

**IN A HISTORIC RESPONSE TO OWNER OCCUPIED
RESIDENTIAL FORECLOSURE CRISIS,
CHIEF JUDGES FROM THREE FLORIDA COURT SYSTEMS
SIMULTANEOUSLY IMPLEMENTED MEDIATION PROGRAMS**

For the first time in the history of the Florida courts, the Chief Judges from three Florida court systems participated in a joint commemorative ceremony, linked by videoconferencing technology, to simultaneously sign administrative orders that will implement managed mediation for all owner occupied residential foreclosure cases filed in their circuits.

They are: Chief Judge Terry D. Terrell of the 1st Judicial Circuit (Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties); Chief Judge Joel H. Brown of the 11th Judicial Circuit (Miami-Dade County), and Chief Judge Steven J. Levin of the 19th Judicial Circuit (Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie Counties). Justice Barbara Pariente' participated in this historical event as well.

This simultaneous signing ceremony took place at 11 a.m. (CST) on Friday, February 26, 2010, in Courtroom 405 of the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Center, 190 Governmental Center, Pensacola, Florida 32502.

The media attended, and a media availability session will took place immediately after the signing ceremony, where Chief Judge Terry D. Terrell answered questions from the media about the significance of these administrative orders in the handling of owner occupied residential foreclosure cases in the First Judicial Circuit (Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties)

Background Information: For the past several years, Florida's courts have been crushed under a deluge of new foreclosure filings. On March 17, 2009, Kim A. Skievaski, Chief Judge of the First Judicial Circuit signed Administrative Order 2009-18 IN RE: Mediation Case Management Order and Mandatory Referral of Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Cases to Mediation, which implemented mandated mediation for all future foreclosure filings in an effort to streamline case flow and provide opportunities for homeowners and lenders to discuss resolution as early as possible in the life of a foreclosure case.

At about the same time, the Florida Supreme Court commissioned a task force to study the foreclosure crisis and come up with recommendations to be implemented statewide. 11th Circuit Civil Administrative Judge Jennifer Bailey was appointed Chair of that task force.

Based on the recommendations of the task force, the Florida Supreme Court established a Model Administrative Order (MAO), which promotes managed mediation for all courts statewide, and promotes consistency in the handling of foreclosure cases statewide. The MAO is very similar to the programs previously initiated by the 1st, 11th and 19th Circuits and includes enhancements to improve the effectiveness of managed mediation.

The commemorative signing ceremony on Feb. 26th was a joint effort by the Chief Judges of these three court systems to promote the expansion of managed mediation for residential mortgage foreclosure cases statewide and to encourage other court systems to follow suit.