A Message from Lisa Goodner, State Courts Administrator

When I first started thinking about my message for this edition of the Full Court Press, I found myself hoping—unrealistically, I realize—that the budget wouldn’t have to be my dominant focus yet again. This is the newsletter’s tenth edition since its resurrection in winter 2005, and the judicial branch budget was front and center in my two preceding messages, and it occupied a significant portion of my message in three earlier issues (in those, I discussed the employee pay plan). I wish I didn’t have to keep circling back to budget issues when there are so many noteworthy court programs and initiatives to recognize and celebrate.

But not to talk about the budget now would be like ignoring a gigantic elephant in the room.…

The bottom line, as you probably already know, is that the state court system budget is down by $43.7 million for FY 2008-2009—9.8 percent from where we began on July 1, 2007. Across the state, court system employees have been laid off, programs have been cut, and a hiring freeze and travel restrictions are still in place. (See the article on p. 2 for details about the numbers and their impact on our employees and the branch.)

The challenge, as we adjust to our new circumstances, will be how to continue to effectively fulfill the branch’s mission and vision. Clearly, the branch no longer has the resources we were able to rely on previously, so we’re going to be pressed to come up with even more cost-effective ways to meet our constitutional obligations and our branch goals. Moreover, the budget outlook continues to be bleak, and how the court system fares in these challenging times will continue to be a priority for branch leadership.

However, there are bright spots to reflect on in this issue. For example, despite another year of no raises—coupled with budget reductions, the hiring freeze, travel restrictions, and the inevitably dampened morale provoked by such circumstances—we’ve worked together to make sure the branch continues to operate smoothly. Also, as this newsletter details, we’ve had some incredible accomplishments. For instance, the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity produced its Perceptions of Fairness report; the Performance and Accountability Commission produced its report on services for pro se litigants; the Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group drafted its strategic plan; the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning completed its public opinion telephone survey, which will feed into the branch’s long-range plan; and the Court Interpreter Certification Board formalized the mechanisms for certifying court interpreters.

Finally, I also want to recognize and express appreciation for the tireless efforts of Chief Justice Lewis, whose advocacy for the branch’s funding needs was extraordinary. Many, many thanks also to the members of the Trial Court and the DCA Budget Commissions and all the judges who spent much time in Tallahassee to work with legislative leaders; their commitment has carried us through some tough times and will continue to do so as we move into the new fiscal year.

Sincerely,
Lisa Goodner
Legislation

Impact of the Budget Cuts on the Court System

Between October 2007 and May of this year, the judicial branch was hit with three rounds of budget cuts. The first two rounds imposed “current year cuts.” (Note: current year cuts are somewhat rare—and they’re particularly painful because court operations, and the personnel who are responsible for carrying them out, have already been budgeted and set in motion for the year; thus unanticipated reductions can cause substantial disruption.) Passed into law during the second week of the legislative session, the current year cuts required the court system to forfeit 25.7 million in general revenue dollars. However, by tapping into its operating budget and drawing upon trust fund dollars and non-recurring appropriations, the judicial branch was able to avoid having to furlough or let go of any of its employees at that point.

Then, on top of these cuts came a third one, finalized during the last week of this year’s legislative session and affecting the FY 2008-2009 budget. This cut imposed a further reduction of just under 18 million in general revenue dollars (the three cuts together represent a 9.8 percent reduction from the original 2007-2008 appropriations). In the final analysis, as a result of the three rounds of cuts, the court system had to eliminate the equivalent of 268.25 full-time positions.

But this issue isn’t just about general revenue dollars diminished or full-time positions lost. “More importantly, it’s about people,” emphasized Gary Phillips, OSCA’s chief of Personnel Services. “We have tried to retain as many court employees as we could, minimize the number of people laid off as much as possible, and make decisions that will enable the branch to continue to operate with reduced staff.”

In order to decrease the number of people laid off, the courts began by asking employees whether anyone was contemplating leaving by June 30, thinking about retiring early, or willing to go half-time. The branch pared those full-time positions and also cut a number of position vacancies that had been kept open as a result of hiring freezes that began in September 2007, thereby helping to reduce the number of people the courts had to lay off. In addition, Chief Justice Lewis lifted the hiring freeze for people in affected positions so that qualified employees could be moved into vacant positions whenever possible. Due to good fiscal management, the branch was able to limit considerably the number of people it had to lay off. The final numbers won’t be available until the end of July, but, according to the most recent estimates, the circuits had to let go of 131 people; the DCAs had to let go of 14; and OSCA and the supreme court had to let go of four people—149 employees all told.

To try to lessen the impact as much as possible, the courts were able to give most affected employees a minimum of 30 days’ notice, and Personnel Services has connected people with local workforce agencies and is helping them network to secure new employment.

In addition to its concern about the people and positions it lost, the branch is also apprehensive about the effects of these cuts on court services. For instance, in the trial courts, cuts primarily affected case managers, magistrates, civil traffic infraction hearing officers, court administrators, and law clerks. Asked about the impact these cuts will have on the trial courts, Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Belvin Perry, chair of the Trial Court Budget Commission, lamented, “The funding cut that the court system sustained in October 2007, combined with the cut that was imposed in the second week of this year’s legislative session and the subsequent cut at the conclusion of the session, is a significant throwback to pre-Revision 7 days”—largely because these reductions have affected the implementation of the voter-approved amendment, which is to ensure that all the trial courts across the state maintain a minimum level of court services. He added, “These cuts will be a serious setback to the trial courts in terms of being able to deliver services, especially considering that during hard economic times like these, the workload in the trial courts actually increases,” the dramatic rise in foreclosures being just one obvious example. “The budget reductions will present a significant challenge to our ability to keep up with our ever-increasing caseloads during these difficult times,” Chief Judge Perry cautioned.

There’s no question that with the loss of approximately 131 trial court employees, case processing will slow down. Also, the efficiency of the courts will be challenged when judges with already-overloaded dockets have to pick up the cases that used to be handled by general magistrates and civil traffic infraction hearing officers. The effects of the cuts will...
be felt in other ways as well; for instance, in an effort to save money in the short term (though it won’t save money in the long term), many circuits plan to eliminate or scale back successful programs and initiatives like drug court and mental health court.

The cuts to the DCAs will be crippling as well. In particular, DCA judges fear that the disposition of cases will be held up. Since certain cases—like post-conviction relief and emergency writs—have to take precedence, other kinds of cases, especially civil cases, will suffer delays, they anticipate.

Clearly, as noted by Charlotte Jerrett, director of OSCA’s Administrative Services, these cuts have provoked a “significant disruption to our operations and our planning, and it’ll be years before we recoup the ground we’ve lost—with people, with court functions, with court committees that help to improve the system. And with the uncertainty of the economy,” she warned, “there is a prospect of additional reductions” in the upcoming fiscal year. At this point, she added, “We’re just trying to let the dust settle and figure out where we’re at.”

Fairness and Diversity

Report on Perceptions of Fairness in Florida’s Courts Now Available

Representing the culmination of several years of intensive outreach, synthesis, and composition, Perceptions of Fairness in the Florida Court System, a report produced by the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity, was released in March. This report is the result of three years’ work and brings to completion one of the charges articulated in then Chief Justice Pariente’s November 2004 administrative order establishing the standing committee (read report online).

The charge specifically directed the committee to “conduct outreach and obtain input from judges, court staff, attorneys, jurors, litigants, and/or the public on their perceptions of disparate treatment in Florida courts” and then to submit a report detailing its findings to the chief justice. The committee was asked to consider the following issues as it conducted its research: stereotyped thinking that leads to inappropriate conduct and expressions of bias in the courtroom; the devaluation of a person or a person’s work due to prejudice; the imposition of a burden on one class of people that is not placed on other classes; and structural factors that may have a detrimental impact on one class of people. When the gavel passed to Chief Justice Lewis in 2006, he renewed the standing committee and instructed it to complete this monumental project.

To satisfy this charge, the committee collected survey responses (both multiple choice answers and narrative) from over 5,000 judges, court personnel, lawyers, jurors, and litigants, and it assimilated and ascertained the meaning of all that material. In addition, the committee held public meetings in Miami, Tallahassee, Orlando, and Jacksonville between January 2006 and February 2007—meetings that drew a broad cross-section of speakers and generated some rather extensive and emotional testimony—and it reviewed and synthesized all that material as well. Ultimately, this voluminous expanse of information, both data and narrative, had to be shaped into a document that would describe—smoothly, pertinently, usefully, and fairly—people’s perceptions of disparate treatment in Florida’s courts. And Perceptions of Fairness has indeed accomplished these goals. “The task was huge, and the resources were small,” remarked Judge Gill Freeman, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, who has chaired the standing committee since its inception. “The challenge was to reach out and gather an incredible amount of information with limited ability, and we did it.”

The report is organized around the specific biases perceived by the survey respondents and speakers at the public meetings, with each chapter having a discrete focus: racial and ethnic bias; socioeconomic bias; gender bias; age bias; disability bias; English language bias; and other biases (sexual orientation, gender identity, cronyism, and political affiliation). Each chapter generally begins with some demographic information that contextualizes that bias; then it briefly addresses the history of that bias in Florida and touches upon some of the ways in which that bias has manifested in the justice system. Then, the chapter segues into an overview of the qualitative responses—a summary of the anecdotal information that people included in their surveys or offered at the public meetings. This is followed by a synopsis of the
survey data, which is punctuated by an abundance of easy-to-follow tables that give a breakdown of the responses to the survey questions.

The report makes every effort to present its information neutrally, impartially, and unemotionally, neither justifying the behavior of the court system nor judging the perceptions of the respondents and speakers—even when these perceptions are based on misinformation or a misunderstanding of Florida law, court policies, or legal procedures. As a result, both in tenor and tone, the report achieves a sense of balance, objectivity, and even-handedness. As Judge Freeman declared, “The report effectively conveys the impact of failures in perceptions of fairness on the public. It is not merely a reporting of data but gives the reader the essence of the problems in a very graphic and palpable way.”

Active on a variety of court-appointed “fairness committees” for over 20 years, Judge Freeman said she “was pleased to see that we had made some progress over time and that some of the problems we discovered initially are being dealt with effectively”—in particular, she mentioned family and domestic violence issues. However, she observed, “Some of the same problems of lack of sensitivity in treatment and comments still persist throughout the system”—especially regarding the treatment of the poor and minorities in our courts. Ultimately, she added, “I’m hoping the report will increase awareness of how our customers feel and make us all more conscious of what we say and what we do. We don’t always understand the consequences of our actions, and I’m hoping that this report will result in increased awareness. With that awareness, we can improve our court system.”

For OSCA’s Debbie Howells, lead staff for the committee, one issue cuts across the board for all the respondents: “Although all the groups have different barriers that impede their access to the courts, the commonality for all these disadvantaged groups is the desire for procedural fairness: all of them want to feel they’ve had their day in court and received justice.” It’s critical to take note of this, she added, because “The court system gains people’s trust and confidence only when they feel they’ve had a fair shake.” She was also struck by how interrelated all these issues are: “People with disabilities might often face socioeconomic problems as well, and ethnic minorities might also experience English language bias,” for example. For the courts to address the needs of these constituents, she suggested, these issues have to be considered in their totality.

In response to the report, Chief Justice Lewis said, “Fairness is the foundation of the public’s trust and confidence in their court system. Courts that operate fairly and treat all participants with respect are perceived to be places where justice is accomplished. The need to address the increasing diversity and the rapid social changes in Florida is a long-term process for the court system. Achieving fairness—both in fact and in perception—can only be accomplished through ongoing attentiveness.” Therefore, he urges all judges, court personnel, and justice system partners to give serious attention to the matters that are raised in the report and, within their capacity, to make every effort to assure that fairness and diversity remain among the justice system’s core values.

Court Improvement

Court Interpreter Certification Board Implements Formal Certification Measures

All people, regardless of their ability to communicate effectively in English, have a right to meaningful access—which includes spoken language access—to the courts. Thus, in Florida, where 16.7 percent of the state population is foreign born and 23.1 percent speak a language other than English at home, having qualified court interpreters is essential. When court interpreters are not duly qualified, the parties and the court system alike can suffer. At last, after ten years of building an extensive—but purely voluntary—training and testing program for foreign language court interpreters, Florida’s court system now has a formal court interpreter certification process in place, by dint of the focus and determination of the members of the Court Interpreter Certification Board.

To help judges and trial court administrators evaluate the qualifications of court interpreters, OSCA began building a training and testing program in 1998. But participation in the program was a matter of choice rather than necessity: although the supreme court had the inherent authority to establish a formal certification process through the rules of court, it chose to work collaboratively with the legislature and await enabling legislation before developing one. Then, in spring 2006, the legislature passed an enabling act making clear that the court is authorized to “establish minimum standards and procedures for qualifications, certification, professional conduct, discipline, and training” of foreign language court interpreters. Soon thereafter, the court created the Court Interpreter Certification Board, making it responsible for the certification, regulation, and discipline of court interpreters as
well as for the suspension and revocation of certification. The board, which is chaired by Judge Ronald N. Ficarrotta, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, was also directed to determine the qualifications necessary for certification, e.g., written and oral exam requirements, continuing education requirements, ethics and professional conduct, and background checks.

In Court Interpreting Qualifications, the National Center for State Courts advises that a professional court interpreter should have “educated, native-like mastery of both English and a second language; display wide general knowledge characteristic of what a minimum of two years of general education at a college or university would provide; and perform the three major types of court interpreting: sight interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting....Court interpreters must perform each type of interpreting skillfully enough to include everything that is said, preserve the tone and level of language of the speaker, and neither change nor add anything to what is said” (read document online). These are the criteria that Florida’s Court Interpreter Certification Board has striven to capture in its certification process.

Now that the Court Interpreter Certification Board has approved formal certification measures, application forms for certification are available, and applications are being accepted. To be considered for certification, applicants must satisfy three major requirements: they have to attend one of the two-day orientation workshops sponsored by OSCA; they have to pass the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification Written Examination; and they have to pass the Consortium or the Federal Court Interpreter Oral Proficiency Examination. They also must complete the application, submit a digital photo (taken at their local judicial circuit) for a picture ID wallet card, undergo a background check, take an oath to uphold the Code of Professional Conduct, and pay the certification fee. Once certified, interpreters will be subject to annual background checks and will have to renew their status every two years. (Court interpreters seeking certification may call 850-922-5107 or email interpreters@flcourts.org with questions.)

In Florida, interpreters can become certified in one or more of the following languages: Arabic, Cantonese, French, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Currently poised for certification is a registry of approximately 250 court interpreters.

As Board Chair Judge Ficarrotta emphasizes, “Access to our courts by all our citizens is crucial. Toward that end, the Court Interpreter Certification Board worked very hard to come up with uniform procedures and standard certification measures for all the court interpreters who serve the citizens of our state.” He ended by thanking OSCA staff for its invaluable support: “Without the help of Court Operations Consultant Lisa Bell (coordinator of the court interpreter program with OSCA’s Court Services Unit) and Richard Cox (senior attorney II with OSCA’s Office of the General Counsel), the board could never have accomplished this important goal.” With certification criteria now in place, the Court Interpreter Certification Board has satisfied an essential element of its mission, which is “to afford all Floridians equal access to the justice forum by removing linguistic barriers and increasing the availability and effectiveness of qualified foreign language interpreters.”

Serving Florida’s Self-Represented Litigants

Within the court system, the word access seems to be surfacing with notable frequency and in a wide scope of contexts lately. One hears about electronic access to court records; access to court facilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act; access to electronic information and information technology for people with disabilities; access to information about the roles, operations, performance, and accomplishments of the courts; and access to court-user-friendly forms and documents. In recent years, courts have also been paying serious attention to the need to provide court users, especially those who represent themselves, with access to correct and helpful information. Since 1995, various court initiatives in Florida have focused on strategies for helping self-represented litigants achieve meaningful access to the courts. The most recent is a report produced by the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability: Ensuring Access to Justice: Serving Florida’s Self-Represented Litigants (read report online).

The supreme court began taking important steps toward helping the self-represented in 1995, when it initiated a movement to simplify the rules, forms, and appendices for the people who represent themselves in family law cases—by far, the cases with the highest percentage of self-represented litigants. The following year, former Chief Justice Kogan
directed the Family Court Steering Committee to make recommendations about how the courts could help “self-represented litigants access the family courts through the use of standardized simplified forms, self-help centers, technological innovations, and other mechanisms, as appropriate.” Over the next few years, the steering committee worked on creating uniform, more accessible instructions and forms and developed the family law self-help rule and the “unbundled” legal services rule.

But with the 2004 implementation of Revision 7, which shifted the primary funding responsibility for Florida’s court system from the counties to the state, the responsibility of self-help programs was transferred from the courts to the clerks of court. Naturally, however, the court system continues to have a fundamental interest in making sure that adequate self-help services are available because these services improve access for the litigants, improve the efficiency of court services, and enhance public trust and confidence in the courts in general. Therefore, former Chief Justice Pariente convened a focus group in 2006 to redirect the court system’s attention to services for the self-represented and to begin contemplating a common framework for addressing their needs.

The Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability’s Ensuring Access to Justice: Serving Florida’s Self-Represented Litigants, submitted to the supreme court for its consideration, responds to a charge in Chief Justice Lewis’ September 2006 administrative order instructing the commission to “Make recommendations for a court-based service framework that will connect litigants with legal assistance, where possible, and reliably provide the ministerial assistance and procedural information needed to ensure that litigants representing themselves have meaningful access to the civil justice system” (read order online). Soon thereafter, the commission, chaired by Judge Alice Blackwell White, Ninth Judicial Circuit, established the Self-Help Workgroup to address this charge. Chaired by Judge Robert Bennett, Twelfth Judicial Circuit, this workgroup examined the focus group’s action report and recommendations and used them as the basis for a court-based self-help program.

In keeping with the directives of the administrative order, the commission’s most pointed goal in this initiative was to determine what a court-based service framework should look like. Thus the report’s first objective was to describe a comprehensive service framework that identifies and meets the access needs of self-represented litigants in civil cases. The report also satisfies two other objectives: it affirms basic principles and assumptions relating to court-based programs for self-represented litigants, and it establishes and clarifies the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the private bar, legal service providers, trial courts, and clerks of court.

The most substantial portion of the six-section report, called “Threshold Services for Self-Represented Litigants,” describes the twelve services that should be components of the self-help program: (1) directions to the correct location to find needed services; (2) information/notice about the scope of court-based self-help services and their limitations; (3) information about the legal process specific to the subject matter of the litigant’s case; (4) information about the necessary documents and procedural steps involved in seeking a legal remedy; (5) information about options for dispute resolution/mediation; (6) interpretation for non-English speaking litigants; (7) translation of written materials; (8) referral to public and private services; (9) ready access to the court files and records to enable litigants to monitor the progress of their case; (10) a written order embodying the court’s ruling; (11) a basic explanation of what’s contained in the court’s ruling; and (12) post-judgment information.

The report recognizes that the self-help program will affect many stakeholders, and it also emphasizes that “Effective customer service will require the active involvement and participation of clerks’ staff, judges, case managers, court administration, and even security.” Because broad support of this program is critical to its success, before finalizing its report, the commission sought feedback from a wide range of interested groups—including several Florida Bar committees, Florida Legal Services, the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Florida State Court and County Law Librarians, Clerks of Court, the Florida Association of Court Clerks and Comptrollers, chief judges, trial court administrators, the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, and the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity. Stakeholders commonly voiced two concerns: the defined scope
of ministerial assistance and the potential fiscal impact of the program. However, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability was not instructed to recommend how a self-help program should be implemented in terms of fiscal or staffing requirements and is quick to acknowledge that this report reflects “only a first step to achieve successful implementation of the self-help program.”

Court Improvement Drafts a Domestic Violence Strategic Plan

It took a little over a year, but thanks to the concentrated effort of a group of more than 30 noted leaders in the field of domestic violence, OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement has drafted a strategic plan that addresses some of the most exigent domestic violence-related issues facing Florida’s courts and provides guidance for future court projects. From the beginning, Court Improvement’s goal was to craft a long-range plan that would reflect the voices of the key stakeholders, so it included in its planning group not only judges and court staff, but also court clerks, representatives from the Department of Children and Families, law enforcement officers, attorneys (including a public defender, a prosecuting attorney, and an immigration attorney), a representative from the Office of the Attorney General, victim advocates, batterers intervention program directors, and probation officers. The group collectively determined its mission at its first meeting: “to improve the effectiveness of Florida’s courts in handling domestic violence cases.”

The Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group came together three times to identify, discuss, and prioritize domestic violence-related matters and to suggest ways in which the courts can more effectively manage those issues that are within their jurisdiction. At its initial meeting, in February 2007, each member enumerated and made a case for what he/she saw as the priority issues; at the second meeting, the group finalized the set of issues on which it would focus and then divided into three workgroups, each of which was assigned three or four of these issues to research; and at the third meeting, each workgroup presented a comprehensive report defining several goals, as well as strategies for achieving those goals, for each issue it addressed.

After listening to the three reports, group members had a final chance to offer suggestions about ranking and achieving these goals, and then OSCA staff consolidated, organized, and corralled the material from the three reports, along with the final comments, into a comprehensive strategic plan, the draft of which was submitted to the Department of Children and Families in April.

The plan encompasses seven overarching issues, which fall into the following categories: Assistance for Parties; Domestic Violence Procedure and Form Revision; Inconsistent Orders; Compliance and Enforcement; Mediation and Domestic Violence; Dependency and Domestic Violence; and Criminal No Contact Orders. After a description of each issue, the plan delineates specific goals that address that issue. For example, under the first issue, Assistance for Parties, three goals are identified: produce a video that can be used across the state to educate parties about the civil domestic violence injunction process; encourage proactive case management as essential to the timely provision of assistance to parties; and make the injunction process as user-friendly as possible. Finally, after each goal, the plan presents strategies for accomplishing it; typically, the strategies offer practical, concrete steps for achieving the goals, thus showing how these challenges can be manageably undertaken.

In March, at the third and final meeting of the Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group, Court Improvement Chief Rose Patterson thanked the members for their investment in this endeavor and assured them that the fruits of their labors “won’t end up sitting on a shelf”; their ideas and recommendations “will be looked at for years to come” and “will have an immediate impact on the work of our office.” In particular, she said, this group’s work “will help us identify our priority areas, especially given the budget cuts and our need to limit our focus.”
Transforming the Public Mental Health System Through Cross-Systems Collaboration

Given the recent flood of media coverage on the topic, no Floridian should be surprised to hear that approximately 125,000 people with serious mental illnesses are booked into Florida jails annually. Moreover, over the past nine years, the population of prison inmates with mental illnesses has grown from 8,000 to about 17,000—and is projected to reach 32,000 in the next nine years. (To handle this anticipated increase, the state would have to begin building, on average, one new prison every year.) As the media have also reported, the cost of forensic hospital beds devours an enormous percentage of the budget earmarked for Florida’s mental health system: for the 2,600 people for whom the courts ordered the Department of Children and Families to provide forensic beds last year, taxpayers spent almost 250 million dollars. Given that forensic commitment increased by 71 percent between 1999 and 2007, that cost will continue to rise uncontrollably unless alternative strategies are adopted. This money might be considered well-spent if it actually addressed the underlying problems leading to the incarceration of people with mental illnesses; however, after these inmates are released, because they lack access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, treatment, and social services, they are all too likely to be re-arrested, back in court, and once again in need of a forensic bed.

Ideally, people with mental illness ought to be diverted from unnecessarily entering the criminal justice system to begin with. Unfortunately, however, Florida communities currently lack sufficient treatment infrastructure to help keep these people out of the criminal justice system and give them a chance for a somewhat stable life.

Clearly, a problem of this magnitude cannot be solved by a single agency or even by a single branch of government. To address it comprehensively requires a concerted effort and commitment—by the judicial branch and others who work in the criminal justice system, representatives from various state agencies (e.g., the Department of Corrections, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Agency for Health Care Administration), mental health specialists, substance abuse professionals, and social services providers. Fortunately, thanks to a range of collaborative endeavors, many of which were initiated by Chief Justice Lewis, this situation is about to begin changing.

Soon after the gavel was passed to him, Chief Justice Lewis launched several initiatives in response to the heightening prevalence of mental illness among inmates and among young people caught up in the juvenile justice system. First, in August 2006, he directed the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court to “create a subcommittee to study and examine the scope, impact, and relationship of mental health issues with regard to individuals involved in the justice system.” The subcommittee was further enjoined to “develop recommendations for courts to address, process, and deal with individuals having mental health issues and formulate an action plan for implementation of the recommendations by the court system” (see Task 2 of the administrative order).

A few months later, in November 2006, after calling upon Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, to chair the subcommittee, the chief enlisted a carefully-selected roster of experts to help it carry out its directives (read administrative order online). Embodying a wide range of professionals with proficiency in the mental health field, the subcommittee membership reflects the kind of “cross-systems collaboration” that Chief Justice Lewis recognizes as necessary for the success of any mental health initiatives in Florida.

Then in April 2007, the chief justice appointed Judge Leifman to serve as his special advisor on criminal justice and mental health. Among his many responsibilities, Judge Leifman was urged to work collaboratively with the secretaries of state agencies that are also affected by the problems resulting from untreated mental illness (read administrative order online). The collaborative nature of this sweeping mental health initiative—in particular, its visibly inter-branch approach—was unmistakable from the beginning: at the supreme court press conference announcing Judge Leifman’s appointment, the judge and chief justice were ringed by Lieutenant Governor Jeff Kottkamp, Secretary Bob Butterworth.
(Department of Children and Families), Secretary Walt McNeil (then with the Department of Juvenile Justice), and Chief of Staff Richard Prudom (Department of Corrections).

In November 2007, the supreme court hosted a Mental Health Summit, at which Judge Leifman—supported by Chief Justice Lewis, Governor Crist, Secretary Butterworth, Secretary McNeil, Secretary Agwunobi (then with the Agency for Health Care Administration), and Secretary McDonough (then with the Department of Corrections)—rolled out the Mental Health Subcommittee's report, *Constructing a Comprehensive and Competent Criminal Justice/Mental Health/Substance Abuse Treatment System: Strategies for Planning, Leadership, Financing, and Service Development* (read report online). In brief, this report—truly an energetically inter-branch effort—provides a detailed blueprint for channeling federal funds into a comprehensive system of community-based services that will help people with mental illness and keep them from becoming involved in the criminal justice system. This plan, Judge Leifman demonstrates, will both save money and help people.

Meanwhile, the legislature has also inaugurated several important mental health initiatives with which the judicial branch has been involved. For instance, during the 2007 session, the legislature created the Criminal Justice, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Reinvestment Grant Program, which operates within the Department of Children and Families "to provide funding to counties with which they can plan, implement, or expand initiatives that increase public safety, avert increased spending on criminal justice, and improve the accessibility and effectiveness of treatment services for adults and juveniles who have a mental illness, substance abuse disorder, or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders and who are in, or at risk of entering, the criminal or juvenile justice systems" (read statute online). The membership of each county planning committee must include a circuit judge, a county judge, and the court administrator or designee, and these local committees can apply for a one-year planning grant (up to 100,000 matching dollars) or a three-year implementation grant (up to one million matching dollars). This year, 22 counties were awarded grants—and a number of those grants will be directed specifically into court-related initiatives such as developing mental health courts and court-based justice diversion programs.

The common denominator in all these undertakings is the conspicuously collaborative effort to provide true help to some of Florida's most vulnerable citizens—while simultaneously reducing demand on the resources of Florida's judicial branch, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the state's health and social services systems, and, ultimately, the taxpayer.

**Drug Court Graduation**

The Eighteenth Judicial Circuit hosted Florida's Ninth Annual Statewide Drug Court Graduation on May 15, in honor of National Drug Court Month. The event took place at the Brevard County Government Center in Viera, but, thanks to videoconferencing, 270 graduates, from 15 circuits, were able to celebrate the event together. Judge John M. Harris presided over the ceremony, and distinguished speakers included Justice Quince; Judge Meryl L. Allawas, Eighteenth Circuit; Danny Treanor, a meteorologist for Channel 13 Central Florida News; and William H. Janes, director of the governor's Office of Drug Control Policy. Each of the Eighteenth Circuit’s eight graduates was given the opportunity to say a few words, which infused the ceremony with a personal note.

Justice Quince congratulated the graduates for embracing the harder path, emphasizing that “It is not easy to choose the drug court route,” and she pointed out that offenders who participate in a drug court program have a better chance of creating loving and stable homes for their children. Mr. Treanor reminded graduates that they’ve “been given a second chance”; “Use it,” he urged them.
Update: Florida Drug Court Conference

Due to budget reductions and travel restrictions, the plans for the 2008 Florida Drug Court Conference, which was originally scheduled for September 3-4 in Orlando, have been modified: the conference will now be a distance learning opportunity, slated for Thursday, September 4, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Using the court system’s videoconferencing network, this distance learning session will feature Dr. Andrew Osborne, who will talk about meeting the diverse needs of drug court participants by structuring sanctions and incentives in a culturally proficient way. Participants can receive CJE, CLE, or CUE credits. The circuits will get more details soon, but if you have any questions, please contact OSCA’s Jennifer Grandal at grandalj@flcourts.org or FADCP’s Eve Janocko at eve.janocko@aol.com.

Education and Outreach
The Justice Teaching Institute

“It was one of the highlights of my life”; “…a once in a lifetime experience”; “…such a worthwhile, stimulating endeavor”; “…an intellectual challenge”; “I’m going to need a week or two to decompress and take in its significance and absorb everything we’ve done this week”; “it will definitely help me take my craft to the next level....”

The “it” here refers to the Justice Teaching Institute (JTI), and these quotations reflect just a small sampling of the exuberant reflections that this year’s JTI fellows shared with Annette Boyd Pitts, Executive Director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, on the last day of the comprehensive, four-and-a-half day education program for secondary school teachers. One teacher called the JTI “the Rolls Royce of professional education,” with others readily comparing it with the Williamsburg Teacher Institute and the U.S. Supreme Court Summer Institute for Teachers (link to information about the JTI).

Sponsored by the supreme court, subsidized by the Florida Bar Foundation, and coordinated by the Florida Law Related Education Association, the JTI gives 25 secondary school teachers from across the state an opportunity to explore, in great depth and in a hands-on fashion, how the judicial branch operates. First offered in 1997, when former Chief Justice Kogan conceived it as part of the court’s Sesquicentennial Celebration, the JTI has become an annual event, nurtured and shaped by Ms Pitts along with Chief Justice Lewis, who has been an active participant since his appointment to the supreme court in 1998.

The JTI instructors are among the best the branch has to offer: this year’s faculty roster included all seven justices; Ms Pitts; Judge Michael Genden, Eleventh Judicial Circuit; and Judge Leandra Johnson, Third Judicial Circuit. Not surprisingly, the JTI is a highly intensive and interactive program, and, to be chosen to participate, teachers have to undergo a competitive selection process and can anticipate a challenging, densely-packed curriculum: they study the structure and function of the state court system, the criminal court process, the significance of an independent judiciary, the Florida Constitution, the case study method, nuances of the oral argument, alternative methods of dispute resolution, accessing legal resources from the library and the Internet, and the constitutional issues underpinning an actual case that is about to go before the court. All this training is in preparation for the culminating moment: the teachers’ mock oral...
argument on the very case for which the justices themselves are preparing. Witnessing the justices engage in the oral argument about the case that the teachers have been so carefully contemplating and deconstructing is surely one of the highlights of the program for the teachers.

The crop of 25 teachers who came together at the supreme court this April hailed from all across the state, from 15 judicial circuits. According to Ms Pitts, the class represented a fine balance of new and seasoned teachers and of middle and high school teachers. One of the more unusual features of this year’s class, she remarked, is that teaching is the second career for a number of them: for instance, five of the teachers are former practicing attorneys, and two of them are former law enforcement officers. Ms Pitts was also especially impressed with the “tremendous depth of knowledge” of this class and with the teachers’ “incredible growth” over the course of the five days.

Once they complete the program, JTI fellows are eager to facilitate JTI training for other teachers in their school or develop a courts unit for classroom use. And many of them have already begun incorporating what they’ve learned into their curricula. For instance, William “Liam” Quigley, a teacher at Pembroke Pines Charter High School, observed that ever since he returned from the program, he has “repeated words, given insight, shared ideas, helped my students focus, all gleaned from parts of this program. My students will be going through the mock case we did; they will be reading it, preparing oral arguments, and watching the real arguments.” He added, “I will change next year the way I teach the constitution because of the program. I will bring my students to Tallahassee to watch the supreme court in action. Oh, yes, what I learned during the week is changing and will continue to change what I do in the classroom.”

And Jackie Gonzalez, a teacher at Palm Springs Community Middle School, declared, “I have always taught about the constitution and the Bill of Rights, but I am now teaching about it with a newfound excitement that I know my students can feel.” Like many of the fellows, she is already planning what she’ll do differently in the future: “I have always taken my class on a tour of our county courthouse.... But this time, we are spending the week leading into it learning about what we will see and hear and what it all means and how it all works....In addition, they will conduct a mock trial in a couple of weeks, and they are slowly preparing. I feel so much more confident about teaching about our judicial system,” she affirmed.

Marsha Chusmir Shapiro, from David C. Hinson Middle School in Daytona Beach, noted that “Specific methods and materials which were presented are certainly going to be useful in the middle school classroom with my advanced and gifted students. Although it will take a great deal of time and preparation, I will do case studies next year. I’d also like to bring my students to the supreme court during the JTI week next year so that we may prepare for the case being presented and watch the actual hearing. In addition, I’d like to take them to our county and district courts here in Daytona Beach to watch trials and hearings.”

And Aaron Green, who teaches at Fort Clarke Middle School in Gainesville, plans to “develop a teaching unit covering Article V of the Florida Constitution since the judiciary in Florida is not covered in the standard textbooks for eighth graders. I think I may emphasize, for instance, the circuit court’s jurisdiction over matters of juvenile law. I certainly intend to invite and have a local circuit judge, with a current juvenile court assignment, come speak to my students.” In a recent email, Aaron enthusiastically added that, at his request, Justice Pariente has agreed to speak at his school this November.

Teachers had no hesitation in expressing what they found most compelling about the JTI. Hank Goldstone, of Spruce Creek High School in Port Orange, said it was “the personal connection with the justices as well as all the other fantastic resources we met. Their passion and enthusiasm for giving teachers the inspiration and tools to teach our kids about the judicial branch of government was obvious.” His comments were echoed by Ms Gonzalez, who underlined “the absolute devotion and excitement I felt from those teaching us.” She added, “Although I have been to
many workshops over the 10 years of my teaching career, nothing even comes close to JTI as far as the amount of useful information I am able to use immediately with my students”; in fact, because of the way the JTI made the material “come alive,” she is finding that the program has especially helped her with her students who have recently immigrated to this country: “These students learn and are excited about going home to teach their parents about our government.”

One comment that the teachers almost universally voiced is that, as teachers, they truly felt “validated” by the program and the faculty. As Ms Shapiro asserted, “We educators know how important our work is, but we do not often hear encouraging words from the public. To have people of the stature of supreme court justices say that they respect our work, and to be treated as well as we were by everyone involved in the program, was a real morale booster.” Her only lament was that “So few teachers are able to take advantage of this opportunity each year.” But, as she noted, “Twenty-five teachers times 150 students does add up.” And this exponential effect is precisely one of the beauties of this program. Those students whose lives are touched by these dedicated and inspiring teachers are likely to develop an understanding of and support for the role and functions of the judicial branch—ultimately enabling them to participate more meaningfully in what the Chief Justice Lewis calls “the promise of this democracy.”

Distance Learning Opportunities for Bar Referees and Appellate Law Clerks

Training for Bar Referees
The consequences for an attorney facing disciplinary actions could be significantly life-altering: the most dire sanction is disbarment; other possibilities include suspension, probation, admonishment, and public reprimand. The ramifications of these disciplinary actions are important for the public as well because public trust and confidence in the legal system is possible only when a meaningful mechanism for disciplining attorneys exists. Therefore, because so much is at stake in these disciplinary proceedings, it’s essential that they be conducted with the utmost care and that those who conduct them—i.e., the bar referees—be properly trained.

When an attorney is facing a grievance in Florida, the attorney being investigated, his or her attorney, The Florida Bar, and the supreme court all play a role in the process, but in the center of it all is the judge who serves as the bar referee. The bar referee is a rotating assignment: the position is appointed by the chief judge whenever a circuit has an attorney discipline case. Being a bar referee involves a highly specialized type of proceeding—which means that the training too must be specialized. For the last several years, The Florida Bar and the supreme court have been working toward making bar referee training readily available. The first step was the development of online training materials, which were made available to newly-assigned bar referees on demand.

Then, on March 25, OSCA’s Court Education Section unveiled its first live distance learning training initiative for bar referees. Over 50 judges from across the state participated in the one-and-a-half hour training session, which consisted of two parts: for the first, judges accessed and studied the materials available on the intranet; for the second, judges participated in a live educational opportunity by audioconference, led by subject matter expert Judge Diana L. Moreland, Twelfth Judicial Circuit. Participants could email Judge Moreland their questions both before the live session began as well as during it, thereby helping to promote an interactive environment. Also, when more than one judge was participating in a given circuit, those judges were encouraged to sit in on the audioconference together, creating another level of synergy. On the whole, the program was well-received, and participants especially enjoyed the convenience.

Justice Pariente, who has been involved in this project since she was chief justice and who currently chairs the Florida Court Education Council, sees this program
as an important step, both as a training strategy for bar referees and as a distance learning initiative: "Both the bench and bar have identified the need for training of judges as bar referees. The educational challenge has been how to deliver effective education in a timely way, especially since judges serve as referees on an infrequent basis. I was very pleased to learn that with hard work by our court education staff, working with The Florida Bar, we rolled out the first distance learning course for judges using an audioconference format. I look forward to continuing to improve this distance learning opportunity."

Questions about this program can be addressed to Susan Morley at morleys@flcourts.org.

Training for Appellate Law Clerks and Staff Attorneys

On April 17, appellate law clerks and staff attorneys throughout Florida were treated to a two-hour U.S. Constitutional Law Update with Erwin Chemerinsky, Alston and Bird Professor of Law and professor of political science at Duke University. The professor, who did his lecture from Duke, was able to link to the state courts’ videoconferencing system using an Integrated Services Digital Network line (a technology that’s used to provide simultaneous voice, video, and text transmission between unrelated videoconferencing systems.) Thus, while Professor Chemerinsky lectured, not only could he be seen and heard by the 120 or so law clerks and staff attorneys in attendance, but he was also able to hear and see them and answer their questions.

The update was especially useful because Professor Chemerinsky focused on pending cases and on some very recent decisions—and on one ruling that was announced only the day before the seminar took place: he spoke at some length about the U.S Supreme Court’s April 16 decision, on which the justices ruled 7-2 that Kentucky’s three-drug protocol for carrying out lethal injections does not amount to cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment, thus clearing the way for executions to resume.

This distance learning seminar, which was recorded, is in the process of being transcribed and will be available for future review.

Dispute Resolution Center Director Returns to Amman, Jordan

The last edition of the Full Court Press reported on the basic mediation training workshop in Amman, Jordan, that Florida Dispute Resolution Center Director Sharon Press led for a group of 29 Jordanian judges and attorneys in November (for article, go to page 11). As part of a larger effort to increase the efficiency of the Jordanian court system, Jordan’s Ministry of Justice and the American Bar Association’s Rule of Law Initiative sponsored that workshop to help expand the role of mediation in Jordan. Recognizing that Jordan must build a contingent of its own mediation trainers in order for mediation to achieve a more pronounced foothold in that country, the Rule of Law Initiative invited Ms Press to return in mid-March to conduct a train-the-trainer workshop. So once again on annual leave from OSCA, Ms Press revisited Amman to teach seasoned mediators how to train aspiring mediators.

This train-the-trainer workshop was open only to mediators who had taken mediation training and had some experience doing mediations. The Rule of Law Initiative Office screened and selected the applicants, and 15 were invited to participate in the workshop: 10 judges, three attorneys, and two professors. The goal of the intensive two-and-a-half day event was to teach these mediators about training theory, provide them with the materials used in basic mediation training programs, and familiarize them with the kinds of exercises and role-plays used in mediation training. The workshop also gave them the opportunity to prepare and deliver mini-lectures that were very similar to the sorts of presentations they’ll give in a basic mediation training. In addition, they practiced critiquing a student role-play—another skill they must learn to exercise competently as trainers. Then their peers critiqued both their presentations and their role-play critiques, giving participants a good sense of just how effective their training methods are.

Bolstered with materials used in the OSCA Court Education Section’s faculty training programs, Ms Press began her workshop by introducing participants to the range of adult learning styles. After giving an
overview of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument and Dale’s Cone of Experience, she led a discussion about the variety of ways people approach the world, process their experiences, make decisions, and remember what they learn. After considering effective methods for introducing material to adult learners and the skills necessary for giving dynamic presentations, the participants were ready to begin preparing their own presentations.

The 15 mediators were divvied into pairs to teach 15-20 minute sessions on topics such as “Beginning a Mediation,” “Accumulating Information,” and “Local Rules and Procedures.” And this is about the time when things started getting really interesting, according to Ms Press. First, participants misconstrued what they were expected to do for their presentations: they thought they were supposed to create some sort of meta-teaching experience that would involve outlining what they might talk about to a roomful of prospective mediators. Then, participants balked a bit at the prospect of having to do critiques of their peers’ presentations, thinking they’d be “too soft” on one another. But once Ms Press explained that this was a practical exercise for which they would have to do an actual presentation—with real content—as if they were truly training a group of nascent mediators, and once she assured them that the peer critiques would indeed be helpful, the workshop really started to get lively and engaging, and participants quickly recognized the wisdom underpinning her teaching strategy.

Ms Press was very enthusiastic about the workshop generally, but she mentioned two aspects that she found especially heartening. First, in their evaluations, the participants were emphatically grateful for the workshop’s usefulness, stressing that it taught them essential skills and provided them with experiences and materials that they can immediately put into practice. And, second, she believes the workshop has set the participants on the path of developing a mediation program with a decidedly Jordanian signature, and she offered the following as an illustration of her conviction: among the choices for presentation topics was “The Context of Mediation Within Alternative Dispute Resolution,” and the group that chose this topic focused on the seeds of mediation and dispute resolution within an Islamic perspective (i.e., in the Koran). “This is exactly why the Jordanians need to take on the development of this program themselves,” she explained: “It needs to reflect their own cultural norms and values.” She has every reason to feel confident that it will. Thanks to Ms Press’ capable instruction, Jordanian mediators are now trained and ready to put together a program designed specifically for prospective Jordanian mediators.

Save This Date

17th Annual Dispute Resolution Center Conference, August 28-30
The 2008 DRC Conference for Mediators and Arbitrators is scheduled for August 28-30 (Labor Day weekend) in Orlando, Florida. There will be a Supreme Court approved court-ordered arbitration training on Thursday, August 28, followed by a day and a half conference featuring Professor James Cobin, Hamline University; Professor James J. Alfini, South Texas University Law School; and over 30 concurrent session options. For more information, call (850) 921-2910 or email DRCmail@flcourts.org.
Long-Range Plan

Public Opinion Telephone Survey Results Will Help Shape the New Strategic Plan

As reported in the spring 2008 issue of the Full Court Press (for article, go to page 2), a decade has passed since Florida’s court system produced its current long-range plan, and the Task Force on Judicial Branch Planning, chaired by Eleventh Circuit Chief Judge Joseph P. Farina, has begun to re-evaluate the five original long-range planning issues and thereby set the stage for re-configuring the map that will guide the court system into the future.

To develop a strategic plan that will be both visionary and useful, the task force has embarked upon a comprehensive outreach initiative, the first step of which—a public opinion survey—was recently completed. Survey questions were developed and approved by the task force, with the support of OSCA’s Strategic Planning Unit, and the survey was conducted by OpinionWorks, a full-service market research firm, in January and February of this year.

The public opinion survey had seven objectives: it was designed to understand respondents’ attitudes toward public institutions; their knowledge of and experience with Florida’s courts; their sources of information about the courts; their perceptions of barriers to access; their perceptions of court performance; their overall opinion of Florida’s court system; and their perceptions of key issues facing the courts as well as suggestions for improvement.

Altogether, OpinionWorks completed 2,076 telephone field interviews, which is a “healthy sample size,” according to OpinionWorks President Steve Raabe. Via videoconference from the supreme court at the end of March, he presented the results to and discussed them with members of the task force and Judicial Management Council as well as a number of judges and court administrators around the state. According to Mr. Raabe, the large sample size and the random selection of survey participants produced results with a high level of statistical reliability, thus offering a trustworthy snapshot of the opinions of Floridians.

Also, he noted that, because of the large sample size, the surveys, which were conducted both in English and Spanish, allow for analysis by demographics, court experience, and geography. As Chief Judge Farina emphasized, this is the first time the court system has been involved in a statistically valid public opinion research initiative that can be generalized to the state’s population—and it provides the task force with a valid measure of public perceptions of the courts against which to assess the court system’s progress.
Before presenting and reviewing the survey results, Mr. Raabe did offer a few caveats. He remarked that people are in what he called “a cranky economic mood,” which is likely to have colored their opinions. Also, election years tend to affect negatively the way people view most government institutions and functions. Moreover, he emphasized, these surveys are about “people’s perceptions—which aren’t necessarily in sync with reality.” Nonetheless, Mr. Raabe reminded videoconference participants that the court system does have to address and take seriously people’s perceptions of reality—and that perceptions often can be improved when an institution does a more effective job of educating the public about what it does.

Keeping all of that in mind, “The court system fared pretty well overall,” remarked Joanne Snair, senior court operations consultant with OSCA’s Strategic Planning Unit. In terms of people’s “confidence in public institutions,” Florida’s court system ranks on a par with local (city and county) government—which is “not unusual” and suggests that the courts “are not in bad company,” Mr. Raabe noted.

Among the more interesting results, Mr. Raabe and Ms Snair mentioned the following. While African-Americans tend to have the least confidence in the courts, Hispanics tend to have the most confidence, with Caucasians figuring somewhere in the middle. Also, people who are foreign-born tend to have more confidence in the courts than those who are native-born. The other two groups of people who have the most confidence in the courts are jurors and those with graduate degrees. As for those who have been involved in a Florida court matter in the last five years, their responses seem to reflect the outcome of their court case: those who perceive the outcome as unfavorable tend to have less confidence in the courts, while those who perceive the outcome as favorable tend to have more confidence in the courts. This finding is inconsistent with previous research on courts in Florida and other states, which has found that litigants’ level of confidence in the courts is more strongly related to their perception of procedural fairness or procedural justice than to the outcome of their court case. Understandably, people’s confidence in the courts may be influenced by a variety of factors, highlighting one of the areas in which additional research is needed.

This telephone survey, of course, represents only one small piece of the task force’s enormous outreach initiative; the true picture will emerge once all the different streams of information are collected and analyzed. Still to come are online surveys of court users (jurors, parties/litigants), attorneys, judicial officers, and court staff. Following that will be public forums in various locations around the state as well as meetings with justice system partners (state attorneys, public defenders, representatives from state agencies like the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Children and Families). Then, focus groups, which will include people from throughout the court system as well as justice system partners, will be gathered to sort through all this feedback, identify issues and trends, and suggest priorities that the strategic plan may want to address. All of this information will inform the draft of the strategic plan—which is the culminating task, and the responsibility of the task force. The delicately-balanced product of all these efforts will be a strategic plan that helps the judicial branch carry out its mission as effectively as possible.

FLORIDA STATE COURTS STRATEGIC PLANNING
Your Input...the Court’s Future
Awards and Honors

Senior Judge Seymour Gelber, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, received The Florida Bar’s Selig I. Goldin Memorial Award for his outstanding contributions to Florida’s criminal justice system.

Judge Nancy Moate Ley, Sixth Judicial Circuit, was awarded the John U. Bird Distinguished Jurist Award by the Clearwater Bar Association.

Former Chief Justice Ben Overton received a Lifetime of Exemplary Judicial Achievement Award from the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers for his service to the legal profession and his dedication to family law.

Judge E.J. Salcines, Second DCA, was honored by the Hillsborough County Commission with the Ellsworth G. Simmons Good Government Award.

Pam Morris, Judicial Assistant for Judge Randall G. McDonald, Tenth Judicial Circuit, received a Davis Productivity Award for creating a new model to streamline the extradition process, reducing average inmate stays in jail from 105 to 28.7 days per defendant and avoiding over $599,000 in jail costs in the first nine months of the program. Mrs. Morris is the first JA in the state to receive this prestigious award.

In Memoriam

Retired Judge Donald O. Hartwell served on the bench in the Second Judicial Circuit from 1974-1986; he was chief judge from January 1985 until he retired in December 1986.

Retired Judge Walter Bernard Lagergren, Sr., served on the bench in Escambia County from 1973-1986.


Please forward information about judges and court personnel who receive awards or honors for their professional contributions to the branch: schwartzb@flcourts.org
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<td>Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) &amp; Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) Annual Conference, Anchorage, AK</td>
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Under the direction of
Supreme Court Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis
State Courts Administrator Elisabeth H. Goodner
Deputy State Courts Administrator Blan L. Teagle
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