Florida Chief Justice Takes Part in Access to Justice Event at White House

TALLAHASSEE – For a second year, Florida Chief Justice Jorge Labarga will take part Tuesday in the White House Forum on Increasing Access to Justice, one of six state chief justices invited to do so. Other participants in the forum, which will be live-streamed at https://www.whitehouse.gov/live, will include CEOs of major corporations and leaders of legal aid programs.

“I am eager to once again bring Florida’s perspective to this critically important national conversation,” Labarga said Monday. “And I look forward to hearing about initiatives and innovations elsewhere that we may very well want to explore here in Florida.”

The White House event is to include remarks from U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch, White House Counsel Neil Eggleston and John Levi, the chairman of the Legal Services Corp., which is the single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans and a co-sponsor of the non-partisan forum. After the forum, a reception at the U.S. Supreme Court will include remarks by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Labarga has made improving access to civil justice one of the priorities of his tenure as the head of Florida’s judicial branch. In late 2014, a few months after becoming chief justice, he signed an administrative order creating the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice.

The Access Commission is charged with researching how to bring down barriers that keep many low-income and moderate-income people from accessing their courts for civil justice matters, including life-changing events such as divorce, child custody, home foreclosures and landlord-tenant disputes.

“The lack of meaningful access to civil justice is so critically urgent that it I believe it can be fairly described as a crisis,” Labarga said, adding quickly that many individual attorneys and legal groups have worked selflessly to help people who can’t afford a lawyer and praising “the generosity and dedication of so many in the legal field, now and in the past.”
“But the simple truth is that the gaps in access to civil justice are bigger than the legal community,” Labarga said. “We are grappling with a societal problem. And it needs a societal answer.”

At the Washington forum, Labarga and his counterparts from jurisdictions like Texas, Missouri, South Dakota, North Carolina and Arizona will take part in a panel discussion on Fines and Fees at the Intersection of Criminal and Civil Legal Aid.

Another panel discussion, featuring the directors or executive officers of legal aid organizations, will focus on pro bono services and technology innovations. The third panel discussion will include top executives from Microsoft Corp., Veritas, Inc., Merck & Co., Inc., Ariel Investments and The Carlyle Group.

Labarga said he looked forward to hearing the remarks of all the other forum participants as well as featured speakers, adding that pro bono efforts by the legal community, technological innovations and the active engagement of the business community would all be vitally important in Florida as the state works to increase access.

More information on the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice can be found on its website at http://www.flaccesstojustice.org/.

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White House Forum on Increasing Access to Justice

Tuesday April 19, 2016
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1:00 PM – 4:15 PM

Speakers
John G. Levi, Chairman, Legal Services Corporation
Valerie B. Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President of the United States
The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy III, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Patrick J. Murphy, Acting Secretary of the Army
Paulette Brown, President, American Bar Association
W. Neil Eggleston, White House Counsel
The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch, Attorney General of the United States

Panels
Fines and Fees: At the Intersection of Civil and Criminal Justice
Chief Justice Scott Bales, Arizona Supreme Court
Chief Justice Patricia Breckenridge, Supreme Court of Missouri
Chief Justice David E. Gilbertson, South Dakota Supreme Court
Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht, Supreme Court of Texas
Chief Justice Jorge Labarga, Supreme Court of Florida
Chief Justice Mark D. Martin, Supreme Court of North Carolina
Chief Judge Eric T. Washington, District of Columbia Court of Appeals
Lisa Foster, Director, Office for Access to Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (Moderator)

Pro Bono and Technology Innovations to Improve Access to Justice
M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii
Mark O’Brien, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Pro Bono Net
Julia R. Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, OneJustice
Phong Wong, Pro Bono Director, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
James J. Sandman, President, Legal Services Corporation (Moderator)

Perspectives on Access to Justice from the Business Community
Debra A. Cafaro, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Ventas, Inc.
Kenneth C. Frazier, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Merck & Co., Inc.
John W. Rogers Jr., Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Ariel Investments
David M. Rubenstein, Co-Founder and Co-Chief Executive Officer, The Carlyle Group
Amy W. Schulman, Chief Executive Officer, Arsia Therapeutics and Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Lyndra
Brad L. Smith, President, Microsoft Corporation
Arne M. Sorenson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Marriott International
Dean Martha Minow, Harvard Law School and Legal Services Corporation Vice Chair (Moderator)
Reception at the Supreme Court of the United States
Tuesday April 19, 2016
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
One First Street Northeast
Washington, D.C. 20543

Remarks
Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, United States Supreme Court
Judge David S. Tatel, U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit
Harriet E. Miers, Partner, Locke Lord LLP & former White House Counsel