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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Former 7th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge John Tinder to Lead the Effort to Improve Indiana's Public Defense System

Indianapolis – A task force established by the Indiana Public Defender Commission in September of 2017 began the important work of examining Indiana's public defense system under the leadership of U.S. District Judge Larry McKinney. His unexpected and untimely death on September 20 saddened the community, and brought a temporary void in leadership for the group's work. Last Friday, former Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals Judge John Tinder announced that he has accepted the invitation of the Commission to step into that role. In part, it is a tribute to his friend and colleague with whom he shared the bench for many years.

"Judge Larry McKinney was a dear friend and great colleague of mine," explained Judge Tinder in accepting the position. "His untimely death was a great loss to the Indiana legal community. I am privileged to carry on the work of this important Task Force."

The Indiana Task Force on Public Defense was created after the release of a report by the Sixth Amendment Center last year criticized the system of public defense, and called into question whether Indiana meets its constitutional obligation of providing counsel for those individuals in the criminal justice system unable to afford private lawyers. It called for greater accountability and oversight of the system, and structural changes that would ensure independence, sufficient resources and compensation, and workload limits.

Mark Rutherford, who chairs the Public Defender Commission, noted, "Judge Tinder is an accomplished jurist who comes to this position with impeccable credentials. His willingness to assume the leadership of the Task Force after Judge McKinney's death is greatly appreciated."

Both the Indiana and United States Constitutions guarantee the right to effective counsel in criminal proceedings. "I am committed to leading this group in its effort to develop well-supported findings and recommendations to help Indiana meet these constitutional obligations," noted Judge Tinder. Judge Tinder has had a long and distinguished legal career which also included work as a public defender, state and federal prosecutor, and U.S. District Court Judge. He served 20 years as a federal judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, and 8 years on the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Tinder retired from this position officially on October 9, 2015.

For more information about the work of the Task Force and its members, go to the Indiana Public Defender Commission website at <http://www.in.gov/publicdefender/2333.htm>.

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