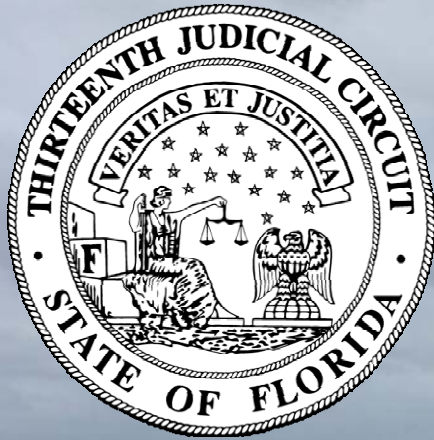


Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court



Chief Judge Manuel Menendez, Jr.

Vision

The Vision of the Administrative Office of the Courts, 13th Judicial Circuit, is to foster an environment for the accessible, efficient, and effective administration of justice.



Values

Diversity/Access

We acknowledge, encourage, reflect, and connect with the ever-changing face of our community. We provide new avenues to improve access to the court.

Case Resolution

We support the independent constitutional role of the judiciary by managing non-judicial court functions and providing supporting resources, allowing the judges to focus on the advancement of cases to a resolution.

Resource Management

We inspire public trust by adhering to the highest standards in the use of public resources and the delivery of service.

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

Chief Judge Manuel Menendez, Jr.

	Contact Information:
	Telephone 813-272-5022
	Facsimile 813-272-7224
	Kim Cash Judicial Assistant Email cashka@fljud13.org

Trial Court Administrator Mike Bridenback

Public Information Officer Calvin Green

	Contact Information:
	Telephone 813-272-5894
	Facsimile 813-301-3800
	Email bridenml@fljud13.org

Contact Information:
Telephone 813-307-4798
Facsimile
Email greencl@fljud13.org

Total Caseload FY 2006-07

2007-08 numbers are pending

Below, the total number of cases filed under the Circuit and County courts in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida for the Fiscal Year 2006-07 according to Florida's Trial Courts Statistical Reference Guide

Circuit/ County	Circuit Court					County Court			Total
	Criminal	Civil	Family Court	Probate	Total	Criminal	Civil	Total	
Hillsborough	19,826	14,022	26,024	5,780	65,652	81,395	141,885	223,280	288,932
Circuit 13	19,826	14,022	26,024	5,780	65,652	81,395	141,885	223,280	288,932

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

Statistical Information



62 Judges (45 Circuit Judges / 17 County Court Judges)



Annual Trial Court Budget (FY 2008-2009) : \$25,597,270

Population Data

County	2000	2008	2010
Hillsborough	998,948	1,206,948	1,234,930
Total	998,948	1,206,948	1,234,930

Provided by Florida Legislature Office of Economic and Demographic Research Estimates/ Projections

Thirteenth Circuit Legislators

Senators	District
Storms, Ronda	10
Crist, Victor D.	12
Justice, Charlie	16
Joyner, Arthenia L.	18

Representatives	District
Ambler, Kevin	47
Rouson, Darryl	55
Burgin, Rachel	56
Culp, Faye	57
Scionti, Michael	58
Reed, Betty	59
Homan, Ed	60
Weatherford, Will	61
Glorioso, Richard "Rich"	62
McKeel, Seth	63
Reagan, Ron	67
Galvano, Bill	68

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

Courthouses



Edgecomb Courthouse
800 E. Twiggs Street



Old Courthouse
419 Pierce Street



Courthouse Annex
800 E. Kennedy Blvd.



Courthouse North Annex
801 E. Twiggs Street



Plant City Courthouse
302 N. Michigan Avenue



Floriland Mall (Civil Traffic)
9309 N. Florida Avenue



Children's Justice Center
Supervised Visitation Program
700 E. Twiggs Street



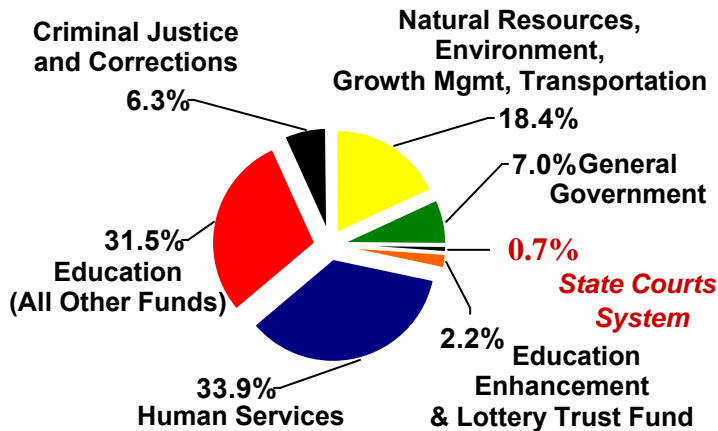
Children's Advocacy Center
at Mary Lee's House
2806 South Armenia

Budgets

Florida's Budget

Fiscal Year 2007-2008

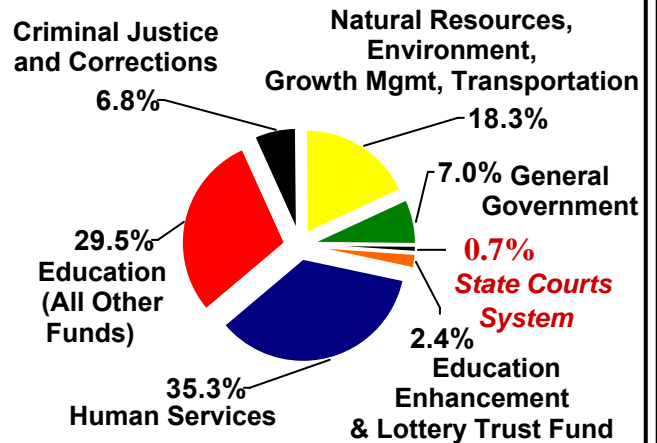
\$71,953,311,480



Florida's Budget

Fiscal Year 2008-2009

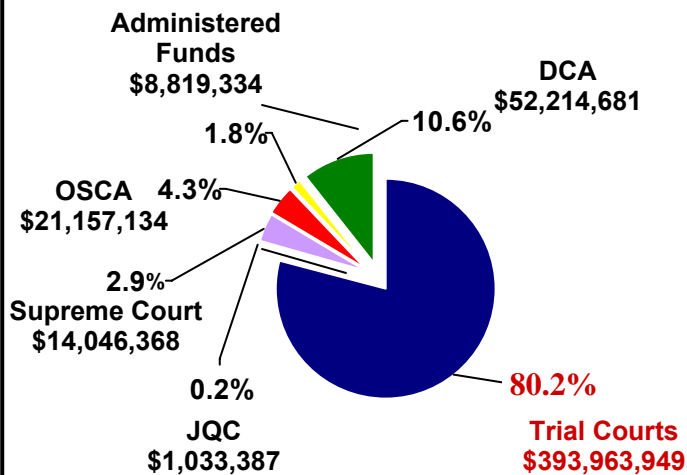
\$66,199,586,152



State Courts System's Budget

Fiscal Year 2007-2008 (Effective 7/1/07)

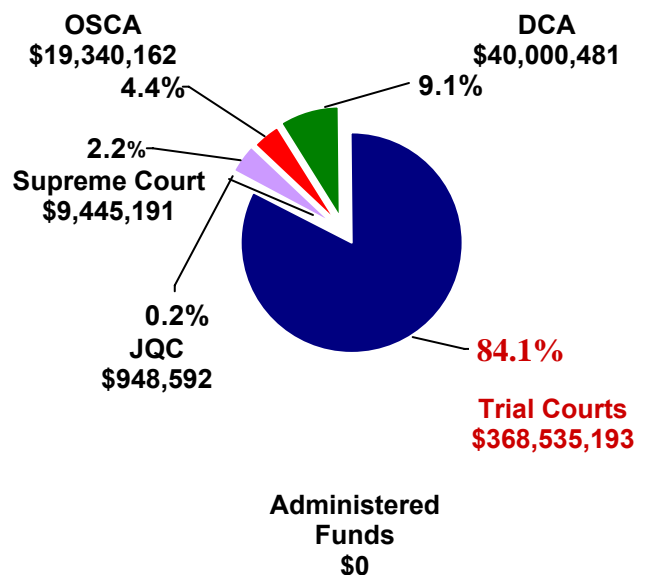
\$491,234,853



State Courts System's Budget

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 (Effective 7/1/08)

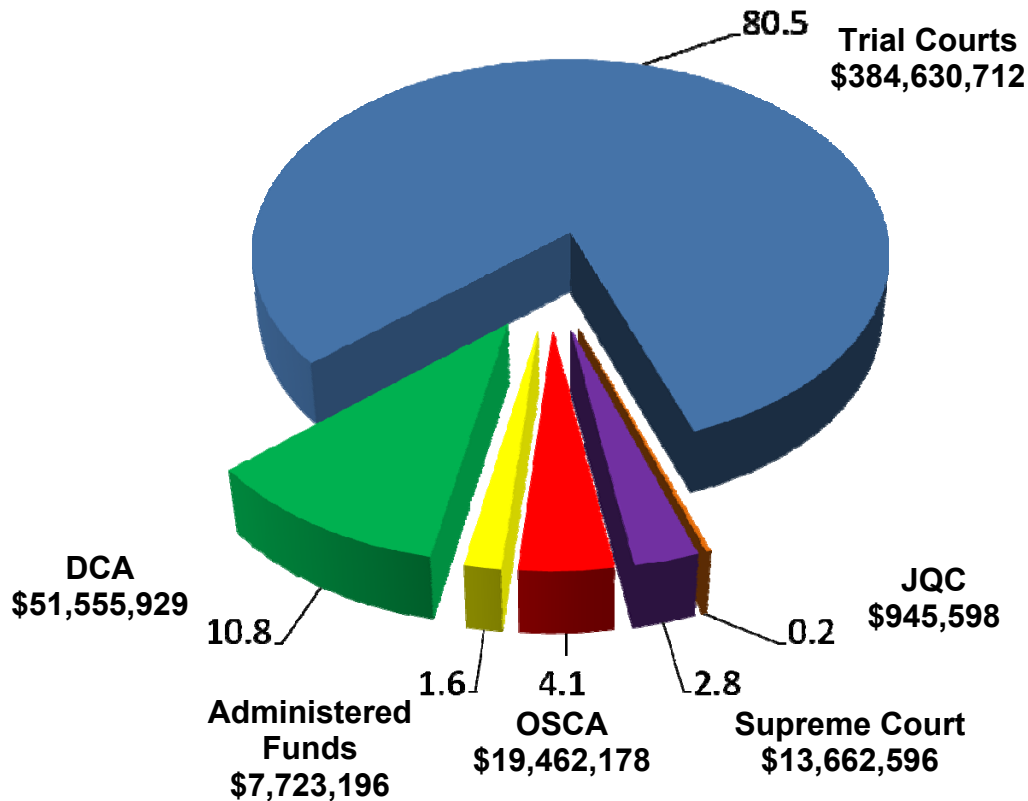
\$438,269,619



*See explanation regarding Budget Cuts on page 6

State Courts System Appropriations FY 2007-08 AFTER Special Session C and HB 7009 Reduction

Total Budget: \$ 477,980,209



Cuts already made

- FY 2007-08 – \$26 million in recurring general revenue (6 percent) after Special Session C
- FY 2008-09 – \$18 million in recurring general revenue (4 percent) after HB 7009 (March 2008)
- Two-year total – \$44 million in recurring general revenue (10 percent) and 280 jobs

Cuts still to come

September 2008

The Governor has ordered a 4 percent holdback of the cash release for the FY 08-09 budget, in addition to the reductions already made. The chief justice ordered a similar holdback for the Judicial Branch but has secured an agreement with the legislature to look for other alternatives for the courts' salary budget to avoid significant additional staff reductions this fall.

December 2008/ January 2009

Rumors of a Special Session to cut the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year Budget.

Impact of Legislative Budget Reductions to the Judiciary

If cuts continue to be made, significant alterations in the deployment of judicial resources will occur.

Cases would be prioritized, with criminal cases and family cases that have mandated time-frames being heard first.

- Further layoffs of staff will significantly impair court operations, forcing citizens to wait substantially longer for court action.
- Civil traffic hearing officers are being eliminated, slowing disposition of these cases.
- With criminal and certain family cases getting priority, significant delays will be seen in many civil cases. **Businesses across all sectors would be impacted:**
- Banks, title companies, real estate brokers, and other related industries would see delays in foreclosures, guardianship cases, estate settlements, bank access to property determinations, and real estate transactions.
- Business contract disputes would take longer to resolve.
- Landlords seeking to evict tenants who don't pay their rent would have to wait longer to regain possession of their property.
- Worker compensation cases would be delayed, increasing the bottom line cost to employers in terms of time spent, benefits paid and attorney fees.

Due Process

Essential to the rule of law is the concept that people are constitutionally entitled to judicial due process when their liberty or other fundamental rights are at stake.

- when they face jail time
- when they face losing custody of their children
- when they face institutional commitment without their consent

A person facing these possibilities is entitled to essential elements of the court system before the authority of the state may be brought to bear. Such services include:

- court reporting services
- language interpretation

If the courts are forced to cut their budgets for these due process services, criminal and family cases cannot move through the system. The courts will be unable to comply with speedy trial requirements or process family matters on a timely basis. As a result:

- local jail overcrowding will increase
- trials cannot occur; forcing release of those accused of crimes
- children will remain in foster care longer

Impact of Legislative Budget Reductions to the Thirteenth Circuit

Overall Circuit Impact

As a direct result of the Reduction in Force earlier in the year and the layoffs which occurred on June 30, 2008, the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit opened its courthouse doors to the public on July 1, 2008, with 8.3% less employees than on June 30, 2008. Additionally, the circuit's budget was reduced by \$300,000 in operating expense, \$50,000 in due process expense and \$140,000 in civil traffic expense monies.

In addition to reductions in the court's budget, court staff, which are already paid 50% less than comparable government workers, are facing yet another year without any pay adjustments. As a result, 11 staff members have left the circuit for jobs in other public sector agencies since July 1, 2007.

Court Information/Access

On July 1, 2008, access to justice in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit was noticeably different for some constituents who walk through the courthouse doors. The layoffs which occurred on June 30, 2008, were immediate as the public sought inquiry at a vacant Information Booth that last year provided directions to almost 100,000 people, who appeared lost in the courthouse complex looking for one of 62 judges or 10 magistrates and hearing officers, most of the time trying to find a hearing without a notice or subpoena in hand (which ultimately result in court delays and prolonged court sessions), or simply trying to find out where to start with the process of filing for divorce or domestic violence injunction.

Circuit Court

Civil

Although the reduction in force and layoffs has not affected all circuit civil divisions, the current state economy coupled with the nation's financial market is directly impacting all civil divisions due to the substantial increase in mortgage foreclosure actions. In calendar year 2007, the 13th circuit's total number of mortgage foreclosure filings was 9,644. For the time period January, 2008 through September, 2008, mortgage foreclosure filings are 15,241, an average of 1,693 filings per month. This monthly average equates to 188 foreclosure filings alone per circuit civil division. In order to deal with the increased volume of cases several civil divisions are conducting separate mortgage foreclosure dockets. The inevitable result due to this increase is a delay in the processing of other civil actions which will directly impact individual citizens, consumers and the business community.

A case manager for the complex business litigation division was eliminated resulting in delays in the processing of the case files in this division. (In addition, due to the elimination of case management services a cap on the number of cases assigned to the division has been established.)

Criminal

A felony division was also shutdown temporarily because of the court budget cuts, as well as those incurred by both the state attorney and public defender. As a result, those cases were redistributed to the other remaining divisions. In August, a 3rd felony trial division was created to assist with handling jury trials in the aftermath of the elimination of the felony division. (See attached Administrative Order S-2008-122).

Drug Courts

As a direct result of the courts budget cuts and layoffs, the drug court programs are currently operating day to day under a decentralized management structure which prior to cuts was one of the responsibilities of the drug court coordinator, who also served as the face of the program in building community support, performing outreach and fostered collaboration amongst treatment providers and other agencies. The drug court programs longstanding tradition to locate and sustain funding opportunities through grant revenues has been hampered by the loss of this position. These full-time efforts are now shared amongst two (2) supervisory staff members. The cut in the case management element has resulted in the increase workload of court staff in each specialized drug court which affects the overall case management services provided to the court.

Impact of Legislative Budget Reductions to the Thirteenth Circuit (continued)

Unified Family Court

Pro se litigants in family court were impacted by the reduction in employees. The cuts in the case management element required us to reduce services to pro se litigants in family cases. In 2007-08, our family case management unit in the Family Law divisions assisted more than 9,600 pro se litigants, 50% of which had their cases disposed of within 90 days of filing. To maintain the 90 day disposition rate will not be possible with the reduction in case management staff and at a minimum, the court administrator projects that approximately 1,000 pro se litigants will not be helped due to the reduction in resources. Maintaining the same level of customer service to pro se litigants will be impacted by the fact that case managers will no longer respond to each and every pro se filing within a 2 - 3 day time frame. In an attempt to operationally combat the cuts in case management staff, maintain dispositional efficiencies and minimize the impact of the cuts to pro se litigants, the 13th circuit created a separate pro se division effective October 1, 2008, which in turn impacts the workload of other divisions and delay the processing of other family law proceedings. (See attached Administrative Order S-2008-128).

Administrative position cuts have affected the case management support of the Dependency divisions in the processing of pro se motions. Dependency case managers are now responsible for handling this function which requires 1 – 3 hours every day of the case managers time. As a result, the overall case management services provided to the court are negatively impacted which in turn creates greater delays with the placement of children or reunification of families.

Probate

Administrative position cuts have affected the support of the Probate and Guardianship division in the processing of guardianship reviews. The backlog of guardianship reviews is beginning to increase as a result.

Mental Health

After facilitating multiple meetings with community stakeholders, developing the criteria for the types of cases that would be accepted for this division and identifying with the clerk of court's office all existing Chapter 915 cases for judicial review, plans to implement a mental health court were suspended due to court budget cuts, as well as those incurred by both the state attorney and public defender.

County Court

The Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer Program was slated to end earlier this year due to state budget cuts, but Hillsborough County provided temporary continuation revenue through September 30, 2009. It is likely that our CTHIO program will be eliminated after that date. If permanent state funding cannot be acquired, the 13th circuit will have to assign a county judge currently handling small claims and landlord tenant cases to assume this civil traffic division. The civil traffic docket involved over 60,000 hearings in 2007. A typical county civil division's caseload includes around 4,500 pending cases, plus 700 new case filings each month. With the reduction of one county civil division to hear civil traffic cases, the remaining four county divisions will have rising caseloads to 5,500 pending cases and 875 new case filings each month. The inevitable result is delay in the processing of these cases which involve both individual citizens and small businesses.

Legal Department

The hiring freeze, in combination with the departure of one (1) Senior Trial Court Law Clerk and two (2) Trial Court Law Clerks, necessitated a reorganization of law clerk resources in order to provide continuing support for the 13th Judicial Circuit's 62 Circuit and County Judges. The full-time law clerk previously devoted to the Complex Business Litigation Division now splits her time among three (3) judges. The Unified Family Court (family law, domestic violence and juvenile) is now only staffed by one law clerk instead of two. The criminal judges have one less law clerk to assist with pretrial and postconviction relief matters. The Legal Department's provision of legal research to quasi-judicial officers (general magistrates and hearings officers) has been suspended. An outstanding candidate for a law clerk vacancy who desired to work for Thirteenth Judicial Circuit was forced to accept an associate position with a local law firm instead.

Impact of Legislative Budget Reductions to the Thirteenth Circuit (continued)

Due Process

Court Interpreting

The budget cuts in court interpreting will be offset with contractual dollars. At some point in the next year, due to increased demands for language interpretation, the 13th circuit will most likely have to transfer operating funds to supplement this service.

Based upon the growth rate experienced by the State of Florida and the resulting increase in demand for language interpretation services, coupled with the recent mandatory certification requirements for interpreters, the state court system will need additional recurring due process contractual dollars to attract qualified and certified contractual interpreters to meet the ever increasing demand for this due process service.

Expert Witness

Since FY 2004-05, expert witness due process funds have been significantly underfunded to meet the demand associated with psychological evaluations. The chronic underfunding of this element creates year end budget issues requiring circuit's to internally shift dollars from within other due process budget categories to cover expert evaluation expenditures.

State Court System

Legislative Budget Request

Fiscal Year 2009-10

Currently, work continues at all levels of the court system to ***maintain*** during this economic downturn period. In addition, a solution to keep the court system from being so financially disabled that Florida's Judiciary becomes dysfunctional as a branch of government is being developed.

The people's rights and freedoms are dependent upon an independent judiciary having sufficient fiscal and human resources to address all cases brought before the courts. Our nation is different in this world. We give our citizens and business entities the constitutional right to challenge government authority and seek relief before the independent judicial branch of government. Action that limits the courts' resources restricts their ability to enforce those rights and protect freedoms. Because of our belief in people's rights and freedoms, the people of Florida in 1998 gave the legislature new and increased responsibility to provide state funding for all Florida courts and to promote "uniformity" of justice irrespective of geography. The citizens wanted equity throughout the court system and to ensure "Justice for All Floridians" was provided.

The 2009-2010 Legislative Budget Requests for the Judicial Branch for new issues include necessary funds for building, facilities, maintenance, and operational upkeep; technology needs, and restoring some of the cuts the legislature made last session.

Our goals for the 2009 Legislative Session are to avoid additional budget reductions that would be devastating to the third branch of government and to secure a stabilized funding source for the future of the judicial branch of government.

Note: Only Trial Court issues included in this document.

TRIAL COURTS

► Due Process Issues: 48 FTE, \$6,684,096 (\$2,690,396 non-recurring)

- Court Reporting: additional funding required for digital court reporters, digital court reporting equipment maintenance costs, equipment expansion and re-fresh, and development of digital recordation software – 33 FTE, \$5,737,594 (\$2,648,921 non-recurring)
- Court Interpreting: increase in demand for court interpreting services – 15 FTE, \$946,502 (\$41,475 non-recurring)

TOTAL: 48 FTE, \$6,484,096
(\$2,690,396 non- recurring)

State Court System Legislative Budget Request Fiscal Year 2009-10

CERTIFICATION OF NEED FOR ADDITIONAL JUDGESHIPS - Placeholder

► **Circuit Courts: 46 FTE, \$5,326,089 (\$127,190 non-recurring)**

- 19 Judges, 19 Judicial Assistants, and 8 Law Clerks

► **County Courts: 84 FTE, \$10,149,971 (\$232,260 non-recurring)**

- 42 Judges and 42 Judicial Assistants

► **Florida Cases Southern 2nd Reporter: \$100,650**

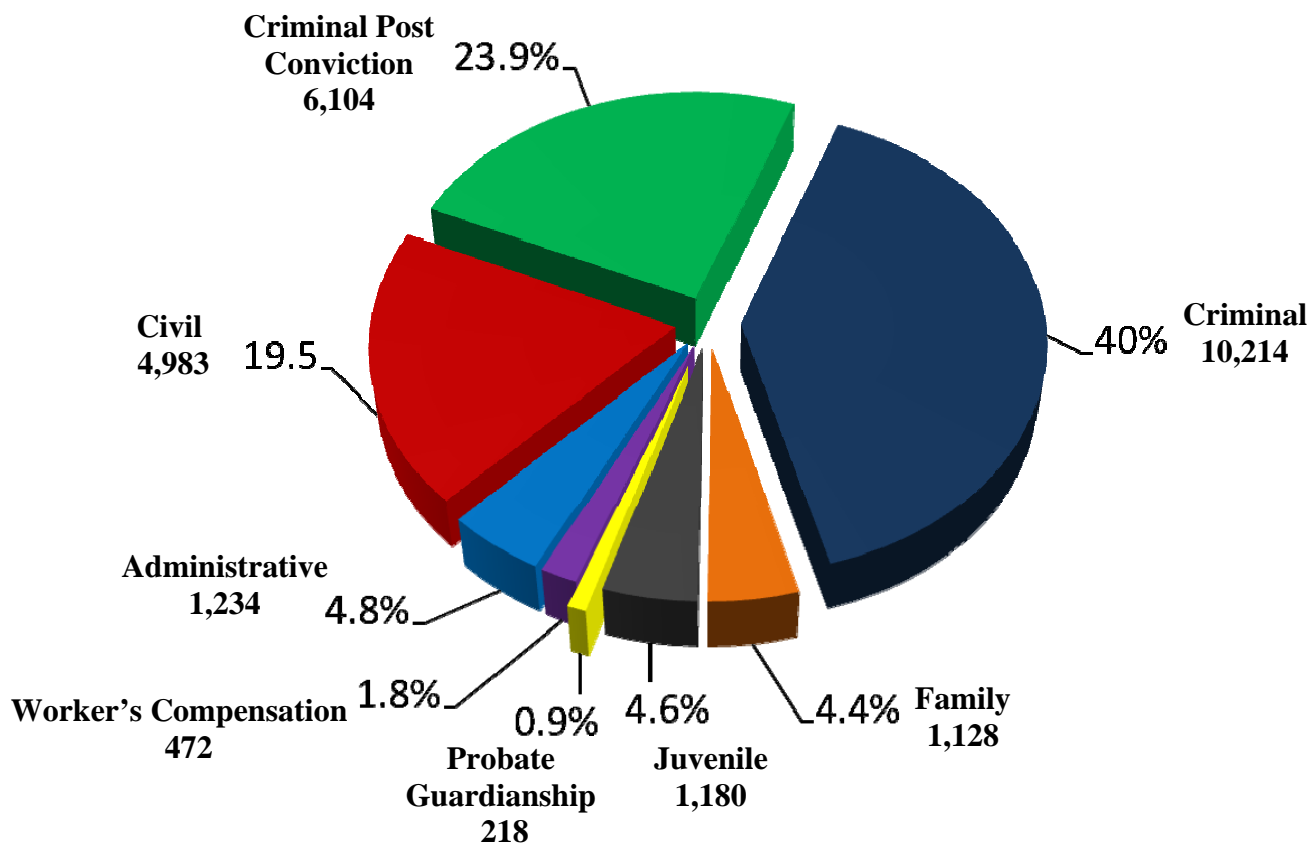
TOTAL: 130 FTE, \$15,576,710
(\$359,450 non-recurring)

Judgeship Needs

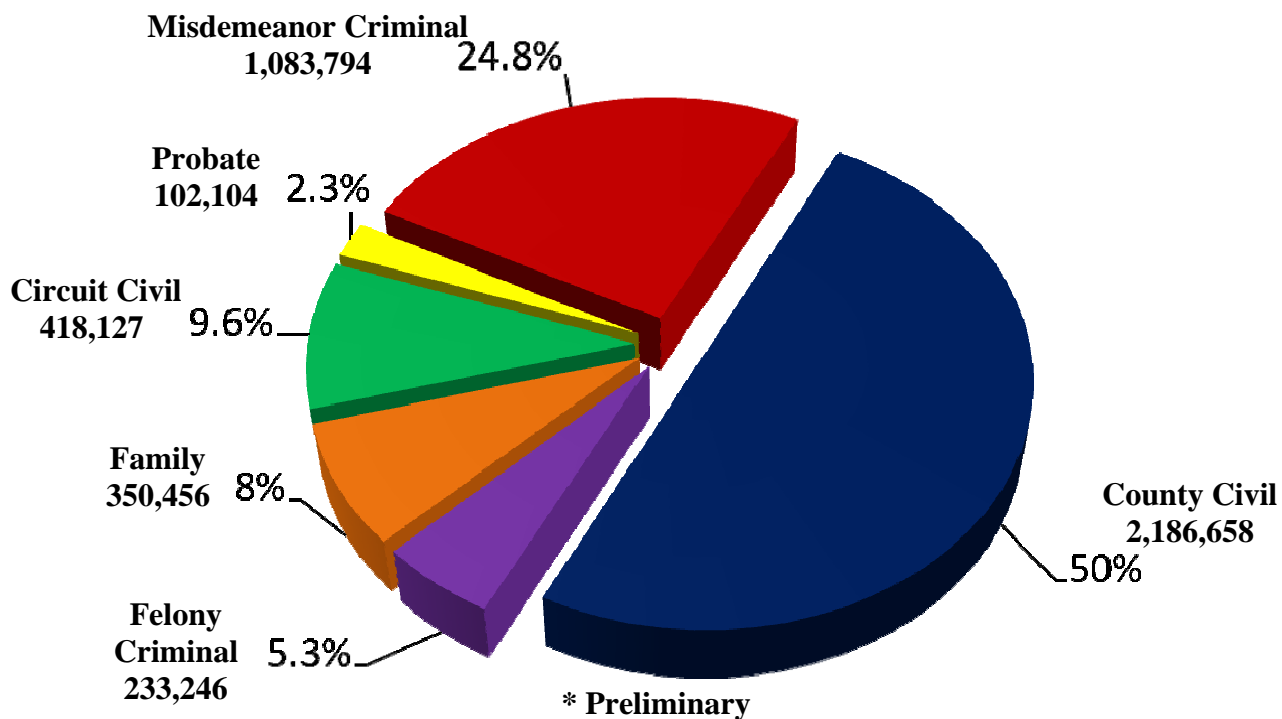
Year	Certified	Funded
FY 2009-10	Pending Supreme Court Order	TBD
FY 2008-09	61	0
FY 2007-08	37	0
FY 2006-07	66	55
FY 2005-06	110	59
FY 2004-05	88	0
FY 2003-04	56	0
FY 2002-03	49	18
FY 2001-02	44	27
FY 2000-01	43	0

2007-2008 CASE FILINGS

DCA



Circuit/County*



Court Structure

Appellate Courts

Supreme Court

- *Seven justices, six-year terms
- *Sits in Tallahassee
- *Five justices constitute a quorum

District Courts of Appeal

- *61 judges, six-year terms
- *Five districts:
 - 1st District Tallahassee: 15 judges
 - 2nd District Lakeland: 14 judges
 - 3rd District Miami: 11 judges
 - 4th District West Palm Beach: 12 judges
 - 5th District Daytona Beach: 10 judges

- *Cases generally reviewed by three-judge panels

Positions— In fiscal year 1995-96 the legislature authorized 892 staff positions. In fiscal year 2004-05, the year of Revision 7, the legislature authorized 2,206.5 staff positions. For the previous fiscal year 2007-08 the legislature authorized 3,408.5 staff positions. In the current fiscal year of 2008-09, the legislature has authorized 3,140.25 staff positions. These numbers **do not** include Judges (990).

Courtrooms- Almost 900 courtrooms are utilized in the state of Florida.

Court Interpreters- Court Interpreters provide services in over 50 different languages around the state.

Trial Courts

Circuit Courts

- *599 judges, six-year terms
- *20 judicial circuits
 - *Number of judges in each circuit based on caseload
 - *Judges preside individually, not on panels

County Courts

- *322 judges, six-year terms
- *At least one judge in each of the 67 counties
- *Judges preside individually, not on panels

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Structure

Judicial Facts

Every Floridian is likely to be touched by the judicial branch of government. Whether as a plaintiff or a defendant in a business or property dispute, a personal injury case, a child in a custody dispute, a victim of violent crime, an heir in a probate proceeding, or a witness, juror or attorney, most Floridians interact with a court in some direct way during their lifetime. *Florida TaxWatch*

The Judicial budget is less than 0.7% of the 2008-2009 General Appropriations Act. **58.6% is for judges and judges assistants (General Revenue).**

Floridians get good value for the money spent on their state court system. The total dollar amount (\$1.15 billion) for the state courts system plus state attorneys, public defenders and the Justice Administrative Commission for FY 2006-07 is 1.6% of Florida's \$71.3 billion budget. *Florida Tax Watch*

Cases continue to increase The work of the district courts and trial courts continues to grow. Overall, **4.5 million cases** were filed in the trial courts last year, **up 12 percent from two years ago**. The latest statistics show the following increases in specific areas (from FY 05-06 to FY 07-08):

- Capital murder has increased by 20 percent.
- Robbery has increased by 47 percent.
- Small claim cases have increased by 40 percent.
- Civil cases up to \$15,000 have increased by 37 percent.
- contract cases increased by 42 percent.
- real property / mortgage foreclose has **increased by 365 percent!**

In the District Courts Criminal Post Conviction filings have increased by 15 percent over the last 4 years (5 percent increase from 06/07 to 07/08). This increase is a direct result of the increase in prison admissions in the last 4 years of 29% (approximately 10 percent from 06/07 to 07/08).

The Circuit Civil Division In October, the OSCA figures give a statewide foreclosure filing explosion of 374.5 percent, or growth from 9,907 in **2004-2005** to 284,263 in **2007-08**.

Legislative Mandates Florida's courts are struggling to fully meet all state and federal requirements at a time of diminished resources. Many child custody cases now contain allegations of domestic violence and substance or child abuse. Many of these cases are self represented litigants and courts struggle to proceed in a fair and effective manner. Criminal, civil and traffic laws are more complex, require more judicial time and increasing as the state experiences population and economic difficulties.

Complex procedures Statutory requirements affecting juvenile dependency cases require multiple post-disposition hearings and intensive judicial oversight, as well as increased responsibilities for counsel representing parents and children. Dependency cases are also governed by strict federal and state timeframes.

Overburdened legal system The Florida legal system is confronting and seeking answers to fundamental questions, such as how the courts will be able to adequately exercise their responsibilities to monitor guardianship cases and protect the incapacitated adults entrusted to their care. There are between 30,000 and 40,000 open guardianship cases in Florida at any given time and the number continues to grow.

Judicial Facts

A top priority for the branch has been to have a successful trial court funding transition; a transition that ensures courts can continue to fulfill their constitutional obligation effectively and efficiently; a transition that assures citizens and businesses experience no disruption in accessing their courts.

The budgetary unification of the trial courts was the critical first step in ending the fiscal fragmentation that previously resulted in disparities in the equality and availability of essential court services.

Over the last several years, the judicial branch has worked with the governor, the legislature and other stakeholders to implement the constitutional amendment known as Revision 7 to Article V. The primary objectives were fulfilled. The state assumed the greater share of funding for the trial court system. Resource inequities that existed among trial courts were substantially eliminated. The legislature set in statutes the “core” elements of the trial courts such as case management, court interpreting, court reporting, court appointed expert witnesses, masters and hearing officers and court administration. The will of Floridians, as expressed in the ballot language itself, was to make “justice less dependent on a county’s size or wealth” and to promote “uniformity” of justice irrespective of geography. The goal was equity and to provide “Justice for All Floridians”. Budget reductions continue to deteriorate this goal.

Florida is a national leader in issues relating to family courts and committed to strengthening the protection of our children, families, and the elderly.

It is the courts system’s responsibility to ensure that cases involving children are given adequate and appropriate attention. The courts are developing ways to expedite the processes that provide children with permanent safe, stable families.

Currently, Florida has the largest population of older adults in the United States. More than 16.6% of Florida’s population is 65 and older which is the greatest number per capita in the nation.

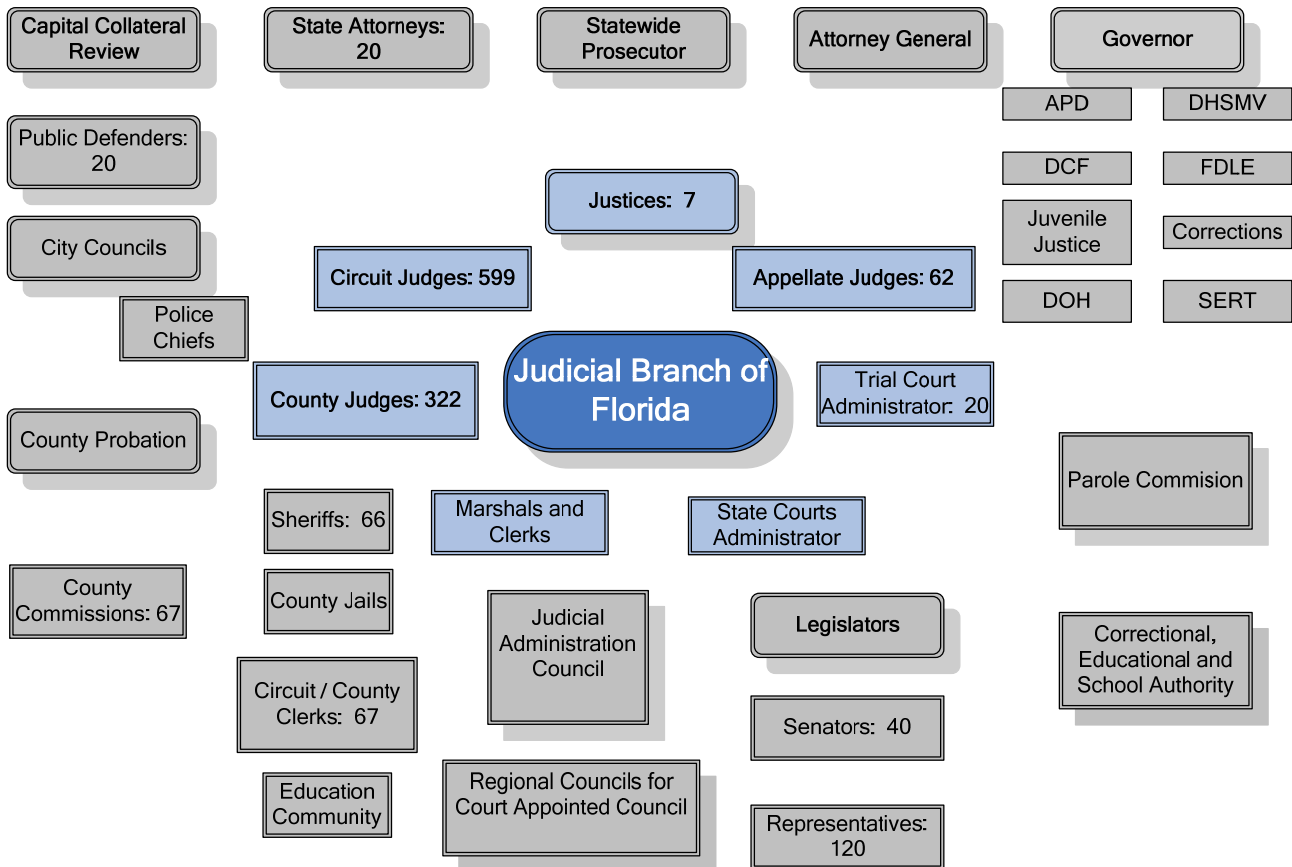
The number of judicial reviews of guardianship issues involving either a review of an annual plan or some other court actions continue to increase.

Equity and access The structure, operation, and funding of judicial branch activities and services should provide meaningful and equal access to justice in all courts of the state. The court system must also continue to conduct self-evaluations and advance efforts to eliminate from court operations bias that is based on: race; gender; ethnicity; age; disability, pursuant to Title II of the Americans with Disability Acts of 1990 (ADA); socioeconomic status; or any characteristic that is without legal relevance.

Independence & Interdependence The independence of the courts, in the adjudication of cases and the administration of the court system, is a cornerstone of American jurisprudence and government and must be maintained. Yet, it is equally important to recognize that the three branches of our government are jointly responsible for a well-functioning justice system and that the judicial branch must be accountable to the people of Florida for the expenditure of public funds and the efficiency of judicial operations.

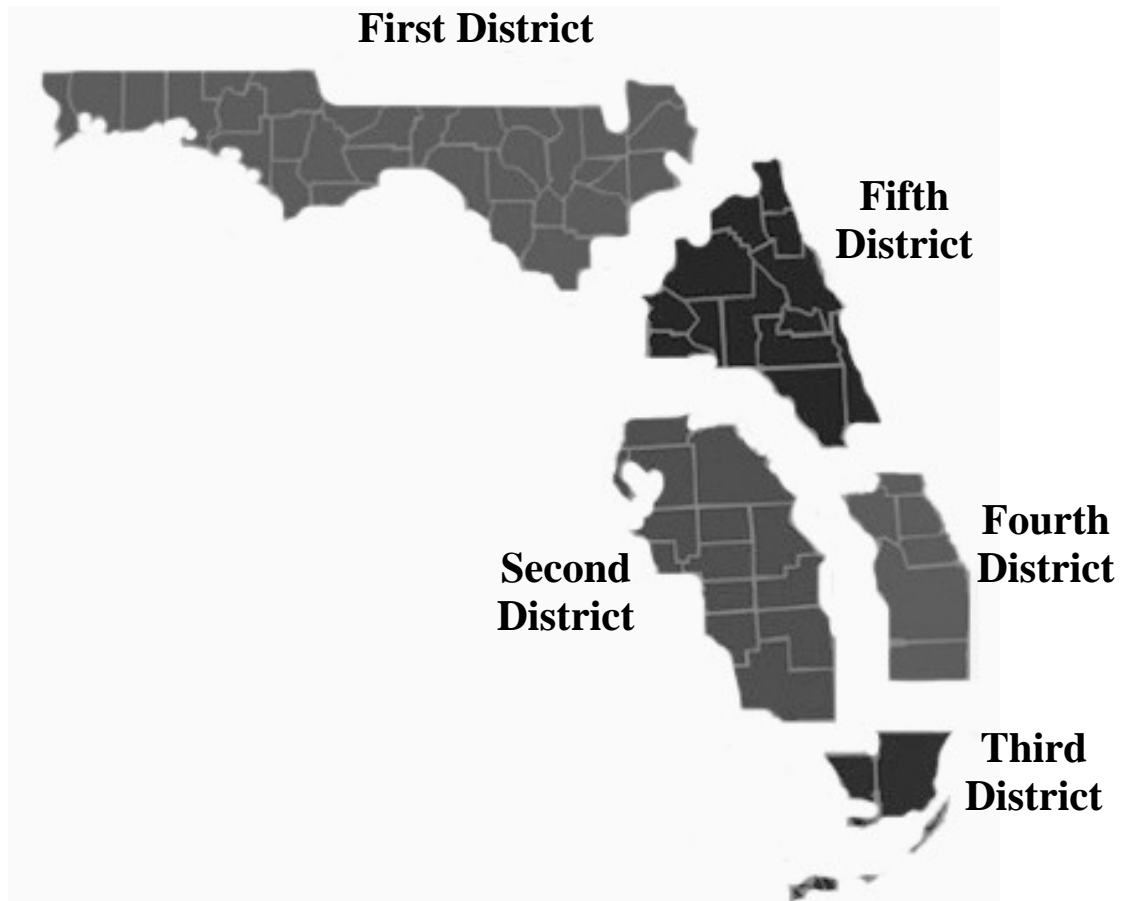
Responsiveness The courts must be responsive to the needs of the people. Just as Florida courts were responsive in creating drug courts, they are responding in other areas such as improving the management of cases in areas such as mental health and complex civil cases. Likewise, the courts are seeking improvement such as the standardization of jury instructions for business and contract disputes.

Florida's Justice System Serves the People



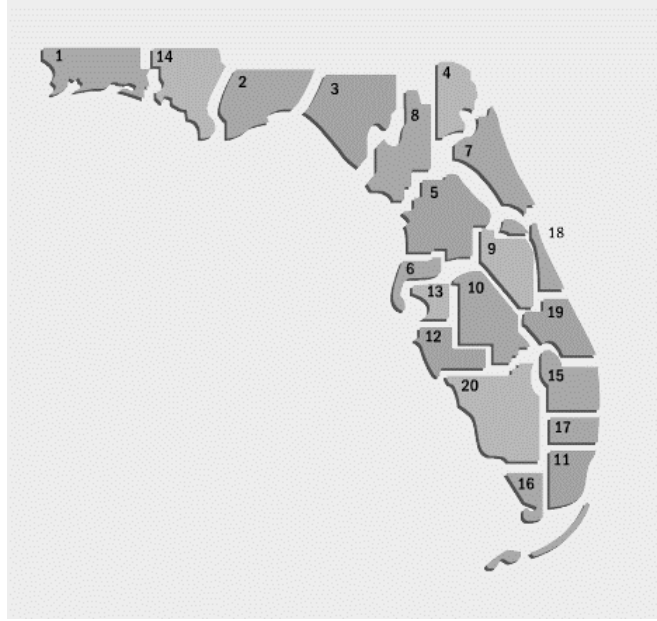
Florida's Justice system is made up of a wide range of independent, state, and local constitutional authorities, executive agencies and contract service providers who depend on Florida's court system.

Florida's Districts



Districts	Counties within each DCA
1st	Alachua, Baker, Bay, Bradford, Calhoun, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Gulf, Hamilton, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Nassau, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, Walton and Washington
2nd	Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota
3rd	Dade and Monroe
4th	Broward, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie
5th	Brevard, Citrus, Flagler, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Putnam, Seminole, St. Johns, Sumter and Volusia

Florida's Circuits



Circuit	Counties within
1st	Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton
2nd	Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, and Wakulla
3rd	Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor
4th	Clay, Duval and Nassau
5th	Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion and Sumter
6th	Pasco and Pinellas
7th	Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns and Volusia
8th	Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union
9th	Orange and Osceola
10th	Hardee, Highlands, and Polk
11th	Dade
12th	DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota
13th	Hillsborough
14th	Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson and Washington
15th	Palm Beach
16th	Monroe
17th	Broward
18th	Brevard and Seminole
19th	Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie
20th	Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee

Challenges of Today's Courts

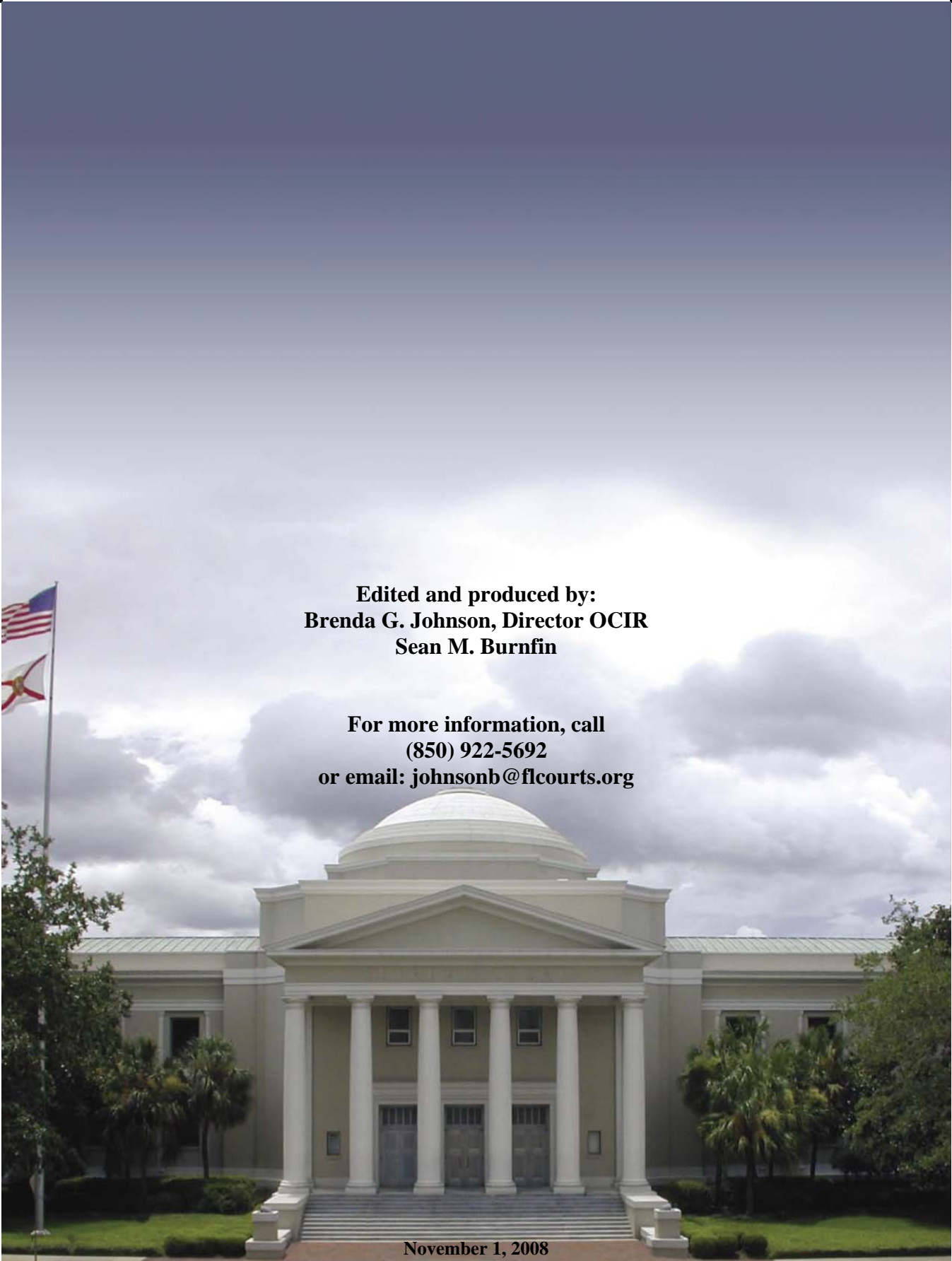
Clarifying the Role of the Courts – respect for judicial independence is a cornerstone of our system of government. While courts respect the unique roles of the legislature and executive branches, decisions made in the other branches can affect the administration of justice. Because these decisions are best made with input from the judicial branch, our courts continue to seek ways to provide appropriate input on matters relating to the administration of justice. The judiciary continues to collaborate with their justice system partners and members of the public on topical issues and trends affecting the administration of justice in Florida. Challenge: *To maintain a secure, strong foundation for the Judicial Branch of Florida.*

Improving the Administration of Justice - The Trial Court Budget Commission, the District Court of Appeal Budget Commission, the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability, the Commission on District Court of Appeal Performance and Accountability, the Florida Courts Technology Commission, and the Supreme Court collaborate in the development and presentation of legislative budget requests that accurately identify resource needs sufficient to carry out the mission of the State Court System and to coordinate the presentation and oversight of budgets consistent with statutory requirements. Challenge: *To maintain the collaborative effort to ensure justice in Florida is accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable. Also, to secure resources needed to carry out court operations including resources for dispute resolution, due process, technologies that enhance court services, and services to protect children, strengthen families and assist other vulnerable Floridians.*

Supporting Competence and Quality- Florida's judicial education program is among the best in the nation. Ongoing education of judges and court staff is critical to the maintenance of quality in the courts. Challenge: *To meet the educational needs for judges and court personnel so Florida's diverse population will be served well and without bias.*

Building Public Trust, Confidence and Enhancing Public Access and Service - The Judicial Branch must be accountable to the public and good stewards of the resources provided. Challenge: *To be accessible, fair, effective, responsive and accountable to the expectations of the public regarding the courts.*

Maintaining the court's fiscal needs during times when our state experience economic difficulties - Alexander Hamilton, in The Federalist Papers #22 said "Laws are a dead letter without courts to expound and define their true meaning and operations." The Constitution requires the courts to interpret and apply the laws that govern our state. Potential budget cuts would impact the day-to-day-operations of the courts and the people the court serves during a period when crime, family issues and mortgage foreclosures are increasing. President Lincoln enumerated the many blessing bestowed on the United States and in particular referred to the observance of law and order when he said that "in the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed every where except in the theatre of military conflict..." Challenge: *To secure adequate funding for the courts so that constitutional rights can be protected and laws mandated by the Legislature implemented.*



**Edited and produced by:
Brenda G. Johnson, Director OCIR
Sean M. Burnfin**

**For more information, call
(850) 922-5692
or email: johnsonb@flcourts.org**

November 1, 2008