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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

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STATE OF FLORIDA, Petitioner, vs. RUFUS FORD, Respondent.

Case No. 79,220

DISCRETIONARY REVIEW OF DECISION OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF FLORIDA SECOND DISTRICT

BRIEF OF RESPONDENT ON JURISDICTION

JAMES MARION MOORMAN PUBLIC DEFENDER TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

STEPHEN KROSSCHELL ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER FLORIDA BAR NUMBER 351199

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ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT

TOPICAL INDEX TO BRIEF

PAGE NO.

1

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

ISSUE

THIS COURT LACKS JURISDICTION BE-CAUSE (1) THE DECISION BELOW MERELY APPLIED RATHER THAN CONSTRUED A CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND (2) THE APPLICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION WAS MERELY AN ALTERNATIVE HOLDING TO THE PRIMARY HOLDING OF THE CASE.

CONCLUSION

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

4

4

2

<u>CASES</u>

1

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PAGE NO.

•

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Armstrong v. City of Tampa,		
106 So. 2d 407 (Fla. 1958)		3
Hanft v. Phelan,		
488 So. 2d 531 (Fla. 1986)	 	3

This court lacks jurisdiction because the decision below merely applied rather than construed a constitutional provision and because the application of the constitution was not the primary holding of the case.

ARGUMENT

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ISSUE

THIS COURT LACKS JURISDICTION BE-CAUSE (1) THE DECISION BELOW MERELY APPLIED RATHER THAN CONSTRUED A CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND (2) THE APPLICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION WAS NOT THE PRIMARY HOLDING OF THE CASE.

This Court lacks jurisdiction because the district court merely applied rather than construed a constitutional provision. The court did not issue any novel interpretation of the confrontation clause but rather applied black letter confrontation law to the facts of the case. According to this black letter law, the four elements of the confrontation clause included physical presence, oath, cross-examination, and observation of demeanor. Although not all of these elements must be present in every case if the state has good reason to request otherwise, enough elements must be present to provide sufficient assurance of reliability, particularly when the witness's testimony seems on its face to be unreliable. The district court applied this well-settled law to the facts of the case and found that three of the four elements -physical presence, oath, and cross-examination -- were not present In addition, the child witness's testimony or were restricted. seemed on its face to be unreliable. Consequently, the right to confrontation was violated.

Contrary to the Petitioner's claim, Brief of Petitioner on Jurisdiction at 6, the district court did not hold that physical presence was required regardless of any compelling state interests.

2

If this claim were true, then this Court would have jurisdiction on the basis of conflict with other decisions. The district court instead held that not enough of the elements of the confrontation right (including physical presence) were present to outweigh the competing interests and the apparent unreliability of the child's statements. This holding was not a new construction of the confrontation clause but an application of existing confrontation law to the facts of the case. Consequently, this court lacks jurisdiction to take this case. <u>Armstrong v. City of Tampa</u>, 106 So. 2d 407, 410 (Fla. 1958) ("It is not sufficient to sustain our jurisdiction merely to point to a set of facts and contend that the trial judge failed to apply correctly a recognized provision of the Constitution.").

Furthermore, the court's application of the confrontation clause was only an alternative holding. The primary holding was that no statute authorized the videotaping procedure employed in this case. This primary holding did not construe a constitutional provision, and Petitioner does not suggest any other basis for jurisdiction over this primary holding. This Court does not take jurisdiction on the basis of alternative holdings. <u>Hanft v.</u> <u>Phelan</u>, 488 So. 2d 531 (Fla. 1986).

3

CONCLUSION

This Court may not and should not take jurisdiction of this case.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that a copy has been mailed to Stephen Baker, Suite 700, 2002 N. Lois Ave., Tampa, FL 33607, (813) 873-4730, on this 5th day of February, 1992.

Respectfully submitted,

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