

Florida Trial Courts Revision 7 Information

- * In 1998, Florida voters adopted a constitutional amendment requiring the state to assume responsibility for funding the state courts system, state attorneys' offices, public defenders' offices, and court-appointed counsel. Funds were required to come from state revenues appropriated by general law. (Article V, Revision 7)
- * The FY 2003-2004 state budget appropriation for the courts is less than 1% of the total state budget.
- * Currently, over half of our trial courts' budgets now come from county funds.
- * Less than 170 million state dollars for the trial courts are needed in addition to the current budget to implement Revision 7. The courts are not asking for additional services and programs. They simply need the state to fully fund those court costs that are shifting from county budgets to the state when Revision 7 is implemented in the summer of 2004. After implementation, the courts' portion of the state budget will be less than 2%. (Note: this does not include what the state attorneys or public defenders need to implement this constitutional amendment.)
- * Competition for scarce revenue dollars will make it difficult to meet the courts' funding needs.
- * If funding for the trial courts is reduced, many services may be eliminated, which will be detrimental to citizens who come before the courts.
- * The courts must continue to receive funding in order to provide access to a justice system that is fair, efficient, and effective. If county costs shifted to the state under Revision 7 are not fully funded with state dollars, court performance will suffer.
- *The ability of the judicial branch to perform constitutional and statutory duties and core functions may be jeopardized if funding is inadequate. The level of funding the courts receive directly impacts public safety, business and commerce, and the welfare of our families and children.
- *As one of the three co-equal branches of government, the courts, in collaboration with the Legislature and Executive Branch, play an integral role in ensuring the public order.
- *Florida trial courts impact every aspect of our society by adjudicating cases involving juvenile and adult crime; drug and alcohol addiction; child, spousal, and elder abuse; divorce, paternity, adoption, child custody, and support; guardianship and probate; civil disputes; and traffic.
- *Our courts, working with other criminal justice partners, safeguard victims' rights, determine guilt or innocence of the accused, and impose appropriate punishment.
- *Our business community and individuals rely on the courts to resolve property disputes, contract disputes, and other civil matters.
- *Families are the foundation of our society. Our courts protect families, children, the elderly and the infirm. Almost half a million cases filed in our courts involve families, children, the elderly, and the infirm.
- *The implementation of Revision 7 will affect all Floridians. It is critical that the new funding structures are implemented so that the operations of the courts system are not disrupted or diminished. It is essential that the courts receive adequate funding in order to continue to fulfill their constitutional functions.

JUSTICE FOR ALL FLORIDIANS ARTICLE V; REVISION 7 KEY MESSAGES:

1. **OUR COURTS PROTECT DEMOCRACY BY:**
 - UPHOLDING THE LAW,
 - ENSURING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES,
 - ENFORCING PUBLIC ORDER, AND
 - PROVIDING FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES.
2. **OUR COURTS, WORKING WITH OTHER CRIMINAL JUSTICE PARTNERS:**
 - SAFEGUARD VICTIMS' RIGHTS,
 - DETERMINE GUILT OR INNOCENCE OF THE ACCUSED, AND
 - IMPOSE APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT.
3. **OUR COURTS RESOLVE PERSONAL, BUSINESS, AND PROPERTY DISPUTES.**
4. **OUR COURTS PROTECT FAMILIES, CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY, AND THE INFIRM.**
5. **OUR COURTS CURRENTLY OPERATE ON LESS THAN 1% OF THE TOTAL STATE BUDGET.**
6. **OUR COURTS, STATE ATTORNEYS, AND PUBLIC DEFENDERS NEED REASONABLE AND ADEQUATE FUNDING TO ENSURE THAT JUSTICE CONTINUES TO BE CARRIED OUT IN A FAIR, TIMELY, AND IMPARTIAL MANNER.**