



Supreme Court of Florida

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Supreme Court launches podcast program 'Beyond the Bench'

TALLAHASSEE – A good conversation covers a lot of ground – and that can be heard in the inaugural podcast released this week by the Florida Supreme Court, which features Chief Justice Jorge Labarga talking with Leon County Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson about why courts must communicate with the people they serve.

During their conversation, the two jurists also discuss the surprising benefit of jury service, Florida's long-standing policy of allowing cameras in the courtroom, the importance of courts that are impartial and independent – and a couple of good movies.

The podcast series, "Beyond the Bench," can be reached from the front page of the Court's website, www.floridasupremecourt.org.

Florida's sweeping Court Communication Plan, which the state's high court unanimously approved in late 2015, calls for Florida's courts to consider taking advantage of recent advances in technology and communications, such as social media and podcasting. The plan also emphasizes the importance of time-honored principles of effective communication, such as building and maintaining relationships of trust with your audience.

"It's imperative that people get to see how justice is being done," Labarga says at one point during the podcast, repeating a point he has made before. "It's not just that justice is done – it has to be seen to be done."

Ashenafi-Richardson tells Labarga that "the word is getting out on Facebook, Twitter ... it's been exciting to see our circuits using technology to allow citizens and our young people to learn more about the courts and what we do."

The Florida Supreme Court launched its Facebook page in the fall of 2016 and joined Twitter in 2009. Florida's Ninth Judicial Circuit, which covers Orange and Osceola counties, launched a podcast in the summer of 2016. The 11th Judicial Circuit, which covers Miami-Dade County, has also started a podcast program. Most of Florida's 26 court divisions – 20 Circuits, five District Courts of Appeal and the

Supreme Court – have a presence on at least one social media platform. The Office of State Courts Administrator, which serves under the direction of Florida’s chief justice and its Supreme Court, is also active in social media.

The Communication Plan, “Delivering Our Message,” was drafted by the Judicial Management Council, an advisory body that includes judges, lawyers and non-lawyers. Ashenafi-Richardson is a member of the council and chaired the committee that developed the communication plan. In the podcast, she describes how the plan includes numbers strategies and ideas for Florida’s courts to consider as they work on improving communication both internally and externally. As one example, she pointed to landlord-tenant clinics in the Second Judicial Circuit, which includes Tallahassee and surrounding rural counties, where the clerk of court and attorneys hold clinics to explain to landlords and tenants about the forms that are required in such cases.

“These are often the type of cases where they don’t want to hire an attorney – they can’t afford to hire an attorney (and) the costs are very low in terms of damages,” she said. “So these clinics are very helpful.”

Future Supreme Court podcasts will cover the work carried out by some of the departments at the Supreme Court, especially those that have the most interaction with the public, including the Clerk’s Office, the Library and the Public Information Office.

For more info:

Delivering Our Message:

http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/pub_info/documents/2016-Judicial-Branch-Court-Communication-Plan.pdf

Social Media in Florida’s courts:

<http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/education-outreach/social-media.stml>

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