

Florida Justices

FILED
THOMAS D. HALL
NOV - 3 2008
CLERK, SUPREME COURT
BY _____

Mary Watson
1817 Montague Street
Lake Worth, FL 33461
October 29, 2008

The Florida Supreme Court
500 South Duval Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1925

Dear Honorable Justices:

I am writing to you today because I am very upset by the proposed rule from the Trial Court Performance and Accountability Commission to be considered for statewide approval by yourselves. I am doubly concerned by the fact that any comments must be received by this Monday, and only this morning was the public allowed any knowledge of this.

That this ruling will affect each and every citizen in the State of Florida is undeniable by its very nature. It affects us all greatly. All citizens should have access to legal and judicial rulings that can so very easily change the very fabric of our lives. This ruling would virtually destroy our so called "Sunshine Laws" which were created to right

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wrongs and secrecy that worked to destroy the fabric of our democratic way of life.

To illustrate the abuse this would bring is too easy in South Florida. One only has to point to the fact that one third of our County Commissioners are now serving time for abuse of their office. It is only through open access to information that investigations spurred by excellent investigative reporting by the Palm Beach Post and other papers, that this abuse was discovered and the perpetrators removed from office as was needed for the welfare of the community. If this ruling had been in effect Tony Massilotti and others would still be manipulating and plundering our economy for their own profit. Not to mention the destruction of vital resources upon which we all depend, most notably our water supply—vital for survival of us all.

On a more personal note this is very dangerous for victims of any crime. As you should be well aware gangs and violence are threatening many areas of Florida. Frequently the police have great difficulty in prosecution because witnesses are too afraid to identify the assailants. Access to court information is vital if you are to ever expect the trust of the public in matters like this. I myself have a friend who was assaulted by her "boyfriend" who almost killed her. She was very scared to testify, but with support of her family and friends did. This resulted in his incarceration for this crime and he was also involved in cocaine trafficking. She knew his sentence, having been of course at the hearing that with her testimony resulted in a conviction. (12 previous attempts to convict unsuccessfully—no testimony). She called me less than one year later. Scared. She had seen him and he was supposed to still be in jail. The system said she would be notified before his release. Did not happen. She looked up court records and found out what had happened. He had been released early. She had no warning. I offered her safe haven at my home, which put me also at risk. This happens all too often. For proof look at our crime statistics. She was able before the trial to find out about his past history. Why would it possibly be in the best interest of society to protect criminals while denying access to knowledge of criminal behavior for victims? Have you thought at all about the effect of this on all major cities which are very really threatened by gang rule?

This destroys any criminal record history for all citizens save the very wealthy, many of

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whom have reaped their wealth through criminal activity.

Have you even invited the opinion of law enforcement, the Police Benevolent Association, public defenders, hospital ERs??

The scope of this change is far reaching. All of us are affected. We are not allowed a reasonable amount of time to be aware or be represented. If the public loses trust and confidence in the judicial system and it becomes a closed system serving only the wealthy, what does that do to justice?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Watson BSN, CPC".

Mary Watson, BSN, CPC

cc Palm Beach Post
Gov. Charlie Crist
Senator Bill Nelson
Senator Mel Martinez