

Introduction

Each of the last two years the courts of Florida have disposed of more than 4.5 million cases, ranging from simple traffic citations to serious criminal cases and complex civil disputes with multiple parties. The management of such large caseloads and the administration of the resources and personnel necessary to manage the court system is a tremendous undertaking. Declining fiscal and staff resources also add to the daunting workload and challenges of the court system. And yet, the Florida Judicial Branch continues to make progressive strides in the high priorities defined in its long-range strategic plan.

The Long-Range Strategic Plan for the Florida Judicial Branch 2009-2015 sets out five major long-range issues as well as related goals and strategies to articulate a comprehensive plan of action to guide the judicial branch in advancing its mission and vision. The plan charts the course for the judicial branch including the supreme court, five district courts of appeal, 20 circuit courts, 67 county courts, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator.

The five long-range issues are:

1. Strengthening Governance and Independence
2. Improving the Administration of Justice
3. Supporting Competence and Quality
4. Enhancing Court Access and Services
5. Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence

The long-range plan was developed with extensive input from the general public, legal professionals, advocates, a variety of justice system partners, and judges and court system staff throughout Florida. The plan is a leadership and management tool to assist the supreme court and the chief justice in effectively administering the State Courts System and providing overall guidance and direction to the judicial branch.

The current Progress Report - 2011 is a mid-cycle description and summary of the milestones and achievements toward meeting existing challenges and the strategic goals of the judicial branch. In essence, the Progress Report tells the story, to date, of the Florida Judicial Branch's advancement toward its vision of creating an accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable justice system for all Floridians.