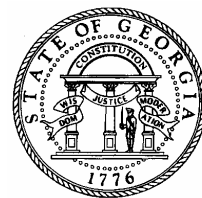


**GEORGIA PUBLIC DEFENDER
STANDARDS COUNCIL**

104 Marietta Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303



Michael Mears
Director

404-232-8900 • (800)676-4432 • Facsimile 404-651-5706 • www.gpdsc.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Robin Fisher, Communications Manager
404-232-8900

**GEORGIA PUBLIC DEFENDER STANDARDS COUNCIL
CHOOSES NEW DIRECTOR**

ATLANTA -- Michael Mears was recently selected as the Director of the newly formed Georgia Public Defender Standards Council. Mears, the Director of the Georgia Multi-County Public Defender's Office since 1992, said that serving as Director of the newly-formed Council "will be the greatest honor of my career."

The eleven-member Council will have responsibility for creating and supervising a system of public defender offices in Georgia's 49 judicial circuits and creating standards under which indigent defense services will be provided. The 49 circuit public defender offices are scheduled to begin operation on January 1, 2005. The Director will administer and coordinate the Council's operations and supervise compliance with rules, policies, procedures and standards adopted by the Council.

-more-

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right . . . to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.
U.S. Constitution, Amendment VI - December 15, 1791

Other key responsibilities of the Director will include budgeting; supervising the Council's administrative staff; maintaining proper financial controls over the Council's operations; coordinating interaction between the Council and any federal, county or private indigent defense programs; supervising the provision of training of the state's public defenders; and soliciting funds from federal, county or private programs to assist the Council in its statutory mission. As the Director, Mears will play a major role in the creation of an administrative structure for the Council's operations.

Mears received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees from Mississippi State University and his Juris Doctor Degree from the University of Georgia. Mears has significant experience in criminal defense representation and is considered one of the nation's most experienced advocates in death penalty representation.

From 1977 to 1991, Mears' private practice ranged from handling misdemeanor cases to complex litigation in cases involving felony murder, rape, and death penalty cases. In 1991 Mears became the Executive Director of the Georgia Appellate Practice & Educational Resource Center. The Center is a federally funded organization which represents death sentenced inmates in state and federal habeas corpus hearings. In 1992 Mears became the Director of the Georgia Multi-County Public Defender's Office, which supervises and monitors all death penalty cases within Georgia and provides direct representation in selected cases. Mears also served on the Decatur City Council for 10 years and as Mayor of the City of Decatur for 8 of those years.

Emmet Bondurant, Chair of the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council stated that "The Council is very pleased to have found a Director that possesses the critical skills needed to lead the implementation of the new circuit-based system of public defense in Georgia." Bondurant also expressed appreciation "to the large number of outstanding applicants that applied for this important position."

###

