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State of Florida

Volume V, Issue I

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**A Word From JAC's Executive Director**



**Rip Colvin**  
JAC Executive Director

The next Justice Administrative Commission (JAC) meeting will be held on March 3, 2015 — the first day of the Legislative Session. The agenda will include the Executive Director's Report; a review of JAC's statutory authority and requirements, as well as other laws impacting JAC; a legislative update; JAC and GAL Pay Plan Revisions, and a general topic discussion. Components of the Executive Director's Report are highlighted below.

**Grant Agreements**

JAC was notified December 4, 2014, that the Department of Financial Services (DFS) initiated a review of selected grant agreements and related grant management activities of the JAC. Additionally, two offices administratively served by JAC, including the Offices of Public Defender, 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and State Attorney, 10th Judicial Circuit, are being reviewed. To date, DFS has held two meetings with JAC staff. An exit conference is scheduled for March 2, 2015.

**BOMS/STAC Agreements**

JAC staff, working with staff from the Offices of the State Attorney, 10th and 20th Judicial Circuits, staff from the Office of the Public Defender, 13th Judicial Circuit, as well as staff from the

Attorney General's Office have been meeting over the past couple of months to review the BOMS (Business Office Management System) and STAC (Case Management System) Licensing Agreements and annual Maintenance Contracts between Justice Administration entities and Computer Information and Planning, Inc. (CIP). The review has focused on the expected deliverables, as well as other elements typically contained within software contracts, in order to bring these Agreements in line with current best business practices.

Currently, draft agreements are being finalized to share with all of the agencies of Justice Administration that use BOMS or STAC, prior to meeting with representatives from CIP.

**Westlaw/Lexis-Nexis Research**

Representatives of the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association and Florida Public Defender Association are working with JAC staff on soliciting interest in providers of online legal research. Following an initial meeting in December 2014, a follow-up survey of the Offices of Public Defender and the Offices of State Attorney will be conducted soon to facilitate this process.

**Object Codes**

The Object Codes Standardization Project initiated by the Department of Financial Services requires all state agencies to "roll

-up" object codes in the state accounting system (FLAIR). Please see [page 4](#) for updated developments.

**Human Resources**

JAC's Department of Human Resources will soon conduct a special training session for all JAC employees, covering a range of vital topics. Included on the agenda will be: Employee Handbook highlights, JAC's new background check policy; other key policies (i.e., ADA, harassment, EEO, gifts, fraud, Wi-Fi, social media, and confidentiality); and security. Tagged as "JAC Day," employees will be able to attend this session on either March 4th or 5th.

JAC is also planning to host a webinar in May 2015 on Financial Disclosures (Form 1) for the agencies we administratively serve.

**JAC Footnotes**

At JAC, we recognize that we are only as strong as our weakest link. Therefore, we understand the importance of building a strong team through ongoing training and professional development. In an effort to provide excellent service delivery, our goal is to ask our stakeholders how we can improve through internal and external surveys and honest dialogue. We hope you are seeing the results through website enhancements and a systems approach to streamlining work processes.

Improvements to JAC's online billing system are featured on [page 5](#).

**Recent or Developing Federal Issues**

- ◆ The funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security expires on February 27, 2015.
- ◆ The U.S. House passed H.R. 529 on February 25, 2015, which amends the Federal Tax Code by improving 529 college savings plans.

Source: C-Span

## 2015 Florida Legislative Bills of Interest

### Senate Bill 150



Senate Bill [150](#), sponsored by Senator Jeremy Ring, creates s. 43.45, F.S., which requires the Justice Administrative Commission (JAC) and the Office of the Attorney General to develop and launch a student loan assistance program on behalf of career Assistant State Attorneys, Assistant Public Defenders, Assistant Attorney Generals, or Assistant Statewide Prosecutors in their repayment of specified student loans. Currently with the Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice, the bill establishes administrative requirements of the program, stipulating that the administering party will be responsible for making payments to eligible attorneys based on their length of service and the availability of funds. Provision is also made for funding in this bill, while requiring JAC and the Office of the Attorney General to develop the actual procedures that will be used to administer the program. An effective date of July 1, 2015 is provided.

**Section 1.** This section creates s. 43.45, F.S., regarding a Student Loan Assistance Program and clarifies the manner in which the Program will be administered. In s. 43.45(1)(a), F.S., “Administering body” is defined to mean:

The Justice Administrative Commission if the eligible career attorney is an Assistant State Attorney or Assistant Public Defender.

The Office of the Attorney General if the eligible career attorney is an Assistant Attorney General or Assistant Statewide Prosecutor.

**Section 1** also provides additional definitions and clarifications. “Eligible attorney” means an Assistant State Attorney, Assistant Public Defender, Assistant Attorney General, or Assistant Statewide Prosecutor; and “eligible career attorney” means an eligible attorney who has completed at least three years [*three years and one day*], but not more than 12 years, of continuous service as an eligible attorney. “Eligible student loan” is also defined with language that expressly prohibits loans that are in default. Loans must be issued pursuant to the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, as amended, to help fund law school education. The definition for “Employment Anniversary” is clarified to mean the date that an eligible career attorney begins employment within the context of this bill. The JAC, as one of the administering bodies, is required to implement a student loan assistance program for eligible career Assistant State Attorneys and Assistant Public Defenders. The manner in which the JAC shall administer the program is further detailed, indicating that the eligible career Assistant State Attorney or Assistant Public Defender must submit, to his or her employer, a certification affidavit within 30 days following the applicable employment anniversary. After execution of the certification affidavit by the employer, the employer shall submit the affidavit to JAC within 60 days after the most recent employment anniversary date of the eligible career Assistant State Attorney or Assistant Public Defender. Upon receipt of a certification affidavit from the Office of the State Attorney or Public Defender, the JAC shall make the following maximum payments:

Three thousand dollars if the eligible career Assistant State Attorney or Assistant Public Defender has at least three years, but not more than six years, of continuous service; or

Five thousand dollars if the eligible career Assistant State Attorney or Assistant Public Defender has more than six years, but not more than 12 years, of continuous service.

Payments must cease upon totaling \$44,000 per eligible attorney or upon full satisfaction of the eligible student loan—whichever comes first. If implemented, this section also permits this student loan assistance program to be funded annually based upon an appropriation in the General Appropriations Act.

A similar measure, House Bill 45, was filed by Representative Dave Kerner on November 26, 2014.

*Senate Bill 150  
addresses law  
school student  
loan relief in  
Florida.*

*Source:  
Florida Senate  
and Florida  
House*

## 2015 Florida Legislative Bills of Interest

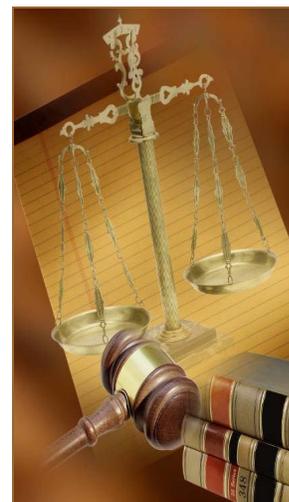
### Senate Bill 1372

Senate Bill [1372](#) relating to government accountability was introduced on February 25, 2015 by Senator Don Gaetz. The measure amends s. 43.16, F.S., by requiring that the JAC, and all of the agencies it administratively serves (Offices of State Attorney, Public Defender, Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, Capital Collateral Regional Counsel, and the Guardian ad Litem Program) establish and maintain robust internal controls as stipulated. A similar measure, House Bill 1063, was also filed on February 25th. Both bills require control measures that will:

- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse;
- Promote and encourage compliance with applicable laws, rules, contracts, grant agreements, and best practices;
- Support economic and efficient operations;
- Ensure reliability of records and reports; and
- Safeguard assets.

The bill would be effective July 1, 2015.

Source: Florida Senate



### House Bill 4003 — Regarding the Death Penalty

House Bill [4003](#), sponsored by Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, was filed on November 21, 2014 and was referred to the Criminal Justice and Justice Appropriations Subcommittees, and the Judiciary Committee on December 19, 2014. As of February 26, the bill is being taken up by the Criminal Justice Subcommittee.

Amending ss. 775.082, 27.51, and 27.511, F.S., the bill deletes various provisions regarding the death penalty for capital felonies, as well as provisions concerning “the effect” of a declaration by a court of last resort that the death penalty in a capital felony is unconstitutional. Additionally, the bill deletes provisions regarding capital collateral representation and, among other things, prohibits a death sentence on behalf of a mentally retarded defendant. Specifically, ss. 27.7001, 27.7002, 27.701, 27.702, 27.703, 27.704, 27.7045, 27.705, 27.706, 27.707, 27.708, 27.7081, 27.7091, 27.710, 27.711, and 27.715, F.S., are all repealed by this bill. The measure also addresses proceedings when an individual under a death sentence appears to be insane or pregnant and amends s. 119.071, F.S., by deleting a public records exemption for capital collateral proceedings. The effective date for this bill is July 1, 2015. Source: The Florida House

*Additional bills we are tracking are featured on JAC's website under "What's New" — Legislative Updates and News. You may click [here](#) to access this list.*

# FLAIR Facts & Fiction — By Vicki Nichols, CPM

## FLAIR Standardization of Object Codes Project



The Object Codes Standardization Project initiated by the Department of Financial Services (DFS) last year requires all state agencies to “roll-up” object codes in FLAIR (state accounting system) into more general classifications and to standardize object codes across all agencies. The object code is a key data element in FLAIR data entry and FLAIR reporting.

For months, an Object Codes Workgroup, comprised of staff from JAC and 14 other offices within Justice Administration, have been working to crosswalk the object code structure from old to new. In addition, this workgroup identified a terrific concern regarding object codes used for information and evidence fees. DFS originally indicated that vendors providing information and evidence would be required to register their tax ID number with DFS prior to being paid. Another concern centered around the “go live” date announced by DFS between April 1, 2015 and May 31, 2015 for using the new codes.

*“JAC received a verbal commitment that the go-live date for Justice Administration will be July 1, 2015.”*

These two concerns prompted JAC to request a meeting with DFS officials to discuss these important issues. A meeting was held on January 27th at the DFS offices. Representatives from SA10, SA11, and PD13, as well as Rip Colvin and JAC staff, presented concerns to Christina Smith, Director of Accounting and Auditing, and her staff. The results of the meeting are:

- ◆ JAC received a verbal commitment that the “go live” date for Justice Administration will be July 1, 2015.
- ◆ DFS retracted their requirements regarding information and evidence payments by removing the additional bureaucratic W9 registration for these fees.

A new object codes crosswalk document was distributed to all entities within Justice Administration on February 19th. More information regarding the transition to the new codes will be incorporated into the Year-End Meetings. Training opportunities will also be offered prior to July 1, 2015.



## Process Improvements in Private Court-Appointed Attorneys' Billings — Rip Colvin, CPA; Cris Martinez, JD; Christian Lake, JD; Mausumi Das; and Stephanie Hanks

Commencing in Fall 2014, JAC began accepting private court-appointed attorneys' billings through JAC's online bill submission system, designed and created entirely in-house. The new system has been readily accepted by private court appointed attorneys, with the percentage of bills submitted through the new system increasing each month. For example, in December 56% of attorney fee bills were submitted using the new online system and in January 67% were submitted online. The new system has also significantly reduced JAC's processing time for attorney flat fee billings. Overall, the number of days to process attorney fee billing has dropped about 35% when compared to the same period last year. Also, the number of days to process attorney fee billings submitted electronically has dropped almost 50% when compared to last year. This system was wholly developed in-house, utilizing the talents of our Information Technology Section, Court Appointed Section, and Legal Section. We are very fortunate to have these staff on our team!

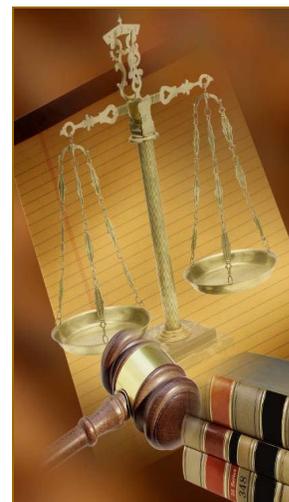
The benefits of the new system to private court appointed attorneys are:

- Faster processing of billings and therefore faster payment
- Immediate receipt of a tracking number through which the attorney can obtain information about the billing and can submit additional needed documents
- E-mail confirmation when a bill is received by JAC
- Ability to submit case specific information that reduces billing deficiencies
- No longer have to rely on U.S. Mail for submission of billings
- Ability to submit billing corrections electronically

The benefits of the new system to JAC are:

- Increased productivity
- Reduction in paper documents
- Reduction in deficient billings due to online bill submission requirements
- Case specific information is automatically uploaded to line items in JAC's database
- Less time spent associated clerical tasks, i.e., printing and scanning, thus allowing more time to review billings for statutory and contractual compliance
- Reduction in overhead costs associated with scanning and printing documents
- Reduction in documents received through the mail

The next phases of online bill submission will (1) enhance bill tracking capabilities for court-appointed counsel and (2) be extended to vendors utilized by private court appointed attorneys. It is anticipated that JAC's vendor online bill submission will begin in May 2015.



*“In December 56% of attorney fee bills were submitted using the new online system and in January it was 67%.”*

*Source: JAC Staff*

## Public Records 101 — By Veronica Vasquez



*“As technology continues to develop, what constitutes a ‘public record’ will continue to take on increasingly different forms.”*

Florida’s first Public Records Law was passed in 1909. Since then, with the advent of the Internet and the information age, access to public records continues to dramatically increase. As a result, Florida’s Attorney General annually publishes the *Government-In-The-Sunshine Manual* to assist public agencies with open government compliance and citizens with open government access.



Codified in Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes, the Public Records Law provides a right of access to the records of the state and local governments, as well as to private entities acting on their behalf. In the absence of a statutory or other exemption, this right of access applies to public records, made or received by an agency, in connection with the transactions of official business which are used to perpetuate,

communicate, or formalize knowledge.

Over the years, the definition of what constitutes a “public record” has come to include—not only traditional written documents such as papers, maps, and books—but also tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, records stored in computers, text messages, e-mails, and social media posts received in connection with the transaction of official agency business. As technology continues to develop, what constitutes a “public record” will continue to take on increasingly different forms. As JAC’s Public Records Coordinator, it is my intention to assist when a public records request is made of JAC.

**If you are interested in submitting a Public Records Requests to JAC, please contact:**

Veronica Vasquez, Operations and Management Consultant  
Office of the Executive Director  
Justice Administrative Commission

**The following communication options are available to you:**

Phone (850) 488-2415, Extension 224  
E-Mail [Via Public Record Request](mailto:Veronica.Vasquez@justiceadmin.org) or [Veronica.Vasquez@justiceadmin.org](mailto:Veronica.Vasquez@justiceadmin.org)  
(For agencies served by JAC)  
Facsimile (850) 488-9857

## Kudos to JAC Staff

### A JAC Welcome and Congratulations



**Hanz Cadet** is the newest member of JAC's Circuit Accounting Section. A December 2014 graduate from Florida A&M University with a Bachelors Degree in Accounting, Hanz was previously employed at Advance Auto Parts and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance for the IRS. He is now a Professional Accountant I assigned to due process disbursement transactions for the Public Defender and State Attorney offices. Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Hanz grew up in Miami and has been in Tallahassee four and a half years. In his spare time, Hanz enjoys cooking and watching movies and televised sports. But, he also likes to get outside and play basketball, soccer, and football. Stop by Circuit Accounting and welcome Hanz to the JAC family.



**Tiffany Chukes** started with JAC as a Court Appointed Auditor on January 5, 2015. A native of Tallahassee, Tiffany wants her JAC family to know that she is God fearing, family oriented, and an all around great person. She attended Florida A&M University Developmental Research School from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and graduated from James S. Rickards High School. Tiffany received a degree in Medical Coding and Billing in June 2012. Prior to JAC, she was employed with Automated Health Systems as a Choice Counseling Specialist, where she assisted Medicaid recipients of Florida enroll in health plans. A devoted wife and mother to six beautiful children, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends in her spare time. Welcome Tiffany!



**Jeanette Otley** started with JAC on January 5, 2015 in the Court-Appointed Section. A new resident of Tallahassee since January 2015, Jeanette is a native of Milton, Florida, right outside of Pensacola. With three older brothers and eight nieces and nephews, Jeanette understands the meaning of *family*. She holds both an undergraduate and Masters degree from the University of Florida and a Juris Doctorate from Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville. Prior to JAC, Jeanette worked as an OPS intern with the Department of Environmental Protection in Jacksonville. In her spare time, she enjoys recreational slow pitch softball and soccer in adult leagues. So far, she has been unable to find leagues in Tallahassee. Who can help her with this?



**Kathleen Stinson** started with JAC in the Court Appointed Section on January 5, 2015. She grew up just across the Georgia line, in Beachton, Georgia, which, according to Kathleen, "Doesn't even have a caution light." A graduate of The University of Georgia with a BBA degree and The University of Alabama at Birmingham with a MBA, Kathleen is no stranger to Tallahassee. When she was growing up, she came to Tallahassee regularly and had family here. Previously, she has served as a substitute teacher and worked for NAI Talcro as the Tenant Coordinator for the City Centre Building. Reports Kathleen, "I love to read mysteries, walk my dogs, and travel."



### Well Deserved Recognition

**February 16, 2015** — *The Florida Agency for State Technology (AST) received funds from the Legislature to complete a risk assessment of information technology security to analyze and provide recommendations for protecting the State's information technology resources. As a result of this ongoing study, JAC was asked to provide AST all documents related to IT security and complete the extensive IT Security Questionnaire. We appreciate the information and assistance we received from Cris, Carolyn, Andy, Michael, Susie, Lydia, and Wayne which enabled us to successfully interpret and answer these security questions (about 300). A special thanks goes to Brian and Robert for taking time away from ongoing projects and spending numerous hours to complete this long survey. Without their contributions, this survey could not have been completed.*  
Mausumi Das, JAC Director of IT

**February 10, 2015** — *JAC is doing great. You guys have really turned things around, starting with the online billing submission and now with the online voucher covers. You have made it much easier and quicker for attorneys to get paid. Keep up the good work.*  
scohen1503@aol.com; JAC Feedback

**January 26, 2015** — *I am ecstatic over the new online invoice billing! Thank you!*  
Betsy Warwick, JAC Feedback

**January 22, 2015** — *On behalf of Human Resources: Amy and Amber met with Wayne, Breckan, and Elaine regarding the current process for the Insurance and Retirement Vouchers. Process improvements were discussed and the group concurred on implementing a new process:*

1. *HR will no longer provide 3 copies of our JT Back-up form to Tim for keying, and then to the voucher room. Instead, HR will provide just one copy.*
2. *After Tim keys it, he will give it to Breckan or Elaine who will scan the one copy along with the Voucher Schedule to Amy and Amber so they can password protect it and then send to DSGI.*
3. *Once the voucher "pays", Breckan will scan the voucher packet in its entirety and send to the appropriate circuit.*

*This new process will really help streamline Insurance Vouchering and save paper! Well done!*  
Carolyn Horwich, J.D., JAC, Director of Human Resources

**January 15, 2015** — *Thanks for being so helpful as every case is individual and the billing is reflective of this! Your responses have been timely and on point. Good work improving the system!*  
Jennifer Ellis, Collins Law Firm, Monticello, Florida

**January 14, 2015** — *I would like to take a moment to thank you and the entire staff for helping me through a somewhat rough first year with the JAC. The entire staff has been so helpful in assisting me with some delicate situations and continues to assist me! I truly love doing this work and hopefully will broaden my work with many more attorneys. Thank you to everyone!*  
Cindy E. Gray, Lawdawg's Private Investigations

*Ms. Shellie's Surprise Birthday Party on January 9, 2015 at Olive Garden  
(Shellie Shelton has been the voice of JAC on the reception phone for many years.)*



*The photos are courtesy of Aleah Roddenberry*

*Ms. Shellie's Surprise Birthday Party on January 9, 2015 at Olive Garden*



*The photos are courtesy of Aleah Roddenberry*



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**[WWW.JUSTICEADMIN.ORG](http://WWW.JUSTICEADMIN.ORG)**

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## BOARDING THE EDMS TRAIN

The Justice Administrative Commission (JAC) continues the phased implementation of an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS). This is an update. Revenue Accounting has “gone-live” with the new transmittal form submission via e-mail and imported into Laserfiche. Several documents have been received by the circuits and it’s going really well.

Online billing Phase 2 has “gone-live” for Private Court Appointed Attorneys. It has also been well received. Due Process vendor online billing is now under development, with a target implementation date in May 2015.

*Courtesy of Michelle Dolce*



### The EDMS Mission

*“Excellent service  
delivery enhanced by  
an efficient  
Electronic Document  
Management  
System, which meets  
the requirements of  
Florida law.”*

***“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but  
I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.”***

***~Bruce Lee~***

## JAC in Brief

The Justice Administrative Commission administratively serves 20 Offices of State Attorney, 20 Offices of Public Defender, 3 Offices of Capital Collateral Regional Counsel, 5 Offices of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, and the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Program; and, provides compliance and financial review of court-appointed attorney fees and due process costs.

The membership of the Justice Administrative Commission consists of two State Attorneys, appointed by the President of the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association and two Public Defenders, appointed by the President of the Florida Public Defender Association. Although members may be reappointed, each term spans a period of two years (s. 43.16, F.S.).

**Vision:** *To be a model of exemplary state government and provide unparalleled services.*

**Mission:** *To be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, while providing the highest quality service to the 49 judicial related entities, private court appointed counsel, and associated vendors we serve, by ensuring compliance with laws, rules, regulations, and best business practices.*

**Values:** *We take great pride in excellence in service, innovation, adaptability, collaboration, honesty, integrity, accountability, and diversity, as well as respectful and ethical conduct, and fiscal responsibility.*