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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CHIEF JUSTICE HARRISON WELCOMES ATTENDEES OF ILLINOIS JUDICIAL CONFERENCE**

CHICAGO – Chief Justice Moses W. Harrison II of the Illinois Supreme Court will welcome more than 80 judges from throughout the state Thursday, challenging them in these uncertain times “to be a bulwark against panic and prejudice.”

Chief Justice Harrison will address attendees of the 48<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Illinois Judicial Conference at a dinner on Thursday beginning at six p.m. at a Chicago hotel.

The annual judicial conference is mandated by the Illinois Constitution and is charged with reviewing the work of the courts “and to suggest improvements in the administration of justice.” The conference begins Thursday afternoon with meetings of various study committees ranging from criminal law to judicial education.

The members of the conference include the seven Supreme Court justices, representatives from all the appellate districts as well as Circuit Court and associate judges from each judicial district.

The eight committees and their members will meet in plenary session Friday morning to present and discuss their committee reports.

In prepared remarks, Chief Justice Harrison spoke of the horror of the terrorist acts the morning of Sept. 11. Word reached the Court as the justices were in Springfield about to convene oral arguments at the beginning of the September term.

“Like many of you, my initial reaction was shock and disbelief,” Chief Justice Harrison said. “We didn’t understand, we couldn’t comprehend the true magnitude of the events.”

Not knowing the extent of the attacks, the Court allowed oral argument to proceed. Eventually, as it received updates during the morning and early afternoon from the Court’s marshal that the entire Capitol complex was being shut down, the Court entered orders postponing the remaining oral arguments scheduled for the rest of the week.

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Chief Justice Harrison told the judges that the events of Sept. 11 underline—not diminish—the importance of the Judicial Conference.

“At a time when terrorists seek to destabilize our country through brutal acts of mass murder, we, as judges, must do everything within our power to insure that our system of justice is as strong and efficient and fair as we can possibly make it,” Chief Justice Harrison said.

“We may be a vehicle for punishment, but we must not become an instrument of revenge. Among all branches of government, it is ultimately the court’s responsibility to preserve reason and wisdom among civil unrest. We must be mindful of how civil liberties can be compromised during times of upheaval. We must be vigilant against persecution. We must be a bulwark against panic and prejudice.”