

Historical Review

SPRING / SUMMER 2022

A Publication of THE FLORIDA SUPREME COURT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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FIRST ROW: State Courts Administrator Ali Sackett, Deputy State Courts Administrator Katie Cunningham, Deputy State Courts Administrator Eric Maclure **SECOND ROW:** General Counsel C. Erica White, Office of Family Courts Chief John Couch **THIRD ROW:** Office of Legislative Affairs Chief Tashiba Robinson, Office of Problem-Solving Courts Chief Jennifer Grandal **FOURTH ROW:** Communications Office Director Susan Emmanuel, Finance & Accounting Chief Jackie Knight, Court Education Chief Rose Patterson, Budget Services Chief Sharon Bosley **FIFTH ROW:** Alternative Dispute Resolution Chief Tad David, Office of Court Services Chief Andrew Johns, State Courts Technology Officer Roosevelt Sawyer, Jr., General Services Chief Steven Hall

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the June 2022 issue of the *Historical Review*.

And, happy 50th anniversary to the Office of the State Courts Administrator, which we all know as OSCA!

It has been a thrill to see each issue come to life since the magazine first introduced themed issues in June 2020 with the redesign and celebration of The Florida Bar's 70th anniversary.

In this issue, we celebrate everything OSCA and its crucial role in supporting Florida's court system. First, an overview of OSCA's growth since inception. Then we hear from former chief justices of the Supreme Court of Florida on how OSCA aided them in their roles as chief. We also hear from the unit chiefs from within OSCA. Of course, we have also some history—with articles on the former State Courts Administrators and the legislation that gave us OSCA.

In other news, this issue covers the Court's election of Justice Carlos Muñoz as Florida's 57th chief justice, recent Investiture ceremonies, and the Society's annual dinner that returned in-person in April 2022.

I hope you enjoy!



Melanie Kalmanson, Esq., *Editor*
QUARLES & BRADY LLP • TAMPA, FLORIDA



Photo by The Workmans
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EDITOR

Melanie Kalmanson

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE

Sophia Akel • Tim Chinaris
Paul Flemming • David Melito
Patsy Palmer

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Mark A. Miller, Executive Director

1947 Greenwood Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32303
www.flcourthistory.org • admin@flcourthistory.org

The Florida Supreme Court Historical Society works to save and maintain for future generations the records of the people and events that have shaped the evolution of Florida's court system from the early 1800s, through the 21st Century, and beyond. The Society is committed to making sure people understand the importance of a strong, independent judiciary in our governmental balance of power. The Society's two-fold mission is to (1) educate the public about the critically important work of the courts in protecting personal rights and freedoms, as well as in resolving the myriad of disputes that arise within the state, and (2) preserve the rich history of Florida's judicial system.

This publication has been sponsored by the members of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society.

CONTRIBUTORS

Sophia Akel



Sophia Akel is a 2L at the Florida State University College of Law. She received her Bachelor's from FSU with majors in Philosophy and Economics. Through FSU College of Law, Sophia serves as an editing intern for the Historical Review.

D. Bailey Howard



Historical Society Trustee

D. Bailey Howard is an appellate attorney with Bishop & Mills, PLLC, in Tallahassee and a member of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society Board of Trustees.

Mark D. Killian



Mark D. Killian is the editor of *The Florida Bar Journal & News*.

David Melito



David Melito is a third-year dual degree candidate pursuing a Juris Doctor and a Master's Degree in urban and regional planning at Florida State University. David is a Florida native who has enjoyed working in several levels of Florida government. He currently splits his time between the City of Tallahassee Attorney's Office and the Office of the State Courts Administrator.

Josie Follick



Josie Follick is a professional writer at the Office of the State Courts Administrator in Tallahassee. She graduated magna cum laude from Florida State University in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree in political science and English. She is currently attending the University of Florida, where she will earn a Master's in mass communications later this year.

Debbie Howells



Debbie Howells is a court operations consultant in the Office of the State Courts Administrator. She has been with the State Courts System for more than 30 years. During that time, she has served as the judicial assistant to Justice Rosemary Barkett as well as in various positions in the administrator's suite. Her current duties include serving as the statewide ADA coordinator for the courts, conducting research and special projects, coordinating court committee appointments, and supporting court system meetings.

Dr. Steven R. Maxwell



Historical Society Trustee

Dr. Steven R. Maxwell has worked more than 35 years in state and local government, education, and public affairs broadcasting. He has served as a public member on both the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission and the Florida Board of Bar Examiners (FBBE). He continues to serve as an emeritus member for the FBBE as well as a member of The Florida Bar's Statewide Unlicensed Practice of Law Committee.

Patsy Palmer



Historical Society Trustee

Patsy Palmer is a lawyer in Tallahassee and a member of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society Board of Trustees.

Francine Walker



Francine Walker retired as Director of Communications for The Florida Bar in 2021, a position she held since 2000.

From the President

This spring was a noteworthy season for the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society. We hosted our Supreme Evening event, which was once again live following last year's virtual version. The event was also three months later than the traditional January date following the Omicron variant outbreak of COVID19 in December. Despite the delay, *A Supreme Evening* was just that, and the theme we chose seemed apropos: "*Sat Cito Si Recte*," the Florida Supreme Court seal's Latin inscription, which those better versed in classics than I am report translates as "soon enough if done rightly." April 7 proved soon enough, and those who attended agreed that it was done rightly indeed.

At this year's *A Supreme Evening*, the Historical Society bestowed its Lifetime Achievement Award upon retired Justice Major B. Harding, who accepted the award with his family present and whose gracious acceptance speech emphasized their role in his long, successful career. We also announced that the Society has renamed the Lifetime Achievement

Award in honor of our late colleague on the Board of Trustees and generous longtime benefactor, Susan Rosenblatt. Susan's husband Stanley, accompanied by two of their children, gave heartfelt remembrances of Susan's life as a champion of justice, wife, and mother. Our keynote speaker, Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht of the Texas Supreme Court, known nationwide

by his peers for his public promotion of the judiciary in American life, gave inspirational remarks about the headwinds facing the third branch of government today and what we as lawyers and citizens can do in response to these challenges.

In addition to covering recent events, this issue celebrates the 50th anniversary of OSCA, the Office of the State Courts Administrator. In addition, outgoing Chief Justice

Canady hands the gavel to incoming Chief Justice Muñoz, who will take his turn as the leader of the Florida judiciary. Enjoy this issue, which I trust you will find arrives soon enough, and is done rightly.

Sincerely,



Scott R. Rost, *President*
FLORIDA SUPREME COURT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Celebrating OSCA

By **Chief Justice Charles T. Canady**

Florida's judiciary entered its modern era 50 years ago after voters approved a constitutional amendment to unify our state courts and create a governance structure that is still in place today in largely the same form as it was implemented originally. Those reforms made the chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court the top administrative officer of the state's judicial branch.

This is more than an academic discussion to me. I have had the privilege of serving three terms as chief justice. I can tell you that serving as chief justice would be a nearly impossible job without the aid of the Office of the State Courts Administrator and the person who leads it—the State Courts Administrator.

In particular, I appreciate one of those State Courts Administrators while recognizing the contributions of all of those who have served in that role.

In my first term as chief justice from 2010-2012, I had the benefit of working with Lisa Kiel as State Courts Administrator. I was further blessed to have her return to that role in 2019 during my second term. Now, as I conclude my third term, I am pleased to work with Ali Sackett, the eighth State Courts Administrator, at the

beginning of her career.

Lisa's career in Florida's court system has been extraordinary. Lisa has repeatedly guided our court system through challenging times—including the implementation of a constitutional restructuring of court funding, a devastating fiscal crisis, and, most recently, the emergency conditions brought on by the pandemic. Time and again she demonstrated extraordinary leadership and excellence in judicial administration. She fulfilled her duties with exceptional professionalism and exceptional dedication to the judicial branch.

It has been the great good fortune of Florida's judicial branch that Lisa dedicated her life to the work of judicial administration in Florida.

Lisa's vision as State Courts Administrator was rooted in a clear understanding of the mission of the judicial branch—to provide equal justice to all the litigants who come to our courts. It is shaped by a deep knowledge of sound principles of judicial administration and an appreciation of the interconnections of the various parts of the justice system.

Lisa's respect for colleagues shines through in everything she does. Court systems operate in a



complex environment. They involve interactions not only with court system users, judges, staff, and justice system partners, but also with the legislative and executive branches. Lisa has the ability to understand the perspectives of all these different players and to fashion solutions that bring people together to further the objective of strengthening the judicial branch's ability to provide justice. These are qualities of huge value to any chief justice.

Lisa's love for Florida's judicial branch was strikingly demonstrated when she came out of a very happy and rewarding retirement to help Florida's courts through an unexpected transition in the position of the State Courts Administrator in 2019. Then I was able to convince Lisa, when the pandemic came, to extend her service to help guide us through the crisis.

During all my time in public service, I have never known a public servant who has served the public more effectively or with greater distinction than Lisa Kiel.

Lisa certainly set the bar high. I know Ali is confident and able and a worthy successor to Lisa. She will serve well as the eighth State Courts Administrator.

The other members of the Court and I have welcomed

Ali to this vital role within the judicial branch and look forward to her leadership. She comes to the position after a successful career at The Florida Bar, most recently as director of the Legal Division, a position she held for more than 2 of her 14 years as a valued staff leader at the Bar.

She leads more than 175 employees in the Office of the State Courts Administrator. OSCA and its people work with judicial officers and staff in jurisdictions throughout the state, doing some of the unsung work necessary for justice to be done and disputes to be resolved in our state's courts.

As State Courts Administrator, Ali has led the State Courts System successfully through her first legislative session. My successor, Justice Muñoz, already understands the important role OSCA plays, as do all of us on the Court. Soon he will have a new appreciation for the vital help he will get from Ali to fulfill his responsibility, as do all of us who have had the privilege of leading the state's courts as chief justice.

OSCA: Out of the Basement and Into the Center of Every Florida Court

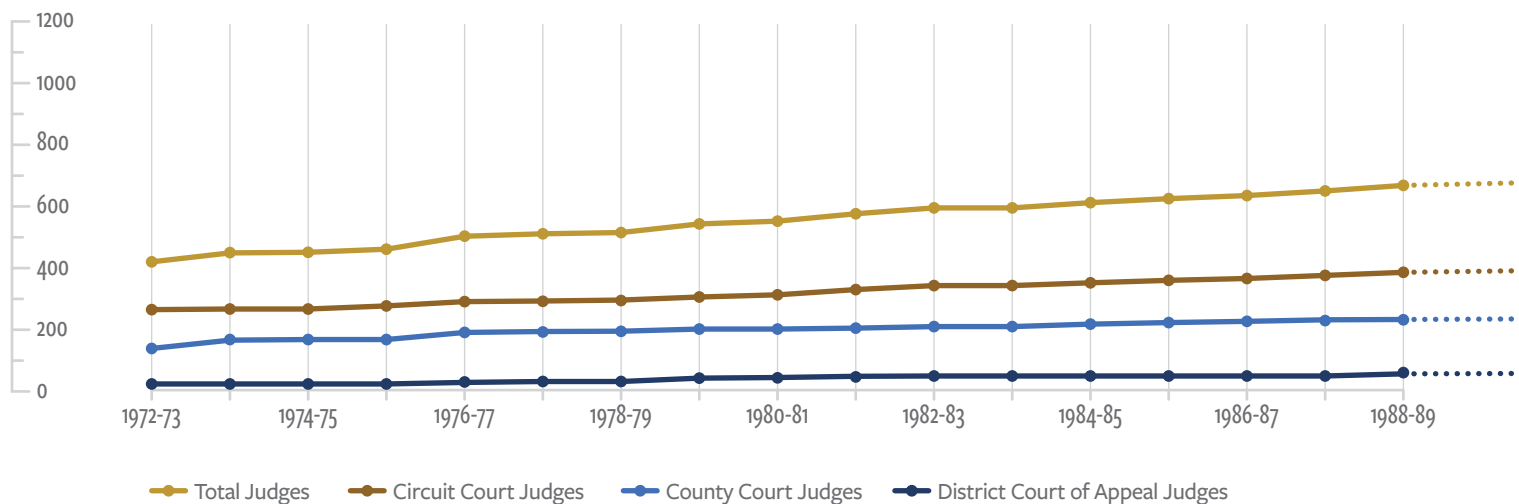
By Patsy Palmer and Debbie Howells

This year, Florida marks half a century of a modern and well-managed court system. Fifty years ago, the state's third branch of government was arguably its weakest, with the court system still constitutionally identified as a "department" and a sprawling hodgepodge of state and local courts that lacked adequate administrative capacity or institutionalized central direction. That would change dramatically in March 1972, when voters approved sweeping reforms of Article V of the Florida Constitution—the section that creates the judiciary.

Those reforms not only streamlined and unified the state courts, but centralized administrative power in the Florida Supreme Court, with the chief justice designated as chief administrative officer of the entire state courts system. The Florida Legislature quickly supported that authority by establishing the Office of State Court Administrator (OSCA) under the high court, something then-Chief Justice B.K. Roberts had long championed. The initial, five-person OSCA office opened on July 1, 1972, in the Court's sub-basement.

The legislation creating OSCA was just the beginning,

A Timeline of the Number of Judges in Florida Courts 1972-2023





In April 2022, OSCA staff gather in the courtroom at the Supreme Court of Florida in Tallahassee, Florida, for a group photo. OSCA's staff now consists of nearly 200 members, up from just five when OSCA was formed. Group photos have become a tradition for OSCA staff.

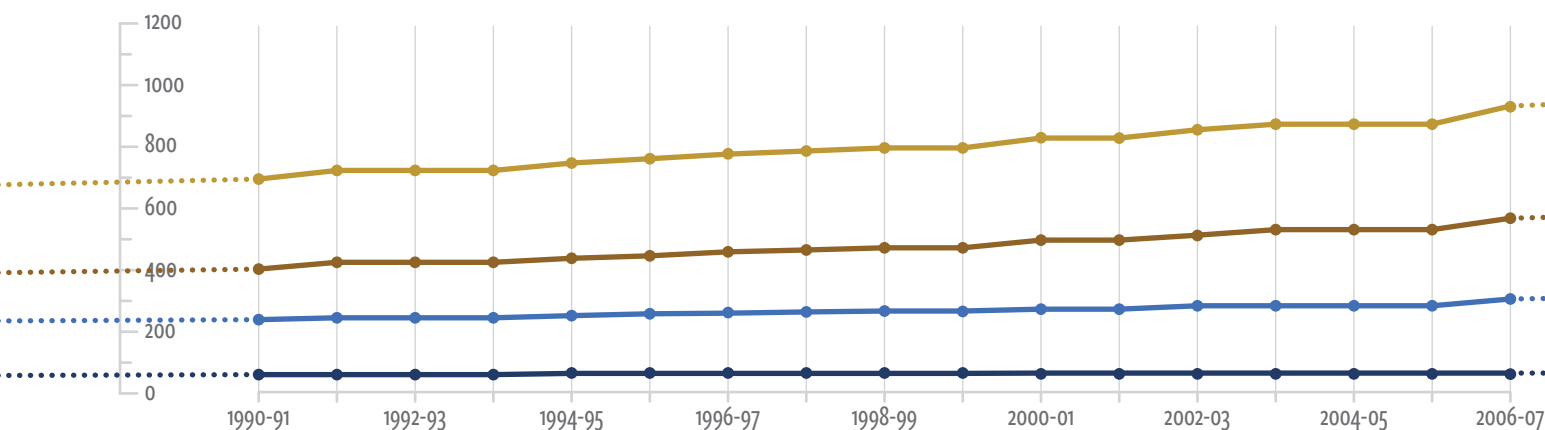
PHOTO BY THE WORKMANS

and OSCA as we know it today was likely impossible to conceptualize at the time. But OSCA's earliest work—developing a uniform case-reporting system—helped transform Florida's judiciary into a modern and accessible system. More precise case reporting also enabled the Court to develop systemwide operating budget proposals and pinpoint the need for new judges as caseloads grew.

The OSCA concept—centralized administration of the Florida judiciary, based in Tallahassee—was met with some initial resistance from court clerks and local

administrators, but OSCA's authority steadily expanded as judges at all levels realized it freed them “to concentrate on adjudicatory, rather than administrative, tasks.”

It did not take long for OSCA to outgrow the sub-basement of the Supreme Court building. However, keeping up with Florida's rapidly expanding court system was a challenge exacerbated by antiquated technology. Even in the mid-1980s, the approximately 60 OSCA employees shared just four phone lines. Today, OSCA has nearly 200 employees (almost all of whom have individual computers), whose responsibilities include serving as



Source: Historic Statewide Judgeships, OSCA, <https://www.flcourts.org/Publications-Statistics/Statistics/Historic-Statewide-Judgeships>



TOP: Before Florida's courts transitioned to operating in a largely paperless environment, it was a more paper-intensive era. Here, OSCA staff member Laverne Weeks is at her desk in the sub-basement of the Supreme Court Building.

BOTTOM: Long-time OSCA receptionist Mary Keuchel works to organize all of OSCA's paper records.

system liaison for the legislature and the executive branch, as well as for national organizations; developing and running judicial and staff training programs; providing research and technical assistance to courts throughout the system; and working in areas like alternative dispute resolution, to expand access to justice. OSCA continues to produce the annual budget proposals and project the need for new judges and specialized court divisions.

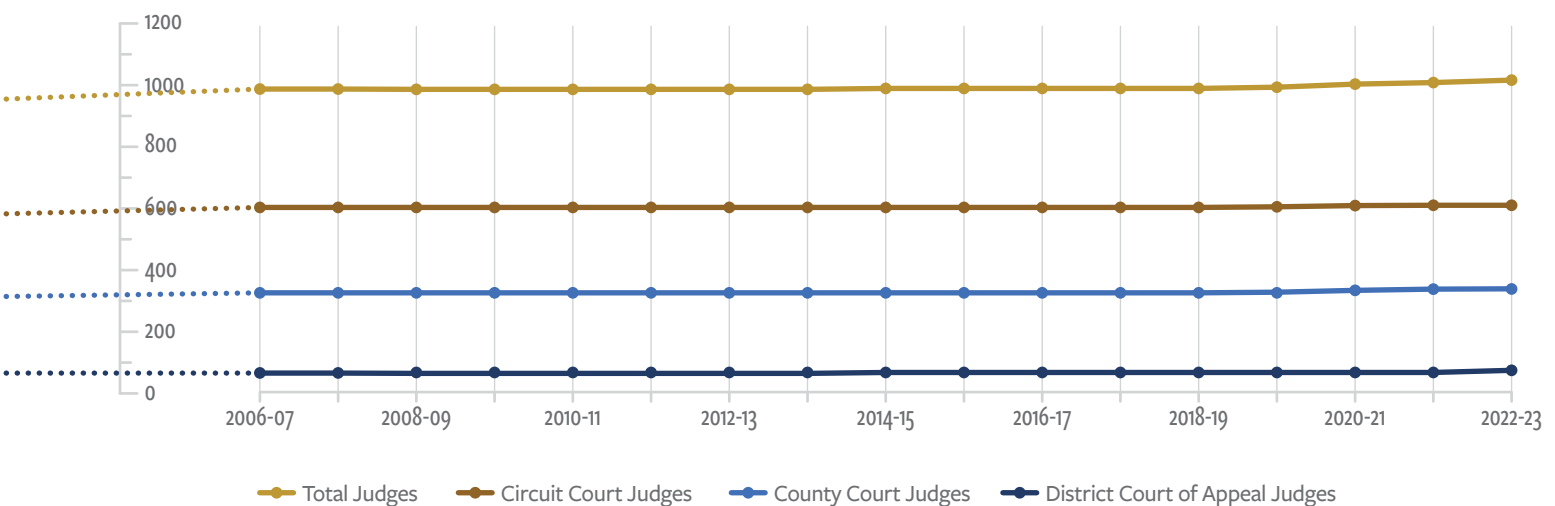
Additionally, turf wars over control have largely subsided, in part through bridge-building efforts by the late Chief Justice Ben F. Overton and former OSCA Administrator Jack Harkness. The Constitution, Florida Statutes, and rules allow some level of local control under OSCA's administrative umbrella. Each of the twenty circuit courts has its own trial court administrator working with the chief judge of the circuit, while individual clerks and marshals assist each chief judge of the five district courts of appeal with administrative matters. Local court administrators and clerks have worked jointly with OSCA on projects like e-filing and the e-portal.

OSCA has developed into a critical part of the administration of Florida's court system. Undoubtedly, its role will continue to develop over the next 50 years.

For ease of publication and reading, footnotes have been removed from this article. The full version, with footnotes, may be viewed on the Historical Society's website at www.flcourthistory.org/Historical-Review/Extended-Articles.

For further perspective on OSCA over the years, see *Reflections on Changes in Court Administration Since 1972: In Celebration of OSCA's 40th Birthday*, which can be found at www.flcourts.org/Publications-Statistics/Publications/Short-History/Miscellany.

A Timeline of the Number of Judges in Florida Courts 1972-2023 (Cont.)



Past Chief Justices Reflect on OSCA's Influence During Their Tenures

One critical role OSCA plays in ensuring the smooth operation of Florida's court system is supporting the chief justice. As chief administrative judge for the entire state, the chief justice requires administrative support in areas as diverse as budgeting, facilities review, and projecting the need for new judgeships. Below, several former chief justices weigh in on how OSCA supported them during their terms as chief.



Chief Justice Rosemary Barkett 1992-1994

■ It is hard to believe that OSCA is turning 50! Being asked to write a few words about my time with OSCA brought back many wonderful memories. I remember Ken Palmer, who was the State Courts Administrator when I took over as chief, with great fondness. He was such a wonderful administrator and an incredibly hard worker. My first day as chief justice provided ample evidence of the dedication of the OSCA staff, led by Ken, as they spent every day, and most nights, in the legislative halls trying to assure that the judiciary would be funded. My diary for my first day as chief reads as follows:

July 1, 1992 – First day on the job as C.J.; Awakened at 3:00 AM by Ken Palmer telling me there was no budget! [We] stayed up and worked on the attached Order (Released at 9:00 AM) – What a way to start!

The Order Ken and I crafted (“In Re Emergency Operation of the Judicial Branch”) decreed that the courts would remain open and that the state government would remain responsible for all costs connected therewith, leaving no question that the courts would remain open, notwithstanding the temporary budget crisis.

From that day forward, I was able to observe the amazing work of Ken and his team in so many areas. Along with the late Dee Beranek, former Deputy State Courts Administrator, Ken and the OSCA team developed and operated a first-rate Judicial College responsible for training so many judges. Ken helped me in areas involving children and families by working with me to organize a statewide conference of chief judges and State Courts Administrators to advance the goal of a unified family court in all of the circuits. OSCA helped in the effort to require the Department of Children and Families to identify all of the children in their custody. (Amazingly, the Department had no such list, and I wonder if they have one now!)

In this day and age, the judicial branch is tasked with so much more than simply deciding cases. The administration of the court system is now a tremendous responsibility and could not be accomplished without the support of the extremely capable leadership and staff of the Office of the State Courts Administrator.



Chief Justice Harry Lee Anstead 2002-2004

■ The Chief Justice is the administrative head of Florida's court system, but OSCA is the office that carries out the administration on a day-to-day basis by providing extensive support for Florida's trial and appellate courts, including the Florida Supreme Court. Since Florida is the nation's third largest state, that is an enormous responsibility. No one does it better and more professionally than Florida's OSCA. Making sure that our courts have all the resources that a modern court system requires is a 24/7 task and that is how OSCA operates, and always has.

A prime example of OSCA's quality work is its operation of Florida's judicial education system, which ranks number 1 in the country. From courses on the fundamentals of judging and judicial conduct for the wave of new judges that come on the bench every year, to the critically important and super-sensitive duties of a judge presiding over a capital case, Florida's judges are provided with cutting-edge and up-to-date insight on current law and procedures. And that is just one example of OSCA's job performance.

What is my opinion of OSCA's overall job performance? In a word, OSCA and its members are the best, bar none.

CHIEF JUSTICES SINCE OSCA'S FORMATION IN 1972

B. K. Roberts	1971-1973	Stephen H. Grimes	1994-1996
Vassar B. Carlton	1973-1974	Gerald Kogan	1996-1998
James C. Adkins, Jr.	1974-1976	Major B. Harding	1998-2000
Ben F. Overton	1976-1978	Charles T. Wells	2000-2002
Arthur J. England, Jr.	1978-1980	Harry Lee Anstead	2002-2004
Alan C. Sundberg	1980-1982	Barbara J. Pariente	2004-2006
James E. Alderman	1982-1984	R. Fred Lewis	2006-2008
Joseph A. Boyd, Jr.	1984-1986	Peggy A. Quince	2008-2010
Parker Lee McDonald	1986-1988	Charles T. Canady	2010-2012
Raymond Ehrlich	1988-1990	Ricky Polston	2012-2014
Leander J. Shaw, Jr.	1990-1992	Jorge Labarga	2014-2018
Rosemary Barkett	1992-1994	Charles T. Canady	2018-2022



Chief Justice Barbara J. Pariente 2004-2006

■ On the 50th anniversary of the Office of the State Courts Administrator—otherwise known as OSCA, I salute the entire staff of dedicated professionals who have made Florida's court system a model of court administration for many other states. While so much of what OSCA does is behind the scenes to most lawyers, every judge in this State, every chief judge, and each of the Trial Court Administrators of the 20 judicial circuits know the invaluable place OSCA plays in running a modern court system.

As for the justices of the Supreme Court of Florida, and particularly those of us who have served as chief justice, we know that our accomplishments would not be possible without OSCA. As chief justice of the then-fourth largest state in the country, there would have been no way to accomplish my goals without this amazing group of stellar and hard-working individuals.

During my time as chief justice, OSCA was headed up by State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner (now Lisa Kiel). How Lisa remained calm under pressure from the hundreds of judges, the court administrators of each of the 20 trial courts, and the demands of each of the justices was always beyond me, but I know how fortunate I was to have Lisa and her staff for critical support.

During my term as chief, which began on July 1, 2004, the court system effectuated the mandate of statewide funding for the court system. Required by a constitutional amendment that had passed previously, the purpose of Revision 7 (as we referred to it) was to equalize the available resources of each circuit. The goal of the critical constitutional change was to ensure that the resources of each circuit would not depend on which chief judge had the best legislative relations, but instead on objective factors applied equally across the state. I characterized the benefits of the constitutional change as ensuring that, from Key West to Pensacola, there would no longer be "rich circuits" and "poor circuits."

I was privileged to be the first chief justice to preside over a truly unified court system—but to realize that vision and put it into effect required the work of literally dozens of individuals, both in Tallahassee and around the state. Without the meticulous work of the Trial Court Budget Commission

(TCBC) and the daily support of OSCA, the transition would have been impossible.

Under OSCA's guidance, each chief justice is charged with carrying out a strategic plan that is reduced to writing for guidance. My top 3 priorities were to continue to ensure full and fair funding of the courts, to take advantage of the opportunities that new technologies have created, and to encourage trial courts to implement the unified family court model. While each of the circuits has its own court administrator and staff, OSCA helps to oversee the sound policies that are promulgated by the Supreme Court of Florida.

During my tenure, I was especially privileged to work with dedicated individuals from the various departments of OSCA, particularly those charged with improving the processing of dependency cases, those charged with court education for our judges and court staff, and those charged with supporting the myriad court committees such as the Committee on Children and Families. With my particular interest in cases involving children and families, I traveled the state with the help of OSCA to speak with chief judges and court personnel to ensure that I received their input on how our policies were being implemented at the local level.

As I think back on my two years as chief justice from July 1, 2004, to July 1, 2006, I am reminded how many of the highlights of my time in that position were connected with the extraordinary men and women of OSCA!



Chief Justice Peggy A. Quince

2008-2010

■ As a justice on the Florida Supreme Court, I interacted with the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) on almost a daily basis. Each individual division of that office, from personnel to dispute resolution to budget and finance, played a vital role in making sure that the Florida court system operated in an efficient and timely manner. During my term as chief justice, I relied on the State Courts Administrator to keep me informed on the various issues that were of concern in any part of the system, in any part of the state. OSCA is the glue that keeps the Florida court system together.



Chief Justice Ricky Polston

2012-2014

■ My term as chief justice from July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2014, came at a particularly useful time to describe the vital role played by the relationship between the chief justice and the State Courts Administrator.

Gaining adequate resources for the administration of justice—and the careful stewardship of those resources—is always at the forefront of a chief justice's responsibility. Reliable and timely court data is a vexing problem the State Courts System has faced since the founding of the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA). At the nexus of resources and data is the question of technology and how to pay for it.

In all these issues—each with specific challenges—a chief justice relies on the State Courts Administrator and OSCA staff to provide necessary information and technical guidance. Then it is the State Courts Administrator who must faithfully implement the decisions and direction of the Florida Supreme Court and the chief justice.

In 2012 when I accepted the passing of the gavel as chief justice from Chief Justice Charles T. Canady following the conclusion of his first term as chief, I knew I would rely extensively on Lisa Kiel, the State Courts Administrator. The two largest challenges facing us during my term were the foreclosure crisis and immediately transitioning to mandatory electronic filing. The collaborative work we did during this very challenging time was very rewarding and a highlight of my professional career.

The foreclosure crisis—hundreds of thousands of cases flooding the courts during an economic cataclysm—was an incredible challenge. This was particularly so as I came to understand how imprecise and incomplete was our ability to have an aged accounting for those cases statewide. We took steps to gather accurate, timely information to guide our response.

We also worked with the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority to establish mandatory electronic filing through the portal. The E-Filing Authority, created through an interlocal agreement between the State Courts System and the Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC), is celebrating its 10th anniversary now and remains a success. It represents a great tribute to the excellent collective work of the FCCC, its member clerks, exceptional leadership by Authority Chair Tim Smith (then-Putnam County Clerk of Court), the Court's Florida Courts Technology Commission, Florida's practicing attorneys, all of

the courts (particularly chief judges, technology officers, and administrators), and OSCA. OSCA's coordination was vital.

Identifying and formulating strategies to respond to these and other issues facing the court system is why the Judicial Management Council was reconstituted to help guide administration of the branch. In this, too, Ms. Kiel's leadership and the OSCA staff were essential to the vision of issues and progress we made.

The State Courts Administrator has a vital role in any chief justice's term as the chief administrative officer of the judicial branch. That is true no matter who holds the job. I was very fortunate to work with Lisa Kiel and her excellent staff, and to benefit from their talents.



Chief Justice Jorge Labarga 2014-2018

■ If you have joined me at public events more than twice it is likely you've heard me recount how I got the wrong idea when I first came to the bench in 1996 as a circuit judge in Palm Beach County's 15th Judicial Circuit. I would hear my fellow judges or staff talk about this very helpful man. He seemed to be involved in everything, he had all the answers, and he was incredibly productive.

I couldn't figure out who this Oscar guy was, but he sure was busy. It's possible I was a little confused.

Of course, it is also true of the Office of the State Courts Administrator, or the OSCA as everyone calls it (and you can imagine how I might have misheard), that the people who work there are experienced, dedicated, and essential to the function of our courts.

If we didn't have the Office of the State Courts Administrator, we would have to invent it. A chief justice is the chief administrative officer of the branch, an incredibly challenging job. One member of the Supreme Court – or all seven justices, for that matter – could not do all that is necessary to keep the State Courts System running efficiently and effectively for the people who come to Florida courts looking for justice and to have disputes resolved.

During my time as chief justice, from 2014-2018 I was able to be a part of many accomplishments for the branch. Few of them would have been possible without the hard work and expertise

provided by staff, working alongside and aiding the judges of the branch in getting things done for the people we serve. I was lucky enough to be chief justice for a number of initiatives I look back on with real pride:

- The Judicial Management Council delivered, and the Court approved, the Court Communication Plan for the Judicial Branch of Florida, with implementation beginning January 1, 2016.
- I created the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice and dozens of judges and stakeholders worked diligently and ably to fulfill its mission, work that now goes on under the aegis of the Judicial Management Council. None of the Commission's work could have been as effective without the input of staff from the OSCA.
- During my time as chief justice, the Judicial Needs Assessment Committee of the Commission on Trial Court Performance & Accountability conducted an evaluation of judicial workload. It was a major undertaking that could not have been done without thousands of hours of OSCA staff time. This is not glamorous work, but it is absolutely necessary to the effective administration of justice.

These are just a handful of the projects OSCA staff worked on and were essential to completing. I could just as easily mention the Court's response to the then-concluding but still enormous foreclosure crisis, or advances made in managing and tracking the work of problem-solving courts, and the fulfillment of a study and review of security in the state's court.

Then, when these huge initiatives are over, it is often OSCA staff who are responsible for seeing them implemented and maintained in the everyday life of the branch. OSCA staff, and the administrative staff in all the jurisdictions, are the unsung champions of the branch.

I would be remiss to discuss my time as chief justice and to write about the OSCA without mentioning PK Jameson, the State Courts Administrator I had the pleasure to work with as chief justice. She was the leader of all those people at the OSCA who do such good work, directed them ably, and had a more thorough understanding of the intricacies of the branch than anyone I know. I could not have done my job without her contributions. I leaned on her and her counsel throughout my 4 years as chief justice. I cannot imagine doing the difficult job of the chief justice at all – much less to the extent we successfully solved problems, met challenges, and proactively improved – without her support and guidance. When I wanted to get things done, it was to her I turned and then I knew it would be successfully achieved.

It is the people, PK chief among them during her time, who are the OSCA and make it a dependable resource and effective instrument of implementing the Supreme Court's direction. On the occasion of the OSCA 50th anniversary, I commend everyone who contributes to the success of the judicial branch and thank you on behalf of all chief justices and the people of Florida.

OSCA

From the Inside: *Unit Descriptions*

By **Josie Follick**

Today, OSCA is comprised of several departments, which are referenced as “Units.” Each Unit, directed by the Unit Chief, has a distinct function in fulfilling OSCA’s role.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

CHIEF: TAD DAVID

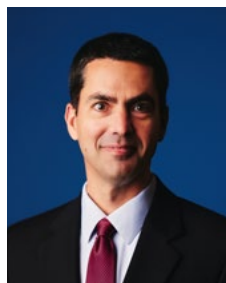


The Florida State Courts System has utilized alternative dispute resolution to resolve disputes for over 40 years, offering litigants court-connected opportunities to resolve their disputes without judicial intervention. Housed in OSCA, the Florida Dispute Resolution Center facilitates mediator certification and

continuing education while regulating and monitoring mediator professionalism across the state. Additionally, the Center provides staff support to committees and boards, which provide guidelines for various neutral professionals such as mediators, arbitrators, and parenting coordinators. Generating standardized systems and processes for mediators and other neutrals makes the Florida judicial system more approachable and accessible to all citizens.

Court Services

CHIEF: ANDREW JOHNS



The OSCA Court Services Unit seeks to provide research and evaluation support services to all components of the State Courts System. These services include technical assistance and monitoring of court programs, research, and data analysis. This Unit also provides staff support to court committees that are

responsible for administrative policies affecting the judicial branch. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, the Court Services Unit seeks to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Florida State Courts System and to advance its mission and vision.





Resource Planning & Support Services

MANAGER: KRIS SLAYDEN

The Office of Resource Planning and Support Services facilitates three primary functions of the Florida State Courts System. These functions include (1) developing and implementing methods of resource funding for the state courts system, (2) forecasting and identifying revenue trends, and (3) operating as a liaison for clerks of the circuit courts regarding budget and resource issues. By fulfilling these functions, this Unit safeguards stable funding statewide, ensures efficient use of funds, and anticipates future challenges that could impact the need for resources throughout the Florida State Courts System. As lead staff to the Trial Court Budget Commission, this Unit works closely with the Budget Services Unit to help ensure the judicial branch has sufficient resources to make justice efficient, accessible, and innovative.

State Courts Technology

OFFICER: ROOSEVELT SAWYER, JR.



The Office of Information Technology seeks to remove barriers and obstacles through inventive tools and technologies. Florida's courts have made significant advances in technology to improve and enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness of court processes. These process improvements are integral to managing information technologies and disseminating information within the courts and to judicial partners. Technological innovations have always created opportunities for the Florida judiciary to address and overcome obstacles faced by our court system. These innovations continue to foster public accessibility and generate trust and confidence in the judiciary.

General Services

CHIEF: STEVEN HALL



The General Services Unit manages and facilitates purchasing and procurement throughout the State Courts System. They are also one of the first defenses against statewide emergencies such as hurricanes or health crises. The General Services Unit provides the foundation for justice, whether that be literally, as through the construction of a courthouse, or through the user experience of a digital process such as E-Notify. By providing the infrastructure for systems such as the Statewide Travel Management System and the accessibility-focused E-Notify, the Unit focuses on innovative solutions to support the goals of the judicial branch.

General Counsel

GENERAL COUNSEL: C. ERICA WHITE



The Office of the General Counsel provides effective and timely legal advice regarding the administration of the State Courts System to statewide entities, including the Office of State Courts Administrator, Florida's court administrators and marshals, and the Florida Supreme Court. The Office routinely deals with matters relating to personnel and employment issues, public records, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, among many others. In collaboration with other OSCA units, the Office of General Counsel provides training to keep court staff caught up on pertinent laws and ethics matters, so as to maintain a skilled judiciary workforce.

Family Courts

CHIEF: JOHN COUCH



The Office of Family Courts seeks to make justice more accessible through the staffing and advisement of many entities, including workgroups, committees, and panels. As one of the most popular subjects searched on the Florida courts website, the Office maintains a highly trained staff that provides support to the public through projects such as DIY Florida. In conjunction with the Office of Problem-Solving Courts, the Office of Family Courts aims to fulfill the goals of the judicial branch through accessibility, fairness, and a commitment to Florida citizens.

Legislative Affairs

CHIEF: TASHIBA ROBINSON



The Office of Legislative Affairs acts as a liaison for the courts. The Office serves as both a coordinating entity for the branches of the government, and a communicator to the public on behalf of the State Courts System. The Office's staff seeks to maintain open lines of communication and collaboration to enhance judicial awareness. By being a liaison to both the Legislature and the public, its transparency improves public trust and confidence in the judiciary.

Problem-Solving Courts

CHIEF: JENNIFER GRANDAL



Problem-solving courts oversee comprehensive treatment plans for eligible non-violent defendants. The Office of Problem-Solving Courts supports, assists, and monitors problem-solving courts statewide. The members of this Office use a specific case management system to assess Florida's problem-solving courts annually. Using the data collected from their annual review, the Office

collaborates with other OSCA units to provide adequate training to court staff and secure adequate funding for courts statewide. A primary goal of the Office is to continue developing and improving best practice standards to ensure consistency and quality. This project, alongside education initiatives, national research and development, and continued data analysis, displays a dedicated commitment to the goals of the judicial branch.

Innovations & Outreach

CHIEF: TINA WHITE



The Innovations and Outreach Unit provides staff support to various court workgroups within the Judicial Management Council. Often referred to as "the headlights of the judicial branch," the Council identifies potential crises and prepares strategies to address them. In addition to foreseeing crises, the Council identifies and evaluates opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the judicial branch. By contributing staff support to the Council and other workgroups, and by looking ahead to creative solutions, the Innovations and Outreach Unit is devoted to increasing access to justice for all citizens of Florida. The Innovations & Outreach Chief will soon change, as Ms. White resigned her position for other employment effective July 8.

Finance & Accounting

CHIEF: JACKIE KNIGHT



The Finance and Accounting Unit provides financial support to every court and court-related entity in Florida. The Unit is responsible for managing and auditing the financial operations of the State Courts System. This includes asset management, payroll, and everything in between. The Finance and Accounting Unit works hard to develop and implement new systems to continue providing transparency to the public and fiscal accountability to the State Courts System. The Unit upholds the goals of the judicial system by committing to improvements, which are accomplished through innovative technology and collaborative strategy.

Court Education

CHIEF: ROSE PATTERSON



The Office of Court Education is committed to ongoing education for members of the judiciary, including court staff, judges, and quasi-judicial officers, to maintain a skilled and professional workforce. Guided by a long-range plan, the Office provides training opportunities to fulfill judges'

continuing education requirements, continues to innovate distance learning alternatives, and identifies opportunities for continuing education statewide. Through countless publications, training courses, and materials, the Office of Court Education is committed to creating a knowledgeable judiciary to meet the needs of Florida's citizens.

Communications & Public Information

DIRECTOR: SUSAN EMMANUEL



The Communications Office works to bolster public trust and confidence in the Florida State Courts System by supporting openness and access to justice. Its staff identifies, monitors, and promotes initiatives throughout the State Courts System that enhance transparency. They use social media, the Florida Courts

website, and many other platforms to maintain consistent communication with the public. The director of the Communications Office serves as the public information officer of OSCA, fulfilling public records requests and responding to media inquiries. Applying multimedia strategies across legacy and digital platforms, the Office directly supports the state courts administrator's priorities and is committed to the goals of the judicial branch.

Human Resources

INTERIM CHIEF: C. ERICA WHITE



The Human Resources Unit creates and implements policies that support all officers and employees of the State Courts System. The Unit is committed to ensuring compliance with all federal, state, and local employment laws to create a welcoming and positive environment for employees.

The staff of the Human Resources Unit strives to create an environment that is characterized by personal accountability and development, respect, and workforce diversity, in order to maintain a skilled judiciary with an appetite for growth.

Budget Services

CHIEF: SHARON BOSLEY



The Office of the State Courts Administrator's Budget Services Unit evaluates the resource needs of courts statewide. It works closely with the Office of Legislative Affairs to build legislative budget requests and allocate resources. The Unit provides staff support to the District and Trial Court

Budget Commissions to maintain proper use of funds and identify areas for improvement. The Unit promotes fiscal responsibility within the Florida Judicial Branch by providing leadership, analysis, and technical assistance in planning, administering, and monitoring the budget.

Florida's State Courts Administrators: 1972-2022

By **Josie Follick**

In 1972, Florida's voters overwhelmingly voted to reform Article V of the Florida State Constitution to ensure unity and consistency throughout the judicial branch. The revisions in Article V identified the need for administration at every level of the judicial branch. It designated the chief justice as the chief administrative officer of the State Courts System and created the position of the chief judge as administrator of their own courts. As a result of the additional responsibility and in response to implementing legislation, the chief justice created the role of the State Courts Administrator to assist the chief in fulfilling administrative duties and ensuring access to justice statewide. Thus, the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) was born.

In 1998, Florida voters passed an additional revision to Article V, section 14, of the Florida State Constitution, commonly called "Revision 7." This revision, implemented in 2004, unified the budgets of Florida's courts and sought to relieve budgetary strain from local governments. The main goal of Revision 7, which is covered in more detail in a separate article in this issue, was to ensure equity statewide so all citizens, regardless of their location, could have the same access to court services.

Since OSCA's formation, there have been 8 State Courts Administrators.

JAMES B. UEBERHORST 1972-1974



Florida's first State Courts Administrator was James B. Ueberhorst, who had been assistant general counsel for the Central Intelligence Agency. Serving at the beginning of Article V reform, he took foundational steps toward improving the efficiency of the courts. Ueberhorst's term as Florida's State Courts Administrator was followed by 4 years working in administration for

the U.S. Supreme Court and 17 years running his consulting firm specializing in foreign trade law and business management analysis. He died of a heart attack at age 67 in May 1996.

JOHN "JACK" F. HARKNESS, JR. 1974-1981



During John F. Harkness's time as State Courts Administrator, he oversaw the implementation of revisions to Article V of the Florida State Constitution. He built the foundation on which the State Courts System depends today. While Article V reorganized Florida's court system, it took leadership to unify the judiciary. Harkness filled that role. After serving as staff director

of the House Judiciary Committee, Harkness practiced law with his father in Miami. Because of his past connections with the judiciary, he was a clear choice to fill the vacancy left by Ueberhorst. His leadership through the challenge of Article V's implementation was integral in setting up the State Courts System for success for many years. His impact remains evident throughout OSCA today. Harkness left OSCA in 1981 to become the Executive Director of The Florida Bar, where he served until his retirement in 2017.

DONALD D. CONN 1981-1985



Donald D. Conn joined OSCA with a Master of Science in Public Administration and a Juris Doctorate from Florida State University. He served in several positions that prepared him for his role in the State Courts System, such as General Counsel for Tampa Bay Water, an Administrative Law Judge with the Division of Administrative Hearings, and General Counsel to the

Department of Business Regulation. Conn's time with OSCA saw some improvements in technology that catapulted the State Courts System into the extensive advancements to come. He left OSCA to start a private practice in Tampa.

KENNETH “KEN” R. PALMER 1985-2001



For 16 years, Palmer oversaw the State Courts System as State Courts Administrator. Palmer showed his passion for access to justice as an OSCA employee for 25 years, including 5 years as Deputy State Courts Administrator. He experienced vast improvements in technology and led the growing OSCA staff through the beginning stages of the Revision 7 implementation.

Courage defined his time as State Courts Administrator as he implemented innovative policies, practices, and court initiatives that continue to help Floridians access justice today. Among his numerous accomplishments, Palmer implemented the family court initiative, treatment-based problem-solving courts, alternative dispute resolution, and statewide interpreter testing. His invaluable impact on the State Courts System remains evident today. Palmer remained State Courts Administrator until his death at age 54 in 2001 from cancer.

ROBIN L. LUBITZ 2002-2003



Armed with years of practice in judicial administration, Robin Lubitz was an experienced candidate ready to continue the implementation of Revision 7. Before his post at OSCA, he was a deputy administrator of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and executive director of both North Carolina's Sentencing and

Policy Advisory and its Governor's Crime Commissions. He left OSCA in 2003 to become the Director of Juvenile Justice Services at the Arizona Supreme Court. In 2009, he retired from the judicial system. He has since published three nonfiction novels.

ELISABETH “LISA” H. KIEL (NÉE GOODNER) 2003-2014, 2019-2021



Kiel served at the helm of OSCA for a total of 14 years. She first served as State Courts Administrator for 11 years from 2003 to 2014. Then, she came out of retirement in 2019 to serve as interim State Courts Administrator until 2021. Her experience as the Assistant Personnel Director at the Department of Corrections prepared her for 3 years as OSCA's Chief of Personnel before

stepping into her role as State Courts Administrator. Kiel saw the last of the Revision 7 implementation through and guided the State Courts System into an increasingly digital world defined by immediacy and emerging media. Building on the

foundation of OSCA's past leaders, Kiel was responsible for beginning the implementation of technology such as e-filing, which is commonplace now. Kiel returned as interim State Courts Administrator and led OSCA through the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although retired, she is now a private consultant on judicial administration and justice-related matters.

PATRICIA “PK” JAMESON 2014-2019



Patricia “PK” Jameson joined the judicial branch after many years of experience in the executive and legislative branches. Jameson has a Juris Doctorate from Florida State University and worked as an attorney in private practice. Before coming to OSCA, she was General Counsel and Deputy Chief Financial Officer of the Florida Department of Financial

Services. She also served as Chief of Staff to the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives and senior policy adviser to the Senate President, Policy Chief of Health and Human Services for former Governor Jeb Bush, General Counsel for the Florida Chief Financial Officer, and Staff Director for a number of legislative committees. Her 5 years as State Courts Administrator are defined by significant advancements in technology, including ongoing initiatives such as virtual remote interpreting and Uniform Case Reporting. Jameson returned to the Legislature in 2019 as Staff Director to the Senate Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations. She now serves as the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability's Coordinator.

ALISON “ALI” SACKETT 2021-PRESENT



Succeeding Lisa Kiel in her post as interim State Courts Administrator, Alison “Ali” Sackett joins OSCA with 14 years of experience at The Florida Bar, where she served as both the Associate Director of Lawyer Regulation and most recently as the Director of the Legal Division, among other roles. Before her time at The Florida Bar, she worked for Legal Services of North

Florida. Sackett comes to OSCA prepared to face persistent challenges and continue to improve the administration of Florida's judiciary.

For ease of publication and reading, footnotes have been removed from this article. The full version, with footnotes, may be viewed on the Historical Society's website at www.flcourthistory.org/Historical-Review/Extended-Articles.

The Impact of Revision 7 on Funding State Courts

By **Dr. Steven R. Maxwell**

In 1998, 67% of Florida's electorate voted to approve what is known as "Revision 7" for inclusion in Florida's Constitution—more technically, section 14 in Article V of the Florida Constitution. "Revision 7" was on the ballot as one of several constitutional amendments proposed by the 1997-1998 Constitution Revision Commission.

"Revision 7 had two purposes: to relieve local governments of the increasing cost of subsidizing the trial courts and to ensure equity in court funding across each county in the state." Revision 7 changed both ways and means of Florida court funding. Before Revision 7, only appellate courts were fully funded by the state. As to the trial courts, only the "salaries of judges and their assistants" were paid by the state. Otherwise, trial courts at both circuit and county levels received the majority of their funding from county commissions, which are elected by voters in each of Florida's 67 counties. Revision 7 "required that both appellate courts and the trial courts be funded through State appropriation, thus equalizing funding levels across county lines." "The funding transition occurred seamlessly, but not without several legislative enactments prior to the transition that provided the structure for the newly constituted trial court system."

However, implementing Revision 7 was not without challenges. When a state's economy is booming, its sales tax and property tax revenue increase, causing the general revenue fund to flourish, and thereby (in OSCA's words) "giving rise to a healthy budget." But when the

economy stalls and retreats, "every entity that depends on state funding—including the courts—feels the squeeze." In addition, "as court services were being reduced or eliminated, citizens and businesses were turning to the courts in greater numbers."

During Florida's 2007-08 and 2008-09 fiscal years, the state—like the rest of the country—experienced a severe economic downturn. This caused the state's general revenue fund to plummet; "the court budget suffered a 12% reduction," which resulted, "in the elimination of nearly 300 staff positions, a hiring and travel freeze, a reduction of the number of judicial education programs and a suspension in the work of numerous court committees."

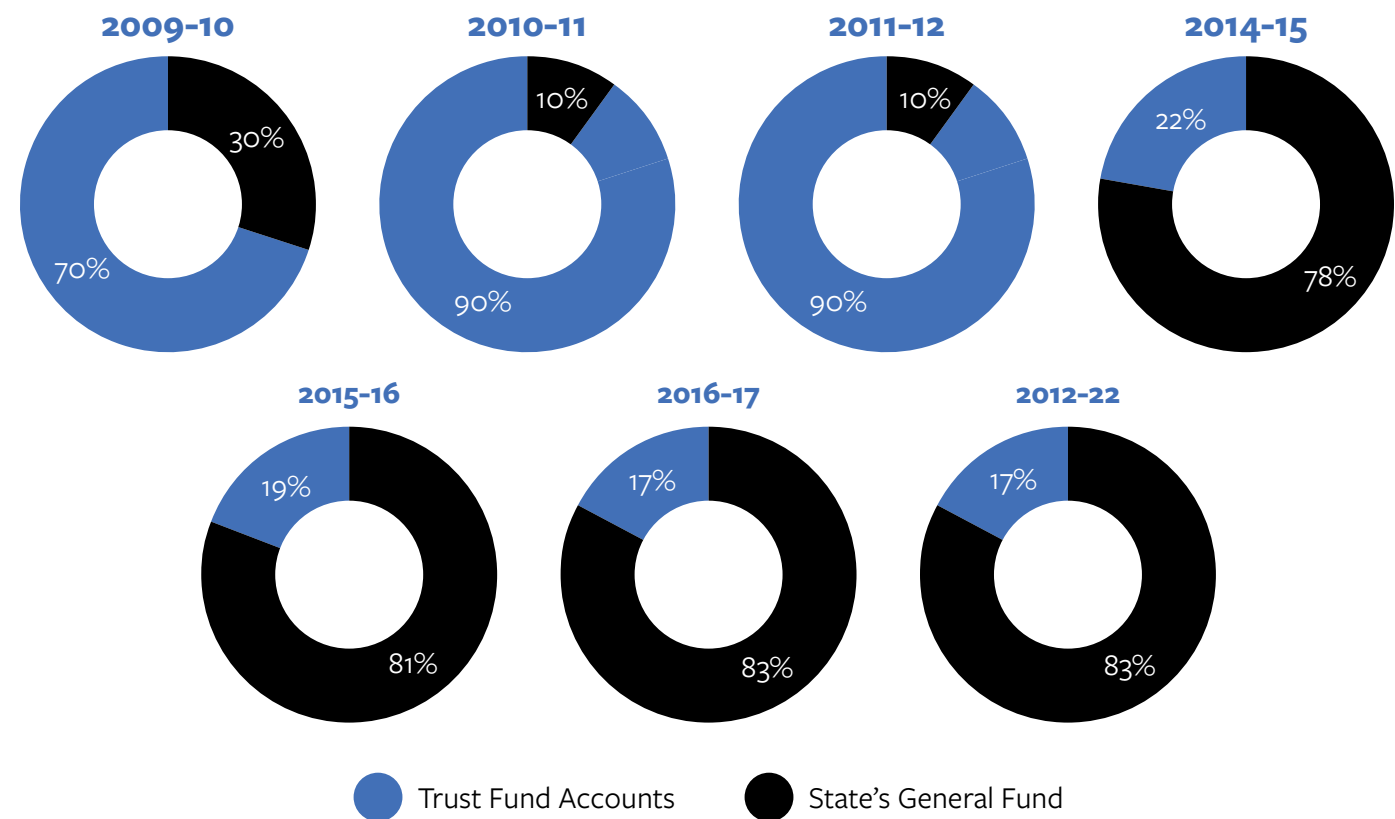
Also during that time, as a result of the state of the economy, foreclosure filings were increasing, which "had both direct and indirect economic consequences, further destabilizing Florida's already fragile financial state. To ensure the timely administration of justice and to safeguard the viability of the courts system, branch leaders began advocating the adoption of budgeting practices that would better stabilize the operations of the courts during periods of fiscal crisis." In January 2009, Florida lawmakers decided that the best way to bring financial stability to the courts was by creating a State Courts Revenue Trust, "which they bolstered with higher filing fees and fine revenues."

Foreclosure filings continued to rise, which caused a significant increase in revenue to the trust fund. In reaction, "the legislature designated foreclosure filing



Former Justice Alan C. Sundberg, who served on the 1997-1998 Constitution Revision Commission after retiring from the Court, addresses the CRC members in the Senate chamber. Photo Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.

State Court Funding 2009-2022



Source: Annual Reports, OSCA, <https://www.flcourts.org/Publications-Statistics/Publications/Annual-Reports>

fees as the principal source of revenue for the trust fund.” This shifted the courts from being primarily general-funded to being primarily trust-funded. In the first year after this change was instituted, fiscal year 2009-10, the court budget was “70 percent trust-funded; in fiscal years 2010-11 and 2011-12, it was 90 percent trust-funded.”

However, in October 2010, foreclosure filings fell from approximately 30,000 per month “to fewer than 9,000 per month.” This “monumental drop caused a huge shortfall in the trust fund, and when the trust fund was insufficient to support the branch’s appropriated budget, the chief justice had to secure emergency funding from the governor and legislature.”

In 2012, Florida lawmakers moved to restore financial stability to Florida’s court system by returning to general revenue as the primary source of court funding. By fiscal year 2014-15, the State Courts System (SCS) was receiving 78% of its funding from the state’s general revenue and 22% from the trust fund. That margin has continued to grow. In fiscal year 2015-16, SCS received 81% of its funding from general revenue and 19% from

the trust fund. In fiscal year 2016-17, 83% of the SCS budget derived from general revenue and the remaining 17% was derived from the trust fund.

According to OSCA, the SCS received a total budget for fiscal year 2021-22 of \$667,223,975 from the state’s General Appropriations Act. Of those funds, \$557,308,450 or 83% came from the state’s general fund and \$114,915,525 or 17% came from trust fund accounts.

While Revision 7 assisted with equalizing funding to Florida’s SCS, counties still shoulder some of the costs for Florida’s SCS. Indeed, Revision 7 (i.e., Article V, section 14, of the Florida Constitution) assigns counties responsibility for funding certain communications, facilities, and salary costs.

For ease of publication and reading, footnotes have been removed from this article. The full version, with footnotes, may be viewed on the Historical Society’s website at www.flcourthistory.org/Historical-Review/Extended-Articles.

Justice Muñiz to Serve as the Next Chief Justice

On March 9, 2022, the Florida Supreme Court unanimously elected Carlos G. Muñiz to serve as Florida's next chief justice. His two-year term begins on July 1, 2022.

The seven members of the Supreme Court of Florida elect a chief justice to serve a two-year term beginning July 1 in even-numbered years. Court rules call for selection “based on managerial, administrative, and leadership abilities, without regard to seniority only.” Florida's chief justice serves as the administrative officer of the judicial branch and of the Supreme Court. The chief justice's authority and powers include the responsibility to serve as the primary spokesperson for the judicial branch about policies of statewide import, including the management, operation, legislative agenda, and budget priorities of the state's courts.

Justice Muñiz was appointed to the Court on January 22, 2019, by Governor Ron DeSantis. On his appointment, Justice Muñiz said:

I'm grateful for the privilege of serving in this capacity, and I join my colleagues in thanking Chief Justice Canady for his outstanding leadership. Our Court's focus will remain on serving the people of our great state and supporting all the judges and staff who work with us in the judicial branch to administer justice on a daily basis.

Before joining the Court, Justice Muñiz served as general counsel to the U.S. Department of Education under Secretary Betsy DeVos, as deputy attorney general and chief of staff to Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, and as deputy general counsel in the administration of Governor Jeb Bush, among other posts in the executive and legislative branches.

Justice Muñiz succeeds Charles T. Canady as chief justice, who remains on the Court after completing his third, and second consecutive, term as chief justice. His tenure included guiding



ABOVE: Justice Carlos G. Muñiz will become Florida's 57th chief justice since statehood was granted in 1845. **BELOW:** In a ceremony held in the rotunda of the Supreme Court building, Chief Justice Charles T. Canady (left) passed the gavel to Justice Carlos G. Muñiz (right).

the State Courts System during the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and taking administrative steps to assure access to justice for the people. Under Chief Justice Canady's leadership, the Supreme Court held its first remote oral arguments in May 2020, joining courts in jurisdictions throughout the state conducting remote proceedings to continue the work of the courts with the aid of technology despite the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, Chief Justice Canady issued administrative orders that set forth procedures and authorized emergency rules allowing remote conduct of court events.

“With the commitment of my colleagues on the Supreme Court as well as judges throughout the state, I am proud of our efforts to keep the work of the courts going through this challenging time,” Canady said. “I look forward to my continued service on the Court under the leadership of my friend and colleague Justice Muñiz.”

Justice Muñiz lives in Tallahassee with his wife, Katie Muñiz, and their three children, Robert, William, and Lydia.



The Couriel family holds the Bible as Justice John D. Couriel is administered the oath of office by the Honorable Robert J. Luck of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Judge Luck also served on the Florida Supreme Court before being appointed to the Eleventh Circuit.

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT NEWS

The Investiture of the Honorable John D. Couriel

By **D. Bailey Howard**

In June 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis appointed John D. Couriel to the Supreme Court of Florida. Justice Couriel's appointment filled the vacancy that was created by the appointment of then-Justice Barbara Lagoa to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. The Supreme Court of Florida met in ceremonial session for Justice Couriel's Investiture in October 2021.

In his remarks at the ceremony, Justice Couriel thanked the many people who have supported him and invested their trust in him throughout his life. "They didn't just desire what was good for me," he said. "They willed purposefully and bravely for my good, often at great cost

to themselves, sometimes—indeed on the most powerful occasions—without knowing me at all." Reflecting on his parents' arrival in the United States as refugees from Cuba, Justice Couriel noted that "[t]hose of us who ourselves arrived in this country, or can remember our relatives who did, often say that we owe a debt to America that we can never repay. But America did more than loan me something," he continued, "it invested in me."

He has repaid that investment with substantial dividends. His legal career began in public service, with a clerkship to the Honorable John D. Bates of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who Justice Couriel describes as "a master" of the law and a treasured

mentor. After a period in private practice in New York, Justice Couriel joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, serving as an Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) for 4 years. As an AUSA, Justice Couriel prosecuted hundreds of federal offenses- from international money laundering and human trafficking crimes, to healthcare fraud and crimes against the public integrity. He later returned to private practice in Miami with the law firm of Kobre & Kim LLP, from where he was appointed to the bench.

Justice Couriel was born in Miami in 1978. He earned his A.B. *magna cum laude* from Harvard College in 2000 and returned to Harvard for law school, earning his J.D. in 2003. At his Investiture, his two children, Jonas and Eden, led the Pledge of Allegiance and, together with his wife, Rebecca L. Toonkel, M.D., enrobed him. Following an invocation by Father Roberto Cid of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Miami Beach, attendees enjoyed remarks from a host of distinguished speakers, including Governor DeSantis, Florida Bar President Michael Tanner, and the Honorable Robert J. Luck, of the Eleventh Circuit and formerly of the Supreme Court of Florida, who was Justice Couriel's trial partner at the U.S. Attorney's Office.

For a full gallery of photos from the Investiture and more information on the Historical Society, visit www.flcourthistory.org/JusticeCouriel.



TOP: The Couriel family prepares to enter the Supreme Court building before the Investiture. Pictured from left: Jonas, Rebecca Toonkel, M.D., Justice John D. Couriel, and Eden. **SECOND:** Miami attorney Barbara Llanes shares insights and stories about Justice Couriel, whom she has known since they met at high school speech and debate tournaments. **THIRD:** Special guests and dignitaries fill the Court's front row. Pictured from left: then-Florida Secretary of State Laurel Lee, State Senator Tom Lee, Barry Kamar, Barbara Llanes, immediate Past President of The Florida Bar Dori Foster-Morales, and current President of The Florida Bar Michael Tanner. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** During the reception following the Investiture ceremony, Rebecca Toonkel gives a toast and thanks guests for attending her husband's Investiture as the 90th justice of the Florida Supreme Court. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Justice Couriel receives a congratulatory hug from his longtime friend Nelson Diaz.



The Investiture of the Honorable Jamie R. Grosshans



Justice C. Alan Lawson administers the oath of office to Justice Jamie R. Grosshans as her daughter Avery holds the Bible and her husband, Josh, and daughter Alice look on. Her son, Jack, also was present.

By **Sophia Akel** and **David Melito**

On November 17, 2021, Justice Jamie R. Grosshans was surrounded by a large group of childhood friends, family, and colleagues eager to watch her be officially invested as the 91st justice of the Supreme Court of Florida. Chief Justice Charles T. Canady described the Investiture as “a reminder of the Supreme Court’s past and a harbinger for its future.” Before joining the Court, Justice Grosshans was a private practitioner and assistant state attorney and then a judge on the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court. Later, she was appointed to the Fifth District Court of Appeal.

Because of COVID-19, the ceremony took place more than a year after Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Justice Grosshans to the Court on September 14, 2020. Speakers included Florida Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez and Florida Bar President Michael Tanner.

Justice Grosshans’s friend Charbel Barakat took the podium and remarked that she was “the kind of friend

others turn to for her patience, wise advice, and good humor.” Barakat thanked Justice Grosshans’s parents, Jack and Shirley Rutland, and the rest of her family for “instilling in her a love of God, family, and country that remains the core of who she is.” Meredith Sasso, with whom Justice Grosshans served on the Fifth District Court of Appeal, reflected on Justice Grosshans’s time as a law student, recalling that she “excelled academically” and was involved in extracurricular activities. While Justice Grosshans never planned to be a judge, Judge Sasso said, all who knew her best knew it was her destiny.

Justice C. Alan Lawson administered the oath of office to Justice Grosshans, who was surrounded by her husband and children. After the oath, Marshal Silvester Dawson escorted her to the bench, where she was invited to say a few words. Justice Grosshans opened by reflecting upon her time as a young girl who adored books and stories; she called writers Agatha Christie and

J. R. R. Tolkien her childhood best friends.

Justice Grosshans thanked her parents, grandparents, and in-laws for their support and expressed gratitude for “such a big family who truly loves spending time together and being an active part of each other’s lives.” She called law school “life-changing,” and expressed appreciation for classmates who “have cheered [her] on for years, a few even finding their way to Tallahassee today, because friendships formed in the Grove last forever” (a reference to a hangout spot at the University of Mississippi).

Justice Grosshans thanked the lawyers and judges in her life, including her former colleagues from the Fifth District and Orange County, saying that each of them played a critical role in getting her to where she is today. Justice Grosshans also thanked Governor DeSantis for trusting her to perform the duties of this new role and Senator Rick Scott for starting her judicial career with her first 2 judicial appointments. She then turned to the other sitting justices on the bench and thanked them for welcoming her into the role with “professionalism, respect, and friendship.”

Turning to her family, Justice Grosshans—through tears—expressed pride and gratitude for her children Avery, Jack, and Alice. She said her role in the judiciary has resulted in her missing some of the important moments in their lives, but thanked them for understanding that “sacrifice is sometimes a part of life.” She ended her remarks to her children by saying, “I love you to the moon and back.” Turning to her husband, Josh Grosshans, Justice Grosshans expressed appreciation for him believing in her before she “even dreamed of it” and for his support and encouragement along the way. She ended by jokingly thanking him for encouraging her to continue on the path when she was considering a Pottery Barn sales position instead.

Chief Justice Canady adjourned the ceremony and invited guests to a reception at the Governor’s Club a few blocks away. The event was sponsored in part by the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society and the Orange County Bar Association.

For a full gallery of photos from the Investiture and more information on the Historical Society, visit www.flcourthistory.org/JusticeGrosshans.



LEFT: The Grosshans family stands on the front steps of the Supreme Court building. Pictured from left: Josh Grosshans, Jack, Justice Jamie R. Grosshans, Alice, and Avery.

BELOW: John M. Czarnetzky, Justice Grosshans’s favorite professor from law school at the University of Mississippi and now Dean and CEO of Ave Maria School of Law, offered the benediction at the end of the ceremony. He expressed that “it is an educator’s greatest happiness to see his or her student exceed [them] in life.”



ABOVE: Orange County Judge Jeanette Dejuras Bigney (left) and David Bigney (right) gather with Justice Grosshans for a picture at the reception held at the Governor’s Club a few blocks from the Supreme Court building.

LEFT: Justice Grosshans and Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez shake hands following the Lieutenant Governor’s remarks at the Investiture. Nuñez described Justice Grosshans as a valuable addition to the Florida Supreme Court. Governor Ron DeSantis also joined the ceremony virtually and apologized for being unable to attend in person due to his accompanying First Lady Casey DeSantis to a breast cancer treatment.





LEFT: During his State of the Judiciary presentation, Chief Justice Charles T. Canady receives impromptu praise from a guest in the audience, followed by an immediate standing ovation by the entire room, for his leadership in managing Florida's court operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. **RIGHT:** Some of the evening's distinguished guests include, from left: Florida Bar President-Elect Gary S. Lesser, Justice C. Alan Lawson, Department of Business & Professional Regulation Secretary Melanie S. Griffin, and Florida Bar Board of Governors Member John A. Schifino.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

Sat Cito Si Recte: A SUPREME EVENING 2022

By **Francine Walker**

"*Sat Cito Si Recte* is the motto on the seal of the Florida Supreme Court," Scott Rost, Historical Society President, said in welcoming the more than 325 honorees, members, sponsors, and guests to *A Supreme Evening 2022*.

This motto was the theme of the event held on April 7, 2022, which was the first to be held in person since 2020. The motto translated means "soon enough if done rightly." While the event is generally held in January, the Historical Society decided that April 7 "would be a soon enough date if we were to do this event right," Rost added.

Historical Society Trustee and Florida Bar Past President Hank Coxe served as the master of ceremonies for the evening. After his brief greetings and recognition of all of the justices, judges, and other dignitaries in attendance, Coxe asked former Justice Raoul Cantero to make some brief remarks in honor of R. Craig Waters, who recently retired from the Court after serving as Public Information Officer for more than 25 years. Waters is best known for his role as the public spokesman for the Court during the 2000 presidential election litigation.

Former Justice Ken Bell escorted former Justice Major B. Harding to the lectern for remembrances and the invocation. Justice Harding, who serves on the FSCHS Board of Trustees, honored the memories of four former justices who passed away in the past year: James E. Alderman, Stephen H. Grimes, Joseph W. Hatchett, and Gerald Kogan. "We give thanks and honor the lives of these former justices. May they rest in peace," Justice Harding concluded.

In his invocation, Justice Harding expressed gratitude for "this event that draws us together tonight with the opportunity to look back and contemplate the past, present, and future of the law, the judicial system, and those who administer it."

SOCIETY'S LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RENAMED & GIVEN TO JUSTICE HARDING

A Supreme Evening 2022 continued with the announcement that the Historical Society Board of Trustees unanimously decided to rename the Historical Society's



Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht of the Texas Supreme Court gives the keynote address for the evening, speaking on how attorneys can assist the courts in preserving judicial independence.



TOP: Former Justice Raoul Cantero recognizes the retirement of R. Craig Waters, who served as the Court's Public Information Officer for more than 25 years. **UPPER MIDDLE:** Avera & Smith law firm guests at the pre-dinner reception include, from left: Gary Wimsett, Mark Avera, Lance Avera, Alexandria Avera, and Brad Willard. **LOWER MIDDLE:** Several OSCA senior staff members attend A Supreme Evening. Pictured from left: Andrew Johns, Eric Maclure, Claudia Johns, and State Courts Administrator Alison "Ali" Sackett. **BOTTOM:** Tampa is well represented at the reception. Pictured from left: Stuart Markman (Trustee), Barbara Casasa, Steve Yerrid, Lori Markman, Amy Farrior (Trustee), and Ed Farrior.

Lifetime Achievement Award after its longtime member Susan Rosenblatt, who died in November 2021 from acute myeloid leukemia. The Historical Society also posthumously awarded her with the renamed Lifetime Achievement Award.

In addition, the Historical Society awarded former Justice Harding with the Susan Rosenblatt Lifetime Achievement Award for his highly distinguished judicial career, many years of extraordinary contributions to Florida's legal system, and lifelong devotion to improving the lives of others.

Both of these presentations are covered in more detail in separate articles in this issue.

STATE OF THE JUDICIARY

Chief Justice Charles T. Canady gave the "State of the Judiciary" address, in which he said Florida's trial courts and the state's lawyers are working collaboratively through the pandemic-induced backlog of cases and progress.

"I am pleased to report on this occasion that the state of our court and of the Florida judiciary is strong," Chief Justice Canady told guests. He said: "Our trial courts are working hard to deal with the pandemic-generated backlog. It is an enormous backlog, and I appreciate the work done in the trial courts across the state every day to address it."

He also reported a nearly 30% reduction in the overall backlog of cases in the trial courts since July 1, 2021. "That is a lot of progress," Chief Justice Canady remarked. "And through aggressive case management, circuit civil and county civil have seen a 50% reduction in the backlog. That far exceeds what we anticipated. It is only happening because a lot of judges and a lot of lawyers are working hard to move those cases forward to resolution." He said that the appellate courts were not as severely affected as the trial courts.

Chief Justice Canady also discussed recent changes in the Court and among the Court's staff, including two new justices, a new State Courts

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Administrator, a new Public Information Officer, and, soon, a new chief justice. "We've got a great team and a strong, collaborative system."

He also praised the Historical Society for the work and dedication of its leaders. In turn, guests praised Chief Justice Canady's service with a standing ovation.

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN EPIC TIMES: INDEPENDENCE AND INNOVATION

As the program continued, Chief Justice Canady introduced his friend, Texas Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht, as the keynote speaker for the evening.

Chief Justice Hecht is the 27th chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas. He is the longest-serving member in that court's history and the longest-serving senior Texas appellate judge in active service. He is well-known nationally for his efforts to expand access to justice through civil legal assistance.

Addressing the continued importance of protecting judicial independence by making the courts more user-friendly, Chief Justice Hecht said the challenges presented during the pandemic led to innovations that might otherwise have not been considered, including remote proceedings. He remarked that the pandemic has taught us two things. First, we have learned "that remote proceedings are fabulous, and they really work and increase participation in family cases, help with maturation of misdemeanor cases, and really do a lot of good in many ways ... And the other thing we have learned is they are terrible in other circumstances." The key, he said, is "[f]inding where to draw that line."

Chief Justice Hecht also said he is confident the courts will emerge from these challenges stronger and better. "We should heed this summons to bring the justice system into the 21st Century, adhering firmly to our ancient values and answering to the demands of our changing culture for more accessibility, while deepening our own dedication to justice for all."

While in Tallahassee, Chief Justice Hecht also met with local legal aid attorney volunteers and students at the Florida State University College of Law.

THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS

The recently renamed Dunlap Champions Club on the Florida State University campus provided the venue for the event.

"Tonight would not have been possible without the generous support of so many sponsoring law firms, legal organizations, and friends," Historical Society President Rost said. "This event is the primary fundraiser for the work and mission of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society to honor and preserve the rich history of Florida's highest court and the justices who serve."

Rost also expressed gratitude to the trustees, volunteers, and Historical Society Executive Director Mark Miller.

For a full gallery of photos from A Supreme Evening 2022 and more information on the Historical Society, visit www.flcourthistory.org/SupremeEvening2022.

Historical Society's Lifetime Achievement Award Renamed to Honor Longtime Trustee

By **Francine Walker**

At *A Supreme Evening 2022*, the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society honored the late Susan Rosenblatt, a Miami appellate attorney and longtime Historical Society Trustee, with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Not only was Susan posthumously given the Award, but the Society also announced that its highest honor has been renamed to permanently recognize her legal career and her dedication to the Society's mission and efforts.

Susan Rosenblatt graduated from the University of Miami with a bachelor's degree in Economics at age 17. She received her J.D. with honors from the University of Miami when she turned 21. She returned to law school a few years later for an LLM in tax.

As a young lawyer, Susan Rosenblatt was an associate of the Miami firm of Colson & Hicks. She later devoted her practice to civil appeals, working extensively with Robert Orseck of the Podhurst Orseck firm.

Susan married Stanley Rosenblatt in 1980, and the Rosenblatts began practicing together shortly after. Starting in 1991, they devoted their law practice to handling the two significant tobacco class actions, *Broin* and *Engle*. Both cases included multiple appellate proceedings, all handled by Susan Rosenblatt while also managing several young children at home. Together, they became well-known for taking on "Big Tobacco." In recent years, Susan Rosenblatt focused her time and energies on assisting FAMRI, a nonprofit created through tobacco litigation that funds research seeking cures for diseases caused by smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Rosenblatt died in November 2021 from acute myeloid leukemia. Historical Society President Scott R. Rost said the Society's Board of Trustees was unanimous in deciding to rename the Society's highest honor to recognize Susan. The Rosenblatts became active members of the Historical Society's Board of Trustees in the late 1990s and are among the organization's greatest benefactors. Both served as chairs of



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD HONOREES

2022	Major B. Harding & Susan Rosenblatt	2013	Reubin Askew & William Reece Smith, Jr.
2021	Joseph W. Hatchett	2012	Dexter Douglass
2018	John F. Harkness, Jr.	2010	Robert Ervin & Mark Hulsey
2017	Janet Reno	2009	Russell Troutman
2015	Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte		
2014	Rosemary Barkett		

various committees, and Susan was elected to multiple officer positions in recent years, including Treasurer and Vice President. In fact, Susan made sure she and Stanley had a residence in Tallahassee so she could fully fulfill her role as Vice President of the organization. She was in line to become President. "She was enthusiastic about becoming the Historical Society president," Rost said. "When her illness placed that move on hold, the Trustees unanimously agreed that her term as President would always be available to her."

At the Historical Society's annual dinner on April 7, 2022, in Tallahassee, the Society presented Susan's husband, Stanley Rosenblatt, with the first Susan Rosenblatt Lifetime Achievement Award, which he accepted on her behalf. Accompanied by two of their nine children, Stanley spoke to the audience about Susan and the legacy she left behind, adding: "Susan was the best wife, mother, and partner that any man could ever hope for."

Historical Society Past President and friend of Susan, Hank Coxe said that honoring Susan was important to the Society: "She was the greatest sponsor of what the historical society has tried to accomplish over the years. I believe the name change is the society's appreciation for everything she did. She will be sorely missed."

For more on the life of Susan Rosenblatt, see Farewell to a Beloved Friend of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society: Susan Rosenblatt by Daniel Hoffman in the Fall/Winter 2021 issue of the Historical Review, which is available at www.flcourthistory.org/Historical-Review.



Stanley Rosenblatt (right)—accompanied by two of his children, David Rosenblatt (left) and Miriam Rosenblatt Hoffman (middle)—accepts the Society's honor of renaming its Lifetime Achievement Award after his late wife, Susan Rosenblatt, on her behalf.



 HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

Justice Major B. Harding Honored for a Lifetime of Achievement

By Mark D. Killian

In accepting a lifetime achievement award from the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society with his wife Jane by his side, retired Justice Major B. Harding said, “her love, her care, her support, her encouragement, and her wisdom, in my judgment, are equally attributable to my receiving this award.”

Harding received the Susan Rosenblatt Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his highly distinguished judicial career, many years of extraordinary contributions to Florida’s legal system, and lifelong devotion to improving the lives of others.

Awarded by unanimous consent of the FSCHS Board of Trustees and presented during the annual dinner April 7, Justice Harding received the newly renamed award immediately after Susan Rosenblatt’s family received the inaugural award. They were the only two honorees this year. Harding and his wife Jane have been active members of the society’s board for more than 25 years and he has served on the executive committee.

“He once said in Jacksonville before he went on the Supreme Court we have discipline courses, we have civility classes, we have professionalism schools, but if your mother didn’t teach you right, I’m not exactly sure what we are supposed to do,” master of ceremonies Hank Coxe said in introducing Harding. “And he meant that because that was Major Harding. That is what he believed and that was what he experienced.”

Former Supreme Court Marshal Wilson Barnes once said of Harding, “Around the court, among my colleagues, we like to consider Justice Harding as a man of the people.”

Barnes said, “From judges to janitors, he related to us all. He is not taken up with the power or the importance of his position.”

A native of Charlotte, North Carolina, Harding received his undergraduate and law degrees from Wake Forest University, where he met Jane, his future wife. The North Carolina Bar admitted him as a member when he graduated in 1959, and he became a Florida Bar member one year later.

The Harding family then moved to Ft. Gordon, Georgia, where Harding spent part of his Army tour as an assistant staff judge advocate from 1960 to 1962, before finally settling in Jacksonville.



On July 1, 1998, Justice Harding is sworn in as the next chief justice of the Supreme Court of Florida. His wife, Jane, holds the Bible on which he rests his hand while taking the oath of office. Former Marshal Wilson E. Barnes is at left.

After two years as assistant county solicitor in Duval County (1962-63), Harding went into private practice.

Harding's initial ascent to the bench has been told and retold: In 1968, he drove to Jacksonville's airport to meet then-Gov. Claude Kirk, who suggested the gubernatorial entourage ride into town in Harding's car.

"I was a young father on a budget," Harding recalled in 2002, shortly after announcing his intention to retire from the court. "And my car was a Volkswagen Beetle that could barely fit two adults comfortably."

The solution? Harding and Kirk chatted comfortably in a Florida Highway Patrol car while a staff member followed in the famed beetle.

Not only a memorable meeting but a productive one, as well. Kirk appointed Harding to the juvenile bench mere days later. In 1976, Harding was elected chief judge of the circuit and soon became the first dean of the Judicial College. In 1991, then-Gov. Lawton Chiles appointed him to the Supreme Court.

During his tenure on the Court, Harding and his fellow justices dealt with such high-profile issues as the election recount and the death penalty. During Harding's two-year stint as chief justice from 1998 to 2000, he oversaw

initiatives to improve diversity, increase public access, and boost public confidence in the courts.

This article was originally published on April 11, 2022, by the Florida Bar News at <https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/justice-major-harding-honored-for-a-lifetime-of-achievement/> and has been reprinted as published.



TOP: Retired Justice Major B. Harding and his wife, Jane, share a kiss on stage after he was presented with the Society's Susan Rosenblatt Lifetime Achievement Award.

LEFT: The Harding family gathers to celebrate their father receiving the Society's Lifetime Achievement Award. Pictured from left: David Harding, Lynn Harding, Alice Sanderson, Robert Sanderson, Terry Sanderson, Elizabeth Harding, and Major Harding, Jr.



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A MOMENT IN TIME



Kenneth R. Palmer, State Courts Administrator from 1985 until his death in 2001, is pictured here in the mid-1980s drawing one of the diagrams for which he was well-known. Ken has been described as the architect of Florida's modern court system. He was recognized by his peers for his excellence and leadership when the Conference of State Court Administrators established The Kenneth R. Palmer Distinguished Service Award (cosca.ncsc.org), presented to a member of that conference who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership and excellence in judicial administration or significantly advanced one or more of specified purposes of the conference.