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April 9, 2010

Ronald Carpenter, Clerk
Washington Supreme Court
415 – 12th Ave. S.W.
P.O. Box 40929
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

ATTN: Camilla Faulk

SUBJECT: Proposed GR 34

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

I write as a member of the Board of Director of the Skagit County Volunteer Lawyer Program to encourage the Washington Supreme Court to adopt the proposed GR 34 as published for comment in April, 2009.

My understanding is that a primary objective of the rule is to ensure constitutionally protected access to the courts for low income persons unable to pay filing fees and other mandatory incidental fees; these fees frequently serve as obstacles to those of limited means to secure judicial relief to which they are entitled. To that end, the rule is intended to establish consistent standards to be applied by court officers in considering requests from indigent litigants for fee waivers. Such consistency is important to the equal treatment of similarly situated low income people regardless of where they live, what court they find themselves in, or what court official is reviewing their application for a waiver of fees. Finally, and of significance to the volunteer lawyer program that I serve as well as similar organizations across the state, a simple, predictable process for the consideration and approval of requests to proceed *in forma pauperis* will decrease the amount of unnecessary attorney, and administrative time involved in processing such applications. From the perspective of a local government official (albeit, not affiliated with the courts in an official capacity), a simple, predictable procedure will also decrease the amount of staff time necessary to process these applications.

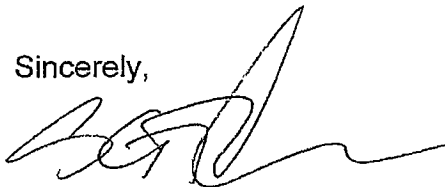
In addition, I understand that the standard is nearly identical to the standard established for determining indigency for indigent defense services established in RCW 10.101.010. This consistency will further advance the proposed rule's goal of equal treatment for all.

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I believe that the proposed rule will remove potentially significant barriers which limit access to the civil justice system by those of limited means. I thus encourage the Supreme Court to adopt this rule.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.G. Thomas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

SCOTT G. THOMAS