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October 13, 1987

Sid J. White  
Clerk, Supreme Court  
Supreme Court Building  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Re: Proposed Florida Rules of Civil Procedure  
Rule 1.491 (Child Support Enforcement)

C  
jph

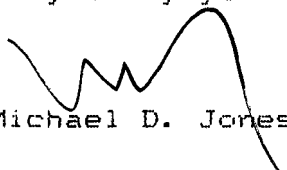
Dear Sir:

I have reviewed, with great interest, the proposed Rule endorsing the appointment of support enforcement hearing officers. While the Rule indicates that the hearing officers will be members of the Bar, there is a provision allowing the Chief Judge to waive the requirement. The thought of increasing the number of non-lawyers handling judicial matters alone is repugnant but, when coupled with the idea that the Court can confer a quasi-judicial authority upon a hearing officer and deny a party his right to appear in a court of law before a judge elected by the general public, it is irresponsible.

I, fortunately, am not involved in the domestic relations practice however, I had a recent experience of dealing with the HRS bureaucracy in a matter involving \$187.00 of "arrearage" which turned out to be the deduction of a Clerk's fee without the husband's knowledge. Early on the matter could have been resolved but HRS chose to throw the matter into a hearing conducted by an HRS appointee. After wasting several dozen hours of everyone's time including the hearing referee, the matter was concluded with the payment of \$187.00. If this is an example of what can happen with appointed hearing officers, whether they be members of the Bar or not, then I would respectfully submit that family law in Florida will become as misdirected as a rudderless ship in the eye of a hurricane.

Respectfully, I would suggest that the Rule is abundantly inappropriate as is any Rule that creates and perpetuates the bureaucracy which will become the cancer of our judicial system.

Very truly yours,



Michael D. Jones

MDJ/bp