



NEWS FROM:
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Public Defender Reports Significant Savings at Fiscal Year Close *Despite State cuts, Matt Shirk assists needy Circuits, ends year with surplus to carry over*

Jacksonville, FL: After completing his first full, fiscal year as Fourth Judicial Circuit Public Defender, Matt Shirk reports that his office will carry into next year \$366,452 in surplus funding. The dollars are sent to a trust fund account which can be used to meet anticipated shortfalls in General Revenue funding and Due Process funding in the Fiscal Year 10/11. The surplus is notable because the State of Florida imposed drastic cuts to Public Defender Offices statewide last year including an 11.2% cut to the Due Process and a 2% reduction to employee salaries.

“As an office-holder funded primarily by the State of Florida, I will not tolerate government waste,” said Shirk. “It is important to recognize that our State continues to face lean financial times. Since taking office in January 2009, I have focused on elevating our performance as a criminal defense law firm and refining our fiscal management as a governmental administration; all the while identifying areas to improve efficiency through technology and cut unnecessary expenditures.”

Shirk continued, “Upon completing our first, full fiscal year, I am proud to report a surplus in excess of \$350,000 and the responsible thing to do is to carry it over into the next year. The reality is that an agency like the Public Defender’s Office can encounter dramatic, unforeseen expenses with major trials. We do anticipate that happening and fortunately have secured something of a ‘rainy day’ fund to be used if needed.”

The unlikely budget surplus comes at the end of year that unforeseen budget cuts were imposed. On July 1, 2009, the State of Florida imposed a two-percent, across-the-board cut to the General Revenue (salaries and benefits) fund for state agencies. This resulted in absorption of the cut by the Public Defender’s Office. Then in February 2010, the State swept 11.2% from the Due Process fund allotted to the Public Defender; the other 19 P.D. offices in Florida were cut a percentage based on their case counts. Shirk weathered this cut by imposing a six-percent reduction on all bills sent by vendors to the Public Defender’s Office. Despite the significant cuts in FY 09/10, the Shirk Administration has exercised tremendous fiscal discipline in attaining the surplus of \$366,452.

“Indigent criminal defense is a very necessary, Constitutional function that the State must fund,” noted Shirk. “But one size does not fit all. When the Legislature approves our budgets, it is often a guessing game to determine our needs. Two of my counterparts in the 2nd and 3rd Judicial Circuits were short on funding this year and we were able to help them, in addition to the \$366,452 surplus. That said, we expect to incur significant expense on upcoming trials during FY 10/11 and we hope that our good fiscal management to date can help offset future costs. We will continue to work hard providing effective representation to our clients while operating a lean and efficient agency.”

The news of a budget surplus comes just days after Shirk announced the implementation of a technological development at the Public Defender’s Office that will result in a \$120,000 annual savings for the Fourth Judicial Circuit. This is made possible through the adoption of the new Public Defender Jail Video System being installed in Duval and Clay County detention facilities.
