

# THE STUART NEWS

SERVING MARTIN COUNTY AND THE TREASURE COAST

High 62. Low 47.  
Chance of  
rain 30%  
Details, C8

www.stuartnews.com

Tuesday, January 18, 2005

50 cents

## LAWYER PLEADS CASE FOR TREASURE COAST

# Judge shortage a 'slap in the face'

"It's incomprehensible

to me that the

Legislature — which should recognize that we have three equal branches of government — should continuously fail to honor ... the need for additional judges."

James Bowditch  
Treasure Coast lawyer

By Melissa E. Holzman  
staff writer

When Florida Supreme Court justices gather Wednesday for a mid-year meeting, they're likely to get an earful from a Treasure Coast lawyer who's frustrated over a lack of judges that he says has turned Martin County courts into a "sad situation."

The high court, which is meeting this week in Miami, has invited James Bowditch, a lawyer with more than 30 years of experience, to speak to the justices about how the Legislature's ongoing failure to fund new judgeships has backlogged cases in Martin courts, causing chronic delays in resolving even the simplest legal disputes.

Bowditch said he's been gathering the

comments of other Treasure Coast lawyers and judges about the condition of local courts and will present them to the justices.

"It's incomprehensible to me that the Legislature — which should recognize that we have three equal branches of government — should continuously fail to honor ... the need for additional judges," Bowditch said. "That is a slap in the face to the people of Florida, and I hope it doesn't continue."

Each year the Supreme Court issues an opinion certifying the need for new judges throughout the state, a requirement mandated by the state Constitution. The Legislature has the final say as to

See SHORTAGE, A2

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY



CHRIS WEATHERLY staff photographer

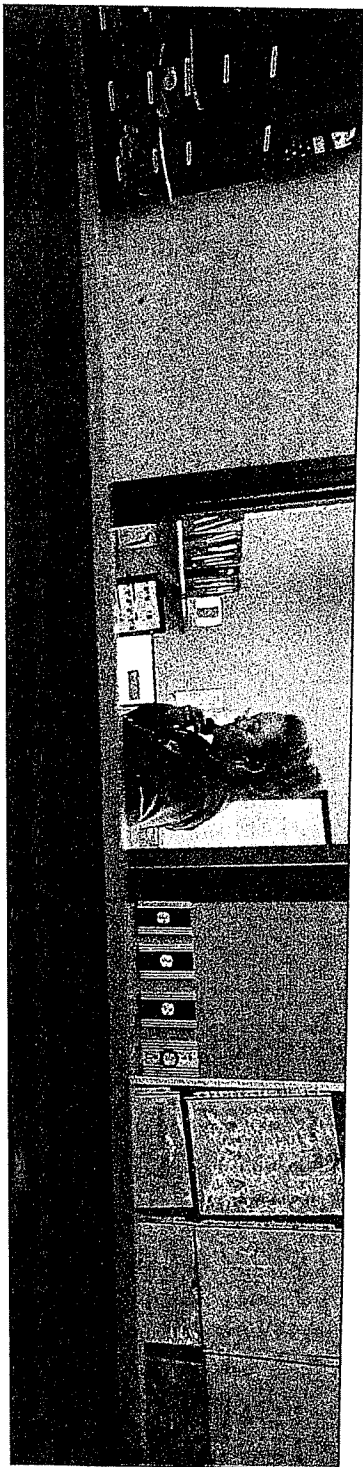
Courtney Chambliss, 14, walks with members of the Sebastian River Middle School Multicultural Club in Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. parade. See how the Treasure Coast celebrates. **PAGE B1**

## GOVERNORS BUDGET

# State can increase spending, cut taxes

# When you call 911 ...

## THE OTHER END OF THE LINE



Jeb Bush says the extra \$4.5 billion coming into the state treasury will ha

rying to out-compete  
be eliminated.”

### Clark Advanced Learning Center IRCC Chastain Campus, 2400 S.E. Salerno Road, Port Salerno

*In its inaugural year, the center already has become a national model for technology-based learning. A partnership between the school district and IRCC, it's the first charter high school in Martin County.*

**Quick facts:**

- The 35,000-square-foot center is outfitted with \$2 million in the latest technology.
  - Students choose from six major including digital media, E-commerce, information technology, eco-technology, multidisciplinary and medical professions.
  - Each of the center's 200 high school students is issued a laptop computer.
  - Students can earn associate degrees from IRCC at no cost while attending.
  - Students interested in attending must submit an application.
- Contact Executive Director Steven Montes at (772)-419-5751 or smontes@ircc.edu for more information.

aid Monday he wanted to repeal the intangibles tax completely this year rather than over a two-year period.

“It's time to eliminate the intangibles tax once and for all. The revenues that the others have sent us are sufficient to fund our future growth especially if we reform Medicaid over the next couple of years,” Negron said.

Bush wouldn't comment on whether he would go for that time table — but as someone who has championed the repeal of the tax for six years he was happy to hear the enthusiasm.

“It warms my heart that the Appropriations chair is trying to out-compete us in the speed by which the intangibles tax can be eliminated,” Bush told reporters.

Besides cutting taxes, Bush wants to continue socking some of the money into reserves — that policy paid off last week when Florida's credit rating was upgraded by a Wall Street rating agency.

### SCHOOL FROM A1

The center is a national model for its innovative teaching and learning environment and was recently awarded a \$600,000 technology grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The center will host seminars and professional development workshops for teachers

from throughout Florida and the country on how to merge new technology into their lessons.

“It's not always about getting students to memorize facts. It's more about showing them the tools they can use to get information when they need it,” said information technology teacher Geo Wassung.

-charlie.reed@scripps.com

and her husband . . . and having to say, ‘It's going to be OK, we  
, that kind of thing is a little nerve-wracking.’”

**Tawnya Rich**  
911 dispatcher

said that he's blue, he's stiff, so you know that he's already dead, but I couldn't talk him through CPR, he was just too young to go through all that,” she said.

“I stayed on the phone until the police got there, and I told the boy what a good job he did, and of course when I hung up I cried.”

One call Tawnya Rich, a 30-year-old shift supervisor at the Martin sheriff's office, won't forget is the first she took to report a death.

“You're not used to the person's emotions on the other end,” she said. “I first

got a call of a woman that had found her husband . . . and having to say, ‘It's going to be OK, we have help on the way,’ that kind of thing is a little nerve-wracking.”

### Sometimes, it's OK

Although the 911 personnel can reel off seemingly endless tales of tragedy and sadness, they also are quick to recount instances where things went right.

Take Lee Bruce, a 40-year-old dispatcher and training officer in Indian River County.

She shared an experience

in which a brother and sister found their father unconscious. She gave instructions to the daughter, who relayed them to the brother as CPR was being performed on their dad, who survived.

And it's those kind of endings that make the job worthwhile.

Like other dispatchers, Indian River County's Fox said a significant amount of work goes into searching for missing persons, noting, “It's always a good feeling when the person is located and they're OK.”

-will.greenlee@scripps.com

“We didn't have  
this when  
Democrats were  
in control and I  
happen to be a  
Republican.”

**James Bowdish**  
Treasure Coast attorney

### SHORTAGE FROM A1

whether new judgeships are created and funded.

And while justices have certified the need for two more appellate judges, 67 circuit judges and 41 county judges, according to the Supreme Court Web site, lawmakers for the past two years have failed to fund any new trial court positions.

Martin County is short four circuit judges and a county judge, justices concluded last year.

In a message sent to the Supreme Court which led to his speaking invitation, Bowdish described “unprecedented and incredible delays” he's experienced in the last year and a half, particularly in Martin County.

“These delays occur not only in getting complicated cases tried, but even getting minor cases tried which might consume one to two days of nonjury trial time,” he wrote. “It is a real mess down here in Martin County.”

“The judges, being pressured, have become arrogant and hostile to the attorneys and their clients. It is a sad situation.”

He put much of the blame with GOP lawmakers.

“Republicans are not particularly favorable toward the court system,” he said. “We didn't have this when Democrats were in control, and I happen to be a Republican.”

-melissa.holsman@scripps.com

A drunk driver ruined something precious. Amber Apodaca.

**Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk.**

Florida Department of Transportation

**A1**  
Good

**SPORTS EVERY DAY** Local • College • Professional

**The News** www.stuartnews.com • www.portstlucienews.com

**TCPalm.com** www.tcpalm.com