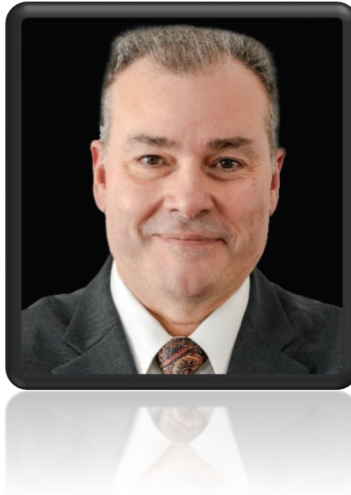


Clerk's Message

By: José A. Rodriguez, Clerk of Court



I am honored to introduce myself as the new Clerk of Court and to share my very first newsletter article with you. With over 28 years of experience in the federal judiciary, including serving as Chief Deputy Clerk in both the Middle and Southern Districts of Florida, I bring a deep commitment to public service, operational excellence, and judicial integrity. Prior to my service in the judiciary, I proudly served in both the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army National Guard, experiences that instilled in me a deep sense of duty, discipline, and leadership. I am deeply honored to take on this role and committed to building on the court's strong foundation while continuing to serve the public and our judicial community with transparency, professionalism, and dedication.

Just as every captain relies on a strong second-in-command, I am pleased to introduce our new Chief Deputy, Dena Eaton. Dena brings with her more than 20 years of experience in the federal judiciary, including the last seven years as Chief of the CM/ECF Division at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. There, she excelled in leadership, strategic planning, and project management. Her deep understanding of court operations, spanning case processing, quality control, and statistical reporting for both district and bankruptcy courts, makes her an invaluable addition to our team. We are excited to welcome Dena and look forward to the expertise and insight she brings to our court.

Earlier this year, we bid a fond farewell to our esteemed Clerk of Court, Sheryl Loesch, as she entered a well-deserved retirement. While her departure came with

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mixed emotions, we are truly happy for her as she begins this exciting new chapter, having left a lasting impact as both a colleague and a friend. Sheryl has several adventures already on her calendar and has rekindled one of her longtime passions, playing the piano. Word has it she's even taking on Led Zeppelin's *Stairway to Heaven*! Though she may no longer be in the office, we take comfort in knowing she's just a phone call or email away.

As we prepare for the upcoming fiscal year, we've been advised to anticipate significant budget cuts, projected to range from 14% to 18%. Alarmingly, these reductions are expected to persist for several years. Compounding this challenge, a work measurement study is scheduled for later this year, which will likely result in the implementation of a new staffing formula. With increasing workloads and no ability to hire additional staff, we are facing considerable operational difficulties in the years ahead. This situation affects Bankruptcy Courts, District Courts, Probation Offices, and Pretrial Services offices nationwide. As is often said during hurricane season— *"plan for the worst and hope for the best."*

The court is currently undergoing an internal migration of its workload distribution software, transitioning from the legacy AQUA system to CMAssist. CMAssist is the AO-supported program utilized by case managers to receive and manage assignments. Special thanks to the Bankruptcy Courts for the Western District of Oklahoma, Northern District of Texas, and Northern District of Georgia for generously sharing their expertise and supporting us throughout this process.

As we navigate new challenges, our staff remain committed and adapt as needed to uphold the integrity and esteemed reputation of our Court. This resilience reflects the exceptional caliber of employees serving the Middle District of Florida.

This year, several members of our staff participated in the Operational Practices Forum, the annual National Conference of Bankruptcy Clerks, and the National IT Conference. Fortunately, we secured funding to support attendance at these valuable educational events, which featured specialized program tracks in human resources, information technology, financial management, and case management. Beyond the exceptional educational content, the networking opportunities were truly invaluable.

In August 2025, amendments to the Local Rules took effect. Below are key highlights of the changes. Amended Local Rule 4001-1 now requires that motions to extend or impose the automatic stay be filed using the Court's mandatory form, available on *The Source*.

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The following Administrative Orders were encompassed in the Local Rule changes and have been archived:

- FLMB-2015-9 Administrative Order Granting Relief from Discharge Injunction to Enter Into Agreement to Refinance or Modify Debt Secured by Lien on Homestead
- FLMB-2019-3 Administrative Order Governing Retention of Special Counsel in Consumer Protection Case
- FLMB-2020-5 Administrative Order Regarding Modification of the Automatic Stay in Connection with Forbearance Agreements

Visit <https://www.uscourts.gov/forms-rules/pending-rules-and-forms-amendments> for information on federal bankruptcy rule and form changes projected to go into effect December 1, 2025.

- [Click HERE](#) to see FLMB's procedure on Applications for Payment of Unclaimed Funds, which was updated on July 8, 2025.
- [Click HERE](#) to see FLMB's procedure on Applications to Employ or Retain. The procedure was updated on May 13, 2025, to revise the language to be included in proposed orders, depending on whether 11 U.S.C. § 328 or 11 U.S.C. § 330 applies.

In closing, for important news, including information about any courthouse closures due to inclement weather during hurricane season, remember to check the Court's website announcements and your emails. I wish everyone a Happy Labor Day!