult Criminal	4,516
	County Civil**	31,489		County Civil**	142,745		County Civil**	9,450
	66,545		279,656		18,750			
3	Adult Criminal	2,668	10	Adult Criminal	10,182	17	Adult Criminal	16,216
	Civil	1,604		Civil	8,445		Civil	35,462
	Family Court*	4,997		Family Court*	18,034		Family Court*	29,996
	Probate	1,041		Probate	4,467		Probate	8,449
	County Adult Criminal	7,659		County Adult Criminal	36,339		County Adult Criminal	75,008
	County Civil**	11,572		County Civil**	36,135		County Civil**	325,798
	29,541		113,602		490,929			
4	Adult Criminal	11,900	11	Adult Criminal	21,074	18	Adult Criminal	8,987
	Civil	14,929		Civil	48,746		Civil	12,532
	Family Court*	23,967		Family Court*	40,681		Family Court*	15,749
	Probate	4,803		Probate	10,335		Probate	4,714
	County Adult Criminal	60,536		County Adult Criminal	132,393		County Adult Criminal	45,074
	County Civil**	129,985		County Civil**	660,792		County Civil**	69,189
	246,120		914,021		156,245			
5	Adult Criminal	10,991	12	Adult Criminal	6,420	19	Adult Criminal	5,855
	Civil	15,223		Civil	10,145		Civil	8,593
	Family Court*	19,853		Family Court*	13,479		Family Court*	10,208
	Probate	7,037		Probate	5,990		Probate	4,159
	County Adult Criminal	30,961		County Adult Criminal	27,627		County Adult Criminal	22,725
	County Civil**	47,798		County Civil**	40,836		County Civil**	36,629
	131,863		104,497		88,169			
6	Adult Criminal	18,371	13	Adult Criminal	13,197	20	Adult Criminal	9,504
	Civil	20,101		Civil	18,993		Civil	18,728
	Family Court*	23,366		Family Court*	27,429		Family Court*	17,502
	Probate	8,291		Probate	5,784		Probate	6,485
	County Adult Criminal	61,991		County Adult Criminal	68,205		County Adult Criminal	47,412
	County Civil**	73,058		County Civil**	144,943		County Civil**	60,848
	205,178		278,551		160,479			
7	Adult Criminal	10,237	14	Adult Criminal	4,680	Total	3,967,613	
	Civil	12,647		Civil	3,478			
	Family Court*	16,580		Family Court*	7,014			
	Probate	5,268		Probate	1,681			
	County Adult Criminal	48,841		County Adult Criminal	17,641			
	County Civil**	50,398		County Civil**	17,512			
	143,971		52,006					

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT, COUNTY, & DIVISION

FY 2010-11

(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	4,964	Leon	Adult Criminal	3,276	Madison	Adult Criminal	265
		Civil	2,686		Civil	3,860		Civil	160
		Family Court*	7,965		Family Court*	4,960		Family Court*	370
		Probate	2,549		Probate	2,302		Probate	114
		County Adult Criminal	14,314		County Adult Criminal	9,996		County Adult Criminal	996
		County Civil**	9,654		County Civil**	21,508		County Civil**	1,830
		42,132		45,902		3,735			
	Okaloosa	Adult Criminal	2,128	Liberty	Adult Criminal	101	Suwannee	Adult Criminal	586
		Civil	1,913		Civil	42		Civil	340
		Family Court*	4,213		Family Court*	153		Family Court*	1,295
		Probate	939		Probate	27		Probate	195
		County Adult Criminal	7,422		County Adult Criminal	192		County Adult Criminal	1,159
		County Civil**	8,452		County Civil**	342		County Civil**	1,385
		25,067		857		4,960			
	Santa Rosa	Adult Criminal	1,355	Wakulla	Adult Criminal	345	Taylor	Adult Criminal	333
Civil		1,290	Civil		390	Civil		154	
Family Court*		2,981	Family Court*		736	Family Court*		486	
Probate		493	Probate		122	Probate		105	
County Adult Criminal		5,472	County Adult Criminal		981	County Adult Criminal		1,133	
County Civil**		5,030	County Civil**		1,396	County Civil**		1,396	
	16,621		3,970		3,607				
Walton	Adult Criminal	601	3 Columbia	Adult Criminal	1,052	4 Clay	Adult Criminal	1,374	
	Civil	1,214		Civil	657		Civil	2,128	
	Family Court*	1,113		Family Court*	1,915		Family Court*	3,665	
	Probate	274		Probate	434		Probate	587	
	County Adult Criminal	2,418		County Adult Criminal	3,010		County Adult Criminal	7,048	
	County Civil**	2,944		County Civil**	5,021		County Civil**	10,883	
	8,564		12,089		25,685				
2	Franklin	Adult Criminal	211	Dixie	Adult Criminal	194	Duval	Adult Criminal	9,797
		Civil	245		Civil	119		Civil	11,994
		Family Court*	335		Family Court*	390		Family Court*	18,915
		Probate	71		Probate	102		Probate	3,946
		County Adult Criminal	903		County Adult Criminal	544		County Adult Criminal	50,727
		County Civil**	915		County Civil**	891		County Civil**	116,263
		2,680		2,240		211,642			
	Gadsden	Adult Criminal	605	Hamilton	Adult Criminal	170	Nassau	Adult Criminal	729
		Civil	403		Civil	121		Civil	807
		Family Court*	881		Family Court*	352		Family Court*	1,387
		Probate	486		Probate	54		Probate	270
		County Adult Criminal	2,262		County Adult Criminal	630		County Adult Criminal	2,761
		County Civil**	5,681		County Civil**	809		County Civil**	2,839
		10,318		2,136		8,793			
	Jefferson	Adult Criminal	249	Lafayette	Adult Criminal	68	5 Citrus	Adult Criminal	1,049
Civil		120	Civil		53	Civil		2,626	
Family Court*		226	Family Court*		189	Family Court*		3,427	
Probate		69	Probate		37	Probate		1,599	
County Adult Criminal		507	County Adult Criminal		187	County Adult Criminal		4,482	
County Civil**		1,647	County Civil**		240	County Civil**		6,425	
	2,818		774		19,608				

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT, COUNTY, & DIVISION

Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings
Hernando	Adult Criminal	2,306	St. Johns	Adult Criminal	1,481	9 Orange	Adult Criminal	14,208
	Civil	2,867		Civil	2,385		Civil	19,115
	Family Court*	3,559		Family Court*	2,937		Family Court*	22,919
	Probate	1,820		Probate	751		Probate	3,967
	County Adult Criminal	4,936		County Adult Criminal	5,620		County Adult Criminal	48,354
	County Civil**	10,743		County Civil**	10,024		County Civil**	118,158
		26,231			23,198			226,721
Lake	Adult Criminal	2,921	Volusia	Adult Criminal	6,527	Osceola	Adult Criminal	3,145
	Civil	3,901		Civil	8,216		Civil	5,070
	Family Court*	4,917		Family Court*	9,582		Family Court*	7,192
	Probate	1,485		Probate	3,604		Probate	954
	County Adult Criminal	9,075		County Adult Criminal	35,229		County Adult Criminal	11,987
	County Civil**	17,135		County Civil**	34,073		County Civil**	24,587
		39,434			97,231			52,935
Marion	Adult Criminal	4,020	8 Alachua	Adult Criminal	2,862	10 Hardee	Adult Criminal	325
	Civil	4,168		Civil	1,928		Civil	232
	Family Court*	7,056		Family Court*	5,093		Family Court*	586
	Probate	1,781		Probate	1,526		Probate	96
	County Adult Criminal	10,419		County Adult Criminal	15,584		County Adult Criminal	2,041
	County Civil**	11,146		County Civil**	22,572		County Civil**	917
		38,590			49,565			4,197
Sumter	Adult Criminal	695	Baker	Adult Criminal	454	Highlands	Adult Criminal	993
	Civil	1,661		Civil	207		Civil	1,329
	Family Court*	894		Family Court*	688		Family Court*	1,964
	Probate	352		Probate	145		Probate	940
	County Adult Criminal	2,049		County Adult Criminal	1,293		County Adult Criminal	2,938
	County Civil**	2,349		County Civil**	2,461		County Civil**	3,064
		8,000			5,248			11,228
6 Pasco	Adult Criminal	4,716	Bradford	Adult Criminal	484	Polk	Adult Criminal	8,864
	Civil	6,893		Civil	245		Civil	6,884
	Family Court*	7,716		Family Court*	627		Family Court*	15,484
	Probate	2,664		Probate	99		Probate	3,431
	County Adult Criminal	16,202		County Adult Criminal	1,389		County Adult Criminal	31,360
	County Civil**	21,739		County Civil**	3,330		County Civil**	32,154
		59,930			6,174			98,177
Pinellas	Adult Criminal	13,655	Gilchrist	Adult Criminal	122	11 Miami-Dade	Adult Criminal	21,074
	Civil	13,208		Civil	131		Civil	48,746
	Family Court*	15,650		Family Court*	428		Family Court*	40,681
	Probate	5,627		Probate	63		Probate	10,335
	County Adult Criminal	45,789		County Adult Criminal	532		County Adult Criminal	132,393
	County Civil**	51,319		County Civil**	507		County Civil**	660,792
		145,248			1,783			914,021
7 Flagler	Adult Criminal	937	Levy	Adult Criminal	633	12 DeSoto	Adult Criminal	489
	Civil	1,396		Civil	488		Civil	235
	Family Court*	2,084		Family Court*	1,066		Family Court*	757
	Probate	565		Probate	192		Probate	101
	County Adult Criminal	4,257		County Adult Criminal	1,936		County Adult Criminal	1,508
	County Civil**	3,783		County Civil**	1,806		County Civil**	1,330
		13,022			6,121			4,420
Putnam	Adult Criminal	1,292	Union	Adult Criminal	207	Manatee	Adult Criminal	2,607
	Civil	650		Civil	106		Civil	4,275
	Family Court*	1,977		Family Court*	350		Family Court*	6,216
	Probate	348		Probate	93		Probate	1,630
	County Adult Criminal	3,735		County Adult Criminal	372		County Adult Criminal	13,063
	County Civil**	2,518		County Civil**	490		County Civil**	14,402
		10,520			1,618			42,193

COURT FILINGS BY CIRCUIT, COUNTY, & DIVISION

Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings	Circuit & County	Division	Total Filings
Sarasota	Adult Criminal	3,324	15 Palm Beach	Adult Criminal	8,800	Okceehobee	Adult Criminal	621
	Civil	5,635		Civil	23,008		Civil	446
	Family Court*	6,506		Family Court*	16,855		Family Court*	981
	Probate	4,259		Probate	7,525		Probate	162
	County Adult Criminal	13,056		County Adult Criminal	76,050		County Adult Criminal	2,032
	County Civil**	25,104		County Civil**	192,359		County Civil**	1,386
		57,884			324,597			5,628
13 Hillsborough	Adult Criminal	13,197	16 Monroe	Adult Criminal	1,421	St. Lucie	Adult Criminal	2,764
	Civil	18,993		Civil	1,328		Civil	4,205
	Family Court*	27,429		Family Court*	1,586		Family Court*	5,118
	Probate	5,784		Probate	449		Probate	2,240
	County Adult Criminal	68,205		County Adult Criminal	4,516		County Adult Criminal	9,156
	County Civil**	144,943		County Civil**	9,450		County Civil**	18,869
		278,551			18,750			42,352
14 Bay	Adult Criminal	2,987	17 Broward	Adult Criminal	16,216	20 Charlotte	Adult Criminal	1,796
	Civil	2,262		Civil	35,462		Civil	2,437
	Family Court*	4,156		Family Court*	29,996		Family Court*	2,995
	Probate	1,036		Probate	8,449		Probate	1,770
	County Adult Criminal	13,188		County Adult Criminal	75,008		County Adult Criminal	5,406
	County Civil**	11,311		County Civil**	325,798		County Civil**	6,939
		34,940			490,929			21,343
Calhoun	Adult Criminal	194	18 Brevard	Adult Criminal	5,537	Collier	Adult Criminal	1,509
	Civil	96		Civil	6,775		Civil	5,063
	Family Court*	372		Family Court*	9,125		Family Court*	3,986
	Probate	65		Probate	2,720		Probate	1,754
	County Adult Criminal	511		County Adult Criminal	26,881		County Adult Criminal	10,160
	County Civil**	758		County Civil**	31,842		County Civil**	15,734
		1,996			82,880			38,206
Gulf	Adult Criminal	187	Seminole	Adult Criminal	3,450	Glades	Adult Criminal	204
	Civil	324		Civil	5,757		Civil	98
	Family Court*	290		Family Court*	6,624		Family Court*	242
	Probate	75		Probate	1,994		Probate	26
	County Adult Criminal	446		County Adult Criminal	18,193		County Adult Criminal	633
	County Civil**	315		County Civil**	37,347		County Civil**	1,294
		1,637			73,365			2,497
Holmes	Adult Criminal	308	19 Indian River	Adult Criminal	1,270	Hendry	Adult Criminal	609
	Civil	126		Civil	1,650		Civil	443
	Family Court*	459		Family Court*	2,060		Family Court*	885
	Probate	87		Probate	956		Probate	123
	County Adult Criminal	797		County Adult Criminal	3,735		County Adult Criminal	3,250
	County Civil**	831		County Civil**	6,599		County Civil**	2,259
		2,608			16,270			7,569
Jackson	Adult Criminal	606	Martin	Adult Criminal	1,200	Lee	Adult Criminal	5,386
	Civil	392		Civil	2,292		Civil	10,687
	Family Court*	1,200		Family Court*	2,049		Family Court*	9,394
	Probate	299		Probate	801		Probate	2,812
	County Adult Criminal	2,067		County Adult Criminal	7,802		County Adult Criminal	27,963
	County Civil**	3,305		County Civil**	9,775		County Civil**	34,622
		7,869			23,919			90,864
Washington	Adult Criminal	398						
	Civil	278						
	Family Court*	537						
	Probate	119						
	County Adult Criminal	632						
	County Civil**	992						
		2,956						

COURT CONTACTS FOR 2012-2013

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

Chief Justice RICKY POLSTON (850) 488-2361
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) 717-8100
Marshal Stephen M. Nevels (850) 717-8130
Website <http://www.1dca.org>

2nd DCA

Chief Judge MORRIS SILBERMAN (813) 272-3430
Clerk James R. Birkhold (863) 499-2290
Marshal Jo Haynes (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
Deputy Marshal Veronica Antonoff (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 Charles Crawford (386) 947-1544
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) 255-1228
Court Administrator Joe G. Stelma, Jr. (904) 255-1001
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 ROBERT ROUNDTREE (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.flcourts.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 2012-2013

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 Scott Wilsker (239) 533-1712

Website <http://www.ca.cjis20.org/home/main/homepage.asp>

OSCA STAFF CONTACTS

State Courts Administrator

Elisabeth H. Goodner (850) 922-5081

Deputy State Courts Administrator

Blan L. Teagle (850) 410-2504

Budget Services Chief

Dorothy Wilson (850) 488-3735

Community and Intergovernmental Relations Director

Eric Maclure (850) 922-5692

Court Education Chief

Martha Martin (850) 922-5079

Court Improvement Chief

Rose Patterson (850) 414-1507

Court Services Chief

Greg Youchock (850) 922-5108

Dispute Resolution Center Chief

Janice Fleischer (850) 921-5404

Finance and Accounting Chief

Jackie Knight (850) 488-3737

General Counsel

Laura Rush (850) 617-1842

General Services Chief

Steven Hall (850) 487-2373

State Courts Technology Officer

Alan Neubauer (850) 414-7741

Personnel Services Chief

Theresa Westerfield (850) 487-0778

Publications Managing Attorney

Susan Leseman (850) 922-5085

Resource Planning Manager

Kris Slayden (850) 922-5106

Strategic Planning Chief

Barbara French (850) 488-6569

Email for OSCA Staff

osca@flcourts.org

OSCA Website

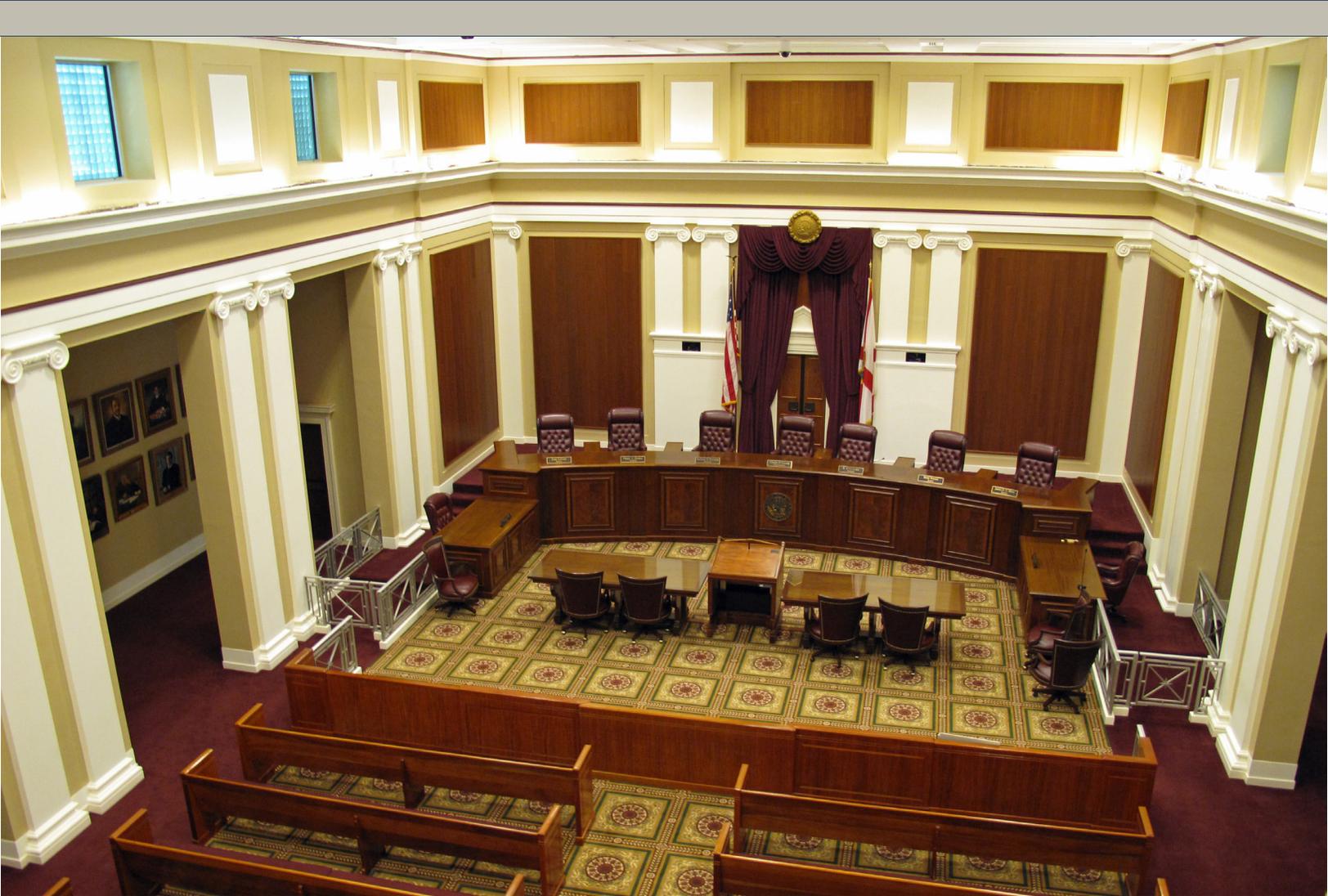
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Under the direction of
Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles T. Canady
State Courts Administrator Elisabeth H. Goodner
Deputy State Courts Administrator Blan L. Teagle
Publications Managing Attorney Susan Leseman

Written and edited by
Beth C. Schwartz
Court Publications Writer



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