

Honorable Chief Justice and Members
Florida Supreme Court
Attention: Thomas D. Hall
Clerk of the Court

July 28, 2005

Dear Mr. Hall:

I endorse the recommended rule change (Fla.R.Med. 10.100-10.130) that would permit Florida's Circuit Court Judges to appoint, when appropriate, qualified mediators who are not attorneys.

While supporting this change I fully recognize that there are many, many cases that require a mediator with a thorough knowledge of the law. Conversely, there are many cases that can be resolved by competent mediators with appropriate educational backgrounds, hands on experience, or specific skill sets who are not members of the Bar. For example, retired corporate executives, contractors, CPA's, licensed engineers, architects, etc., in specific cases may be of immense value to the court in resolving disputes that would otherwise clog the court calendar.

As a 45 year city and county manager in several complex Florida local governments and most recently serving as the superintendent of the fourth largest US school district I have spent a working lifetime settling disputes. I didn't want to sound self serving in this letter, but I have attached a brief one page bio to demonstrate why I feel very well qualified, by lifetime experience, education, mediation training, and unquestioned ethical conduct to assist Florida's judiciary in resolving legal disputes without lengthy trials and legal proceedings. In short, I do not feel that the present rule helps Florida's judiciary system and I respectfully urge this distinguished Court to adopt the worthy Committee recommendation to amend the rules.

While I have not petitioned to speak I would be happy to be of any service to this Court if that would, in any way, be helpful.

Sincerely,

Merrett R. Stierheim

Attachment

Note: I hereby certify and verify that I have sent an exact copy of this letter to the distinguished Committee Chair, the Honorable Shawn L Briese.