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A bill to be entitled
 An act relating to student loans; creating s. 43.201,
 F.S.; providing for a financial assistance program
 administered by the Justice Administrative Commission to
 provide assistance to qualified trial court staff
 attorneys, assistant state attorneys, and assistant public
 defenders for the repayment of eligible student loans;
 defining the term "eligible student loan"; providing the
 elements of the program; providing for funding; providing
 an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 43.201, Florida Statutes, is created to
 read:

43.201 Justice Administrative Commission; student loan
 program administration.--

(1) The Justice Administrative Commission shall administer
 a student loan program for career trial court staff attorneys
 and for career assistant state attorneys and assistant public
 defenders as described in chapter 27. The purpose of the program
 shall be to provide financial assistance to trial court staff
 attorneys, assistant state attorneys, and assistant public
 defenders with eligible student loans.

(2) As used in this section, the term "eligible student
 loan" means a loan that was issued pursuant to the Higher
 Education Act of 1965, as amended, to a trial court staff
 attorney, an assistant state attorney, or an assistant public
 defender to fund his or her law school education.

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30 (3) The program shall be administered in the following
31 manner:

32 (a) A trial court staff attorney, an assistant state
33 attorney, or an assistant public defender is not eligible for
34 assistance under the program until the trial court staff
35 attorney, assistant state attorney, or assistant public defender
36 has been employed as a trial court staff attorney, an assistant
37 state attorney, or an assistant public defender for 3 years of
38 continuous service on his or her employment anniversary date.

39 (b) After an individual has completed 3 years of
40 continuous service, an affidavit of certification on a form
41 approved by the commission shall be submitted to the chief
42 judge's office, the state attorney's office, or the public
43 defender's office as appropriate. The affidavit of certification
44 shall, upon approval of the chief judge, the state attorney, or
45 the public defender, be submitted to the commission.

46 (c) Upon receipt of the certificate, the commission may
47 begin yearly payments in the amount of \$3,000 to the lender that
48 services the eligible student loan. These payments shall be made
49 for the benefit of the qualified trial court staff attorney,
50 assistant state attorney, or assistant public defender named in
51 the certificate and for the purpose of satisfying the eligible
52 student loan obligation.

53 (d) Upon an individual's completion of 6 years of
54 continuous service, the loan assistance payment amount shall
55 increase to \$5,000. After 12 years of continuous service or upon
56 completion of the payment of the eligible student loan,
57 whichever occurs first, loan assistance shall cease. The total
58 amount of loan assistance permitted under the program for any

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59 one trial court staff attorney, assistant state attorney, or
60 assistant public defender may not exceed \$44,000.

61 (4) The program shall be funded annually by an
62 appropriation from the General Revenue Fund to the Justice
63 Administrative Commission.

64 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2004.