Civil Justice Access Commission to meet Jan. 16
in Tallahassee’s Knott Building

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice will hold its first meeting on Friday, Jan. 16, from 12:30 until 4:45 p.m. in Room 412 of the Knott Building in Tallahassee’s capitol complex. The meeting is open to the public and will be broadcast live on the Florida Supreme Court’s Gavel to Gavel website at http://wfsu.org/gavel2gavel/.

Recognizing that economic disparity threatens access to a fair and impartial judicial system, Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Jorge Labarga issued an administrative order establishing the commission in November. The 27-member commission includes leaders from all three branches of Florida government, The Florida Bar, The Florida Bar Foundation, civil legal aid providers, the business community, and other stakeholders, who will work in a coordinated effort to identify and remove economic barriers to civil justice.

The keynote address will be presented by Supreme Court of Texas Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht, who is active in the Court's efforts to assure that Texans living below the poverty level as well as others with limited means have access to basic civil legal services. The Texas Access to Justice Commission was formed in 2001 and has a long list of concrete and impactful achievements. Chief Justice Hecht is co-author with Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas L. Kilbride of “Access to Justice Commissions: Lessons from Two States” in Trends in State Courts 2014, a publication of the National Center for State Courts.

“State access to justice commissions work with state supreme courts and civil justice stakeholders to expand access to justice; tap new sources of expertise, leadership, creativity, and support; and help state supreme courts in the administration of justice for low-income and vulnerable people,” Hecht and Kilbride wrote.
Also on the agenda for the Florida commission’s first meeting are presentations on the role of access to justice commissions and an overview of the need for legal services in Florida, a panel discussion on understanding the legal services gap, and a call to action for the commission members to begin working on five subcommittees that will meet by teleconference: Outreach, Access to and the Delivery of Legal Services; Continuum of Services; Technology; and Funding.

The meeting agenda is posted on the commission’s website at [http://www.flaccesstojustice.org/](http://www.flaccesstojustice.org/).

Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation to participate in the Commission meeting should contact Francisco-Javier Digon-Greer at (800) 342-8060 ext. 5793 or email flacessjustice@flabar.org as much in advance as possible but preferably at least five working days before the meeting. Persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech impairment, and who use specialized telephone equipment may contact Mr. Digon-Greer through the Florida Relay Service by dialing 7-1-1.

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**ATTENTION NEWS MEDIA REPORTERS:** Your coverage of all or part of the meeting is welcome. In addition, a **media availability will be held at 11 a.m.** in the meeting room for interviews with Chief Justices Labarga and Hecht, Florida Bar President Greg Coleman and possibly some commission members. Please contact Francine Walker at The Florida Bar, 850-561-5762 or fwalker@flabar.org, if you plan to attend the availability and/or the meeting.

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