IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

IN RE: AMENDMENTS TO THE FLORIDA PROBATE RULES **CASE NO.: SC16-168**

THE FLORIDA PROBATE RULES COMMITTEE'S RESPONSE TO COMMENTS RECEIVED TO ITS THREE-YEAR CYCLE REPORT

The Florida Probate Rules Committee ("Committee") responds to the March 15, 2016 comments submitted by Franklin Jack Burr II ("Mr. Burr") to the Committee's Three-Year Cycle Report as follows:

1. For the reasons expressed herein, the Committee believes no changes are necessary to the proposed text of Rules 5.550 and 5.560.

2. By way of procedural background, Mr. Burr previously submitted an "Emergent Request for Amendment to of [sic] Florida Probate Rules, Part III," to the Florida Supreme Court, a copy of which is submitted as Appendix A. In that submission, Mr. Burr proposed changes to Rule 5.550[1] to allow a trial court to consider whether an alleged incapacitated person had previously executed an advance directive "and/or designated a [s]urrogate under Chapter 765."

[1] Although the submission advocated for changes to Rule 5.550 (Petition to Determine Incapacity), Mr. Burr also argued for changes to petitions for the appointment of a guardian, a petition that is governed by Rule 5.560.

3. Pursuant to Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.140(a)(2), the Florida Supreme Court forwarded Mr. Burr's submission to the Committee on March 4, 2014.

4. Mr. Burr presented to the Committee in person during its June 25, 2014, meeting, following which the Committee assigned Mr. Burr's submission to a subcommittee for further consideration.

5. Following the subcommittee's report and recommendation, the Committee voted to propose amendments to Rule 5.550 (Petition to Determine Incapacity) and Rule 5.560 (Petition for Appointment of Guardian of an Incapacitated Person) to better facilitate a trial court's consideration as to whether alternatives to guardianship exist. The Committee notes that section 744.331(6)(b), Florida Statutes, requires a trial court to consider whether alternatives to guardianship exist that will sufficiently address the problems of the incapacitated person. Consistent with that mandate, the existing language of Rule 5.560(a)(9) requires a petitioner to state "whether there are alternatives to guardianship known to the petitioner that may sufficiently address the problems of the alleged incapacitated person in whole or in part."

6. After hearing from Mr. Burr, the Committee concluded that Rules 5.550 and 5.560 should be amended to specifically set forth some of the common alternatives to guardianship, namely: trust agreements, powers of attorney, and

advance directives. The Committee also concluded that it should not be left to a petitioner to determine whether such alternatives to guardianship sufficiently address the needs of an alleged incapacitated person. Instead, the Committee concluded that it should be incumbent upon a petitioner to disclose all alternatives that are known to exist—without qualification—and that only the trial court should decide whether those alternatives are sufficient to address the needs of the alleged incapacitated person. It is the Committee's belief that its proposed amendments to Rules 5.550 and 5.560 accomplish both objectives.

7. Mr. Burr objects to the Committee's proposed amendments because, among other reasons, the amendments do not specifically use the word "surrogate." It is the Committee's view that there is no need to include the word "surrogate." The reference to an "advance directive" is sufficient because an advance directive is specifically defined in chapter 765 to include a "health care surrogate." § 765.101(1), Fla. Stat. ("'Advance directive' means a witnessed written document or oral statement in which instructions are given by a principal or in which the principal's desires are expressed concerning any aspect of the principal's health care or health information, and includes, but is not limited to, the designation of a health care surrogate, a living will, or an anatomical gift made pursuant to part V of this chapter."). Thus, the inclusion of a reference to a surrogate in Rules 5.550 or 5.560 would be at least redundant and possibly result in confusion to the reader.

8. The Committee notes that Mr. Burr also objects to the proposed amendments to Rules 5.550 and 5.560 because the rules do not seek to require a petitioner to certify a "diligent inquiry and search for evidence" with respect to the existence of a surrogate. It is the Committee's belief that there is no need for such additional language because the statutes governing petitions to determine incapacity (section 744.3201, Florida Statutes) and petitions for the appointment of a guardian (section 744.334, Florida Statutes) do not require such an obligation. Moreoever, both Rules 5.550 and 5.560 already require a petitioner to verify the contents of the petition under penalty of perjury, and the proposed amendments do not change that obligation.

Respectfully submitted on March 28, 2016.

/s/ Matthew Triggs
Matthew Triggs, Chair
Florida Probate Rules Committee
2255 Glades Road
Suite 421A
Boca Raton, FL 33431-7379
561/241-7400
Florida Bar No. 865745
mtriggs@proskauer.com

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that a copy of the foregoing was furnished by e-mail, via the e-Portal, on March 28, 2016, to:

John F. Harkness, Jr.
Executive Director
The Florida Bar
651 East Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300
850/561-5600
Florida Bar No. 123390
jharkness@flabar.org

Heather Savage Telfer, Staff Liaison
Florida Probate Rules Committee
The Florida Bar
651 East Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300
850/561-5702
Florida Bar No. 139149
htelfer@flabar.org

Dr. Sam Sugar
ssugarmd@msn.com

Franklin Jack Burr, II
P.O. Box 14431
Clearwater, FL 33766
nodopamine@hotmail.com

Barry F. Spivey
Spivey & Fallon, P.A.
1515 Ringling Blvd., Suite 885
Sarasota, FL 34236-6765
barry.spivey@spiveyfallonlaw.com

Tami Foley Conetta
The Northern Trust Company
P.O. Box 4097
Sarasota, FL 34230-4097
tfc1@ntrs.com

Rohan Kelley
The Kelley Law Firm, PL
3365 Galt Ocean Drive
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308-7002
rohan@estatelaw.com

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I certify that this notice was prepared in compliance with the font requirements of Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.210(a)(2).

/s/ Matthew Triggs
Matthew Triggs, Chair
Florida Probate Rules Committee
2255 Glades Road
Suite 421A
Boca Raton, FL 33431-7379
561/241-7400
Florida Bar No. 865745
mtriggs@proskauer.com