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The LeRoy Collins Institute Announces John Marks as New Chairman

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The LeRoy Collins Institute has announced that John Marks, a former Tallahassee mayor, has been named its new chairman. Marks is the longest-serving mayor in Tallahassee's history, holding that office from 2003 to 2014. Marks succeeds Lester Abberger, who has been the Institute's chairman for 10 years.

The LeRoy Collins Institute, located on the campus of Florida State University, studies and promotes policy solutions to address issues facing the people of Florida and the United States.

"We are extremely pleased to welcome John Marks as our new chairman," said Dr. Lonna Atkeson, director of the LeRoy Collins Institute. "John has dedicated his life to serving our city and state, and we look forward to having him as chairman of the board."

Marks, who has been a LeRoy Collins Institute board member since 2002, is the managing principal in the law firm of Marks and Marks, LLC. Marks was among the first African Americans to attend Florida State University (1965) where he received his B.S. (1969) and J.D. (1972 Law). He served on the FL Public Service Commission (1979-1987) and is the Founder of the Jane and John Marks Foundation. An adjunct professor at both FSU and FAMU, he has been recognized as an FSU Distinguished Graduate, inducted in the FSU Alumni Circle of Gold, the FSU President's Club and the FAMU COE Gallery of Distinction. Marks is a US Air Force veteran (1972-1976) and served as president of the Florida League of Cities and League of Mayors. A life member of the NAACP, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and Sierra Club, with professional memberships in the American, National, Florida, and Tallahassee Bar and Barristers Associations, and the American Law Institute.

"Mr. Marks' experience throughout his career and his knowledge of and dedication to public service make him an ideal fit for this role with the Institute," said Lester Abberger, outgoing chairman. "I couldn't be more pleased to turn the chairmanship over to such a deserving and capable leader."

Abberger is managing partner of B.L. Abberger & Co., a Tallahassee public affairs and

investment banking concern, and has served as a board member or chairman for the last 20 years. Under his leadership, the LeRoy Collins Institute has developed and promoted bold, visionary public policy initiatives on issues ranging from climate change and elections to policing and public schools. He will continue serving at the LeRoy Collins Institute as the Chair Emeritus. Abberger is also chairman of the Florida Conservation Campaign, the Tallahassee Bach Parley, and the Friends of Florida History. He is past chairman of Leadership Florida and a recipient of that organization's Distinguished Alumnus Award. He is a graduate of Davidson College, where he served on the Board of Visitors, and is a Knight Fellow at the University of Miami School of Architecture.

"With Lester's experience, knowledge and strong leadership, the Institute has explored and made recommendations on critical policy questions facing Florida residents, Florida schools, and Florida's state and local governments," said Atkeson. "He has worked closely with board members and staff to help ensure we stay on the cutting edge of our state's most pressing issues, and we have grown under his leadership."

About the LeRoy Collins Institute
Established in 1988, the LeRoy Collins Institute is a nonpartisan, statewide policy organization that studies and promotes creative solutions to key private and public issues facing the people of Florida and the nation. The Institute, located in Tallahassee at Florida State University, is affiliated and works in collaboration with the State University System of Florida. Named in honor of former Florida Governor LeRoy Collins, the Institute is governed by a distinguished board of directors. Other board members include executives, local elected officials, and other professionals from throughout the state.