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CHAMBERS OF  
**CIRCUIT JUDGE**

FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

BAY, CALHOUN, GULF, HOLMES, JACKSON AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

*O.A. 5-31-96*

**FILED**  
SIR J. WHITE  
MAY 21 1996  
CLERK, SUPREME COURT  
By Chief Deputy Clerk *097*

DON T. SIRMONS  
CHIEF JUDGE

POST OFFICE BOX 831  
PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA 32402

(904) 747-5322

May 6, 1996

The Honorable Stephen H. Grimes  
Chief Justice, Florida Supreme Court  
Supreme Court Building  
500 S. Duval Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1925

RECEIVED

*87,678*

CHIEF JUSTICE

Dear Chief Justice Grimes:

It has come to my attention that the Florida Bar has presented a proposed change to the Rules of Judicial Administration that substantially changes the way each circuit selects its Chief Judge.

Before this matter receives any serious consideration by the Court, I would request the Court to seek input from the Conferences of County and Circuit Judges respectively, as well as the Chief Judges who are currently serving.

Having served as a county and circuit judge since February of 1977 under two Chief Judges, Robert L. McCrary and N. Russell Bower, and currently serving as Chief Judge for the Fourteenth Circuit since July 1, 1989, I have a sense of the history behind the Bar's request for the Rule change and will note that this matter has been raised a number of times in the past. On each prior occasion, the determination was made to honor the desires of the individual circuit as to how they choose to elect their Chief Judges. Indeed, several circuits have voluntarily implemented various restrictions and/or requirements in their selection process for Chief Judges that were suitable to meet the desires of the judges serving in that circuit.

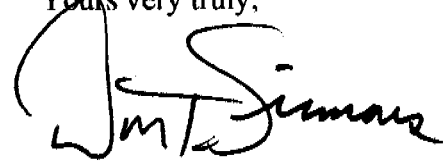
In our circuit, our Chief Judge is elected by a secret ballot, with absentee balloting allowed, of all the county and circuit judges. We sincerely believe in the wisdom of this process and wish to point out that a vote of a majority of judges outside our circuit is not the same as a vote of the majority of judges within our circuit. This is why we have twenty (20) judicial circuits which recognize and represent the many demographic differences that exist within our state.

Honorable Don T. Sirmons  
May 6, 1996  
Page 2

Before a rule change is made that takes away from our local judges their ability to determine who their Chief Judge will be, and that is the logical ultimate effect of the proposed change, I would like to have had the opportunity to hear argument in support of the change and have the ability to respond appropriately to that argument as a Chief Judge.

Thank you for considering my request.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D T Sirmons". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Don T. Sirmons,  
Chief Judge

DTS/dwh

cc: Judge Joseph P. Farina, Chair  
Judicial Administration Section,  
Circuit Court Conference