

Judicial Branch – Florida State Courts System

Long-Range Program Plan

Fiscal Years 2009-10 through 2013-14

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Circuit Court

The circuit courts of Florida protect and declare the rights and responsibilities of the people, uphold and interpret the law, and provide a forum for the just and peaceful resolution of legal and factual disputes. Circuit courts have general trial jurisdiction over matters not assigned by statute to the county courts and also hear appeals from county court cases. The jurisdiction of circuit courts includes original jurisdiction over civil disputes involving more than \$15,000; controversies involving the estates of decedent, minors, and persons adjudicated to be incapacitated; cases relating to juveniles; criminal prosecutions for felons; tax disputes; actions to determine the title and boundaries of real property; and suits for declaratory judgments. There are 20 circuit courts.

County Court

The county courts of Florida protect and declare the rights and responsibilities of the people, uphold and interpret the law, and provide a forum for the just and peaceful resolution of legal and factual disputes. The jurisdiction of the county courts extends to civil disputes involving \$15,000 or less. The majority of non-jury trials in Florida take place before one judge sitting as a judge of the county court. Most of the court's time is involved with traffic offenses, less serious criminal matters (misdemeanors), and relatively small monetary disputes. There are 67 county courts.

Florida District Court of Appeal

The District Courts of Appeal of Florida provide the opportunity for thoughtful review of decisions of lower tribunals by multi-judge panels. District Courts of Appeal correct harmful errors and ensure that decisions are consistent with rights and liberties. The process contributes to the development, clarity, and consistency of the law. There are five district courts of appeal.

Florida Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the court of last resort in Florida. The Court clarifies Florida law, ensures that district court decisions throughout the state are consistent, and ensures that court decisions at all levels of the state courts are consistent with rights and liberties.

Judicial Qualifications Commission

The Judicial Qualifications Commission investigates and prosecutes Florida judges who are charged with misconduct or with having a mental or physical disability which seriously interferes with the performance of judicial duties and, when appropriate, recommends disciplinary action to the Supreme Court of Florida.

Office of the State Courts Administrator

The purpose of the Office of the State Courts Administrator is to assist the chief justice in the administrative supervision of Florida's appellate and trial courts and to support the chief judges in their role as managers of their respective courts by providing professional expertise and guidance to promote effective, efficient, and accountable court services for Florida's judicial branch.