

Supreme Court of Florida

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Labarga Honors ADA's 25th Anniversary with Proclamation

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Chief Justice Jorge Labarga today signed a proclamation honoring the historic signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act 25 years ago and designating July 2015 as a month of commemoration for the anniversary within Florida's State Courts System.

"The very reason courts exist is to provide justice and fairness," Labarga said. "Nothing could be more essential to our overall mission than to provide fair and equal access to citizens with disabilities."

Florida's judiciary has a long-standing commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was signed into law on July 26, 1990. The federal law establishes "a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability" and bans discrimination in access to employment, governmental services and programs, public accommodations, transportation and communications.

Examples of auxiliary aids or services that the courts may provide to afford effective communication include assistive listening devices, qualified sign language interpreters, or real-time transcription services for persons with hearing loss. They also include accessible formats such as large print or Braille documents and qualified readers for persons with vision loss.

More information about court ADA accommodations and procedures can be found online at www.flcourts.org. The ADA information page includes links to each of Florida's 20 judicial circuits, five district courts of appeal, and the Supreme Court. Each court has an ADA coordinator as does the state courts system as a whole.

Past Florida chief justices also focused attention on the requirements of the federal law. During a ceremony on September 9, 1999, former Chief Justice Major B. Harding signed a proclamation designating the year 2000 as a time to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the ADA.

In 2010, former Chief Justice Charles T. Canady issued a proclamation to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the law's passage and dedicated a month to highlight compliance. In 2006, former Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis ordered a statewide survey of all state court facilities to identify and eliminate architectural barriers confronting citizens with disabilities.

Florida courts have also worked since 2007 to ensure that electronic documents and web pages are created and designed to be accessible to people using assistive devices like screen readers.

In the proclamation signed today, Labarga noted that the "full promise of this important federal civil rights law as it relates to the justice system will only be reached if the Florida state courts remain committed to full implementation of the Act.

"I call upon judicial officers and court staff members to renew their efforts to eliminate obstacles that prevent full inclusion of all Floridians in the State Courts System," Labarga said.

In addition to the ADA, Florida's courts are bound by the Florida Constitution, which guarantees "full and fair access to the courts for all residents" in Article I, section 21.

Labarga has made improving court access a priority of his two-year term as the head of Florida's court system. The Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice, which he created by administrative order last year, is currently working on the unmet civil legal needs of poor and middle class Floridians.

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Supreme Court of Florida

PROCLAMATION

In re: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law on July 26, 1990, to ensure the civil rights of persons with disabilities and has expanded opportunities by reducing barriers, changing perceptions, facilitating greater civic engagement, and increasing participation in community life; and

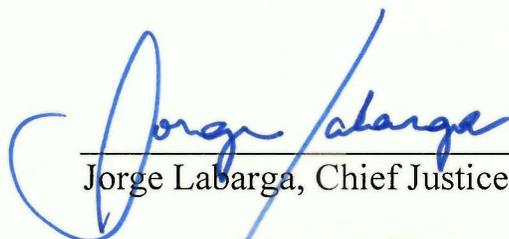
WHEREAS, the Supreme Court of Florida and the Florida State Courts System have committed themselves to full and fair access to the courts for all residents of this great State, as guaranteed by Article I, section 21 of the Constitution of the great State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, the Florida state courts strive to provide reasonable accommodations for judges and court employees with disabilities; provide auxiliary aids and services that ensure effective communication; and take other steps to afford accessibility of court services, programs, and activities; and

WHEREAS, the full promise of this important federal civil rights law as it relates to the justice system will only be reached if the Florida state courts remain committed to full implementation of the Act.

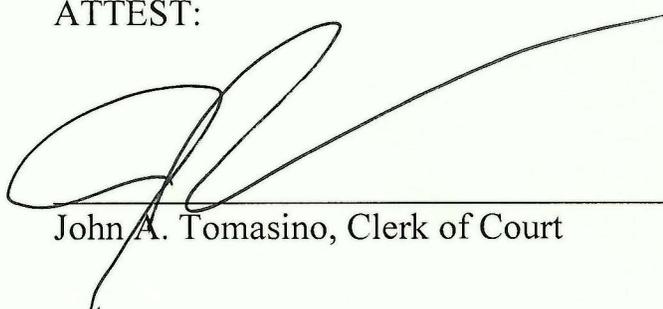
NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jorge Labarga, Chief Justice of Florida, do hereby proclaim that July 2015 shall be known within the State Courts System as a month of commemoration in honor the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I reaffirm the court system's commitment to full compliance with the Act, and I call upon judicial officers and court staff members to renew their efforts to eliminate obstacles that prevent full inclusion of all Floridians in the State Courts System.

AND THE SAME is hereby ordered and done at Tallahassee on this Tenth Day of April, 2015.



Jorge Labarga, Chief Justice

ATTEST:



John A. Tomasino, Clerk of Court

