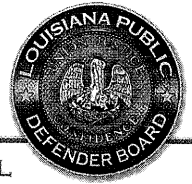


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State Public Defender

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

For Immediate Release: September 3, 2010

Contact: Jean M. Faria (225) 219-1158

Well-known Calcasieu Parish defense attorney Tom Lorenzi has been appointed Interim District Defender for the Calcasieu Public Defender's Office, and has signed a contract for this temporary assignment. Mr. Lorenzi's position was approved by the Louisiana Public Defender Board (LPDB) at its August 24, 2010 meeting. He will maintain his private practice, Lorenzi & Barnatt, LLP, during this temporary appointment.

Mr. Lorenzi has been involved for decades in the effort to improve the quality of indigent defense in the state as well as in the Fourteenth Judicial District Court, which exercises jurisdiction over Calcasieu Parish. He was the chairman of the local public defender board when Calcasieu established its district public defender office, and has also served as president of the Southwest Louisiana Bar Association, president of the Louisiana Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, on the Board of Governors for the Louisiana State Bar Association and in the House of Delegates of the Louisiana State Bar Association. He was named the Distinguished Attorney in Louisiana in 2007 and was awarded the David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award by the Louisiana State Bar Association in 2007.

Mr. Lorenzi is also the State Public Defender's appointment to chair the local Selection Committee which will recommend candidates to the LPDB. Former District Defender Mitch Bergeron will become the office's Chief Financial Officer. Lorenzi says, "I am looking forward to working with Mitch Bergeron to restructure the Calcasieu Public Defender's Office into a full-time office with the necessary and effective administration of both financial and human resources. Further, I am honored to be part of the effort to develop meaningful and sustainable reforms for our clients and the community we serve." Mr. Lorenzi began his Interim tenure on September 1, 2010.

The Calcasieu Public Defender's Office has been chronically under-resourced for many years. As a result, public defenders in the 14th JDC have caseloads which far exceed national and state caseload standards. The quality of representation is inevitably damaged by excessive caseloads, and compounded by limited access to technology, support staff and training opportunities. Since 2004, the office has been involved in class action litigation alleging systemic failure to meet constitutional standards for representation of indigent citizens charged with criminal offenses.

LPDB was recently named as a defendant in the class action suit in the amended class-action complaint, and it received limited supplemental funds from the 2010 Legislative Session to attempt to resolve the issues raised by suit. LPDB dedicated a portion of this funding to provide Calcasieu public defenders the appropriate salary ranges to become a full-time office. Currently, the district public defender offices in Calcasieu and Orleans are the only two in the state that prohibit their attorneys from any private practice. Office restructuring and national technical support are also being utilized to remedy the systemic shortcomings in Calcasieu.

LPDB Chairman Frank Neuner says, “Inadequate resources in the Calcasieu Public Defender’s Office are limiting the efficient administration of justice across all agencies. Over the past 6 months, LPDB has aggressively pursued collaborative solutions with all criminal justice agencies – including judges, District Attorneys and jail personnel – in order to develop a criminal justice system that better serves taxpayers, clients and the Calcasieu criminal justice community. With limited resources for all components of the criminal justice system, this significant effort requires collaboration for the benefit of all.”