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> > César E. Torres Executive Director

April 19, 2010

Mr. Ronald Carpenter Clerk Washington Supreme Court P.O. Box 40929 Olympia, WA 98504-0920

Attn: Camilla Faulk

Re: Proposed GR 34

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

I write on behalf of the Northwest Justice Project (NJP) to urge adoption of Proposed GR 34, establishing a general rule governing applications for waiver of filing fees for indigent persons in civil cases. Adoption of Proposed GR 34 is an important step in Washington's efforts to secure uniformity in the fee waiver process statewide and will significantly improve access to courts throughout Washington.

The proposed rule reflects substantial improvement over current practices by establishing a uniform *In Forma Pauperis* (IFP) application process and standards by which low-income persons can pursue fee waivers and by providing for the presumption of indigency on the basis of representation by a qualified legal services provider. As such, the proposed rule benefits clients represented by NJP, clients represented by volunteer attorneys around the state (most of whom are referred to the *pro bono* local bar programs through our statewide legal "hotline" (CLEAR)), and especially unrepresented low-income persons who face great difficulty negotiating the local court process to get in the proverbial courthouse door. Further, a statewide IFP rule to promote access to superior is an important and needed companion to the statewide IFP Rule of Appellate Procedure for accessing the state appellate courts.

While we greatly support this rule and urge its adoption, we are concerned that it does not address issues NJP raised in our April 29, 2008 comments support adoption of the earlier version of GR 34. We are concerned that as written the rule does not address a number of the troubling local court practices that our client community has experienced and which continue to create barriers for low income persons seeking access to the courts to resolve critical legal needs. One problem our client community experiences is that a local court will "waive" the payment of a filing fee to "initiate" the proceeding, but will also order that the fee be paid before the case can be finalized. Another problem is that proposed GR 34 does not expressly address the problem of differing local courts understandings as to what fees and costs are





Mr. Ronald Carpenter Clerk April 19, 2010 Page 2

those for which "judicial officers have the authority to grant a waiver". See Comment to proposed GR 34. For example, filing fees, which as a constitutional matter must be subject to full waiver, include fees to support courthouse facilitators (RCW 26.12.240); domestic violence support services (RCW 36.18.016(b)); and a judicial surcharge (RCW 36.18.020(5)). Some courts refuse to waive some or all these fees, on the belief that they do not have the judicial authority to do so. GR 34 does not expressly prevent the practices or clarify that all fees required for filing an action in court are subject to waiver.

Examples of form orders from three different courts (enclosed) illustrate these issues:

- Cowlitz County IFP Motion and Form Orders: waive "filing fee" but require immediate payment of applicable surcharges in three distinct cases and state the "remaining [waived] filing fee must be paid before finalization or disposition of this action: OR "the remaining [waived] filing fee will be reviewed before finalization or disposition of this action." In our experience, clients we represent as well as low-income persons proceeding without representation are required to pay the surcharges as a condition of initiating an action. *Pro ses* are more often than not compelled to pay the "waived" filing fee as a pre-condition to finalizing their case.
- Lewis County IFP Motion and Form Order: Allows filing of case, however, the court "reserves the right to review this authorization from time to time and require payment of fees if justified at the time OR: "Petitioner is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee before 90 days has expired, or entry of a final decree, or a dismissal, whichever is first". Thus, the court does not "waive" the fee, but typically revisits the issue or simply requires applicants to pay before final relief is entered.
- Snohomish County IFP Application and Order: Sets out various boxes for the court to check to identify the specific filing fees the court will waive, but does not include a box to check for "all fees". The waiver is then either "subject to later court review" or only waived "temporarily" and ordered to be paid within a specific number of days of the IFP order or "prior to entry of final orders in this case: or partially waived with amounts to be paid at the time of initial filing, within a specified number of days of filing or prior to entry of final relief. The surcharges are similarly treated, but unlike in the Cowlitz County forms are capable of being fully waived.

As currently proposed, GR 34 does not address these inconsistencies or state whether all filing fees are subject to the Rule or subject to judicial authority to grant a waiver. Nor does it state that "waiver" means "waiver" (not deferral) for the duration of the proceeding up to and including final relief and/or that payment of waived fees cannot be a condition precedent to entry of final relief for those deemed eligible for waiver. In other words, once a litigant has been determined to be indigent and eligible for IFP waiver of fees and judicially imposed costs of litigation, they should not be subjected to repeated review and duplicative determinations of indigency or have their ability to obtain final judicial relief held hostage to their inability to pay the "waived" fee.

Mr. Ronald Carpenter Clerk April 19, 2010 Page 3

The rule does not clearly and expressly define "waiver" as a determination that the litigant due to their indigency is unable to pay the costs and fees and does not include any limitation on local court review or rescission of the waiver decision as a condition of final relief. As a result, the current practices identified above by those courts and others do not appear to be resolved by proposed GR 34. If sub-section (b) is intended to prohibit a court from denying or delaying final relief on the basis of an "underlying" action on the merits, it is not clear from the language used. If this is the intent, then we propose that the language be clarified either in the text of the sub-section or by way of an additional Comment to the effect:

Waiver of fees under this rule is intended to be a permanent waiver and is not subject to later review or rescission by the court and may not be the basis the basis for withholding final relief or entry of orders pending payment of fees.

Finally, in order to avoid confusion on whether certain costs are able to be waived and provide consistency among courts statewide, the first comment should clarify that "[T]he rule establishes the process by which judicial officers may waive *all* civil filing fees and costs otherwise payable as costs for access to court services."

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to supplement our comments of April, 2008 and look forward to a much improved system for low-income persons to be able to effectively access the courts throughout the state without barriers based on their inability to pay.

Sincerely,

Deborah Perluss

Director of Advocacy/General Counsel

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Northwest Justice Project

SUPERIOR COURT OF WASHINGTON FOR COWLITZ COUNTY

In re:	
111101	·
	CASE#
Petitioner,	MOTION, DECLARATION, AND ORDER TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS
Respondent.	[] Dissolution of Marriage \$280.00 [] Petition for Legal Separation \$280.00 [] Petition for Invalidity of Marriage \$280.00 [] Dissolution of Meretricious Relationship with Children \$280.00
MOTI	ON
I request the Court to allow me to proceed without payment Statement in support of this motion.	of all or part of the filing fee. Attached is a Financial
DECLAR	<u>ATION</u>
This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my present pay the filing fee without undue hardship.	intention to proceed to final disposition. I am unable to
This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my present pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without fee.	
pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro	
pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without fee.	
pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without fee.	
pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without fee.	secution of this action <i>in forma pauperis</i> and direction
pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without fee. Presented by:	secution of this action <i>in forma pauperis</i> and direction Name
pay the filing fee without undue hardship. I request entry of an order allowing commencement and pro	secution of this action <i>in forma pauperis</i> and direction Name

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ORDER

		<u> </u>
The petition and the Co	oner has preser ourt, finding go	nted a sufficient motion and declaration to proceed <i>in forma pauperis</i> od cause shown, hereby:
[]	ORDERS that which includes \$30.00 Domes Judicial surcha	at the petitioner is authorized to file this action upon payment of \$80.00 s the \$20.00 Facilitator surcharge (1508) pursuant to RCW 26.12.240; the stic Violence surcharge (1512) pursuant to RCW 36.18.016(b) and the \$30.00 arge (1187) pursuant to RCW 36.18.020 (4.)
	<u>Or</u>	
[]	to file this acti surcharge (150	at the Judicial surcharge is deferred* and the petitioner is authorized tion upon payment of \$50.00 which includes the \$20.00 Facilitator 08) pursuant to RCW 26.12.240 and the \$30.00 Domestic Violence surcharge nt to RCW 36.18.016(b.)
IT IS	S FURTHER O	RDERED THAT
	☐ The rem action. (*	naining filing fee must be paid before finalization or disposition of this 1151) (1187*)
	☐ The rem this action	naining filing fee will be reviewed before finalization or disposition of on. (1151) (1187*)
therefore it	is	ISE HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN to waive or defer the filing fees at the motion to waive or defer any of the filing fees is denied.
	·	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
ORD	ERED this	day of
		Judge / Court Commissioner
•		
Presented by:		
ŕ		
Petitioner's <i>si</i> g	gnature, Pro Se	

ORPRFP (07-2009)

	CASE#	
Petitioner(s),	MOTION, DECLARATION ORDER TO PROCEE IN FORMA PAUPER!	D
Respondent(s).	[] Establish Parenting Plan [] Establish Paternity [] Dissolution Modification (Out of County Case) [] Non-Parental Custody	\$250.00 \$250.00 \$250.00
	[] Non-Parental Custody	\$250.00
	TION	
/we request the Court to allow me/us to proceed without Financial Statement in support of this motion. DECLA This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my/our proceeding to pay the filing fee without undue hardship. The request entry of an order allowing commencement are the request entry of an order allowing commencement are request entry of an order allowing commencement.	Payment of all or part of the filing fee. Attache RATION esent intention to proceed to final disposition	ed is a
/we request the Court to allow me/us to proceed without Financial Statement in support of this motion. DECLA This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my/our p	Payment of all or part of the filing fee. Attache RATION esent intention to proceed to final disposition	ed is a
/we request the Court to allow me/us to proceed without Financial Statement in support of this motion. DECLA This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my/our proceeding to pay the filing fee without undue hardship. The request entry of an order allowing commencement are the request entry of an order allowing commencement are request entry of an order allowing commencement.	Payment of all or part of the filing fee. Attache RATION esent intention to proceed to final disposition	ed is a . I/we are is and
/we request the Court to allow me/us to proceed without Financial Statement in support of this motion. DECLA This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my/our planable to pay the filing fee without undue hardship. We request entry of an order allowing commencement are irection to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without dresented by:	TION payment of all or part of the filing fee. Attache RATION esent intention to proceed to final disposition d prosecution of this action in forma pauper fee.	ed is a . I/we are is and
/we request the Court to allow me/us to proceed without Financial Statement in support of this motion. DECLA This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my/our planable to pay the filing fee without undue hardship. We request entry of an order allowing commencement are irection to the Clerk of the Court to file this action without dresented by:	TION payment of all or part of the filing fee. Attache RATION esent intention to proceed to final disposition d prosecution of this action in forma pauper fee. Name	ed is a . I/we are is and

ORPRFP (07-2009)

ORDER

The petitioner(s) have presented a sufficient motion and declaration to proceed <i>in forma</i> pauperis and the Court, finding good cause shown, hereby:
[] ORDERS that the petitioner(s) is/are authorized to file this action upon payment of \$50.00 which includes the \$20.00 Facilitator surcharge (1508) pursuant to RCW 26.12.240; the and the \$30.00 Judicial surcharge (1187) pursuant to RCW 36.18.020 (4.)
<u>Or</u>
[] ORDERS that the Judicial surcharge is deferred* and the petitioner(s) is/are authorized to file this action upon payment of the \$20.00 Facilitator surcharge (1508) pursuant to RCW 26.12.240.
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT
The remaining filing fee must be paid before finalization or disposition of this action. (1151) (1187*)
The remaining filing fee will be reviewed before finalization or disposition of this action. (1151) (1187*)
snae kiret gude.
SUFFICIENT CAUSE HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN to waive or defer the filing fees therefore it is
[] ORDERED that the motion to waive or defer any of the filing fees is denied.
ORDERED this day of,
Judge / Court Commissioner
Presented by:
Petitioner's signature, Pro Se
Petitioner's <i>signature</i> , Pro Se

SUPERIOR COURT OF WA	ASHINGTON FOR COWLITZ COUNTY
O In re:	
	CASE#
Petitioner, And	MOTION, DECLARATION, AND ORDER TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS
	MODIFICATION OF COWLITZ COUNTY CASE { } Support \$56.00 { } Custody / Parenting Plan \$56.00
Responde	nt. { } Notice of Relocation \$56.00 { } Decree \$56.00
This proceeding is brought in good faith and it is my pay the filing fee without undue hardship.	med cause and I request the Court to allow me to proceed hed is a Financial Statement in support of this motion. CLARATION present intention to proceed to final disposition. I am unable to and prosecution of this action in forma pauperis and direction e.
Presented by:	Name
	Address
Petitioner's / Respondent's Signature	
Date	Phone
ORPRFP (07-2009)	

ORDER

The	petitioner	has	presented	a sufficient	motion a	and de	eclaration t	to proceed	in forma	pauperis
and	the Court,	find	ing good c	ause shown	n, hereby	' :	•	•		

ORDERS that the petitioner is authorized to file this action upon payment of the \$20.00 Facilitator surcharge (1508) pursuant to RCW 26.12.240

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT

- The remaining filing fee must be paid before finalization or disposition of this action. (1105)
- ☐ The remaining filing fee will be reviewed before finalization or disposition of this action. (1105)

SUFFICIENT CAUSE HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN to waive or defer the filing fees therefore it is

[] ORDERED that the motion to waive or defer any of the filing fees is denied.

ORDERED this _____ day of _____,

Judge / Court Commissioner

Presented by:

Petitioner's / Respondent's signature, Pro Se

ORPRFP (07-2009)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF MOTION AND ORDER TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS

	ERAL INFORMATION		
(a) (b)	Name:	(a)	Spouse:
(0)	Address:		
(c)	Phone:		·
' Å TV.T	ILY INFORMATION		
) i)	Persons whom you financially support: []	Snouce	[] Children [] Other
o)	List names, ages, relationship and address if diffe	rent from	yours:
		•	
	LOYMENT INFORMATION		
i) i)	Are you presently employed: [] Yes [] No		Is spouse presently employed: : [] Yes [] No
)	Name and address of employer:		Name and address of spouse's employer:
)	Length of employment:		Length of Employment:
)	Occupation:		Occupation:
)	Occupation: Other source of income:	,	Occupation: Other source of income:
ico	ME AND ASSETS		EXPENSES AND DEBTS
)	Gross monthly income (personal)		(a) Monthly living expenses (itemize):
	Gross monthly income (spouse)		Rent/House Payment
	Savings Accounts:		Food
	Checking Accounts		Food Utilities Transportation
	Stocks and Bonds		Transportation
	('ach		Insurance:
	Vehicles/boats/RV/motorcycles		Medical & Dental
			Other
	Home equity (sale value less amount owing)		Other (b) Debts:
			Name of Creditor Amount Owed
	Other	٠.	
TAI	L ASSETS:		TOTAL OBLIGATIONS:
HEI	•		
ECH	R PENALTY OF PERJURY, I DECLARE THAT EDING INFORMATION IS TRUE AND ACCUR	r i have Rate to	EXAMINED THIS DOCUMENT AND THE THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND ABILIT
		·	
e	Signature		

SUPERIOR COURT OF W FOR LEWIS COUNTY	ASHINGTON	
		NO.
Petitioner vs.		MOTION, DECLARATION AND ORDER TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS
Respondent		(ORPRFP)
	I. MOTION	
I request the court to allow me t	o proceed without payment of	the filing fee and other court costs.
	II. DECLARATI	ON
	of marriage. I am unable to	t in good faith and it is my present intention pay the filing fee and other court costs
fees in the following cases: Boo	ddie v Connecticut, 401 US 3	shington have authorized the courts to waive 71, 29 L.Ed.2d 113, 91 S.Ct. 780 (1971); and 83 Wn.2d 630, (1974). I request entry of
	nent and prosecution of this cathe court to file and issue pap	ase In Forma Pauperis; and ers without any fee or charge whatsoever.
My income, assets are:		
Cash \$	My monthly incom-	e is \$
Checking \$	The source of my ir	ncome is

I have to support _____ child (ren)

Savings \$_____

MT FOR WAIVER OF FEES) (MT) - Page 1 of 2 UH-02.0100 (9/2000) - RCW 10.14.060

My necessary expenses are:

Rent \$	Utilities \$	Food \$	Daycare \$
	the penalty of perjury under th true and correct.	e laws of the State of Wasl	nington that the foregoing
Dated	at	·	, Washington.
		Petitioner	
	The second of th	ORDER	
	naving presented a sufficient mood cause shown; now therefor		oceed In Forma Pauperis and the
clerk of the cou petitioner witho	rt is ordered and directed to fil out payment of any fee or charg	e and issue papers and pleage whatsoever. In approvin	on In Forma Pauperis; and the adings as requested by the ag this Order the court reserves ayment of fees if justified at the
	ner is required to pay the d, or entry of a final decre		-
DATED			
		JUDGE/COU	RT COMMISSIONER

	{ 	
1		
2		
3		ı.
4		
5		
6	IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE	STATE OF WASHINGTON
7	IN AND FOR THE COUNTY	
8	In re the Marriage of:	No.
9	•	APPLICATION/ORDERTO PROCEED IN
10	Petitioner,	FORMA PAUPERIS
1.1	Vs	(ORPRFP)
12	,	
13	Respondent.	
14	I. APPLICA	ATION
15	I,, move the Court Forma Pauperis (at public expense) in this case.	for an Order authorizing me to proceed in
16	Attached is a Financial Statement in suppo	ort of this motion.
17	II. ORD	<u>ER</u>
18	It is hereby ordered that the above named is permitted indicated below:	to proceed without payment of the filing fees
19	General Case Filing Fee \$200 Domestic	Case filing Fee \$200.00 (see sections 2.3 and 2.4) Modification Fee (in-County \$36 (see section 2.3)
20		
21	It is hereby ordered that the above fee(s): Are waived subject to later court review;	
22		prior to entry of any final orders in this case;
23	Are waived in the amount of \$ at the time of filing within prior to entry of any final orders in thi	days of filing
24	Other	
	APPLICATION/ORDER TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERI (ORPRFP) - 1	rs ·

1	Snohomish County Code 4.90) shall be paid:
2	At the time of filing
3	Within days of filing or no later that (date) Prior to entry of any final orders
4 5	36.18.016(2)(b)) assessed on all petitions for dissolution, legal separation or declaration
6	Does not apply At the time of filing
7	Within days of filing or no later than (date) Prior to entry of any final orders
8	It is hereby ordered that this case shall be dismissed on (date) if any of the above fees have not been paid as ordered.
9	DATED THIS DAY OF, 20
10	
11	
12	JUDGE/COURT COMMISSIONER Presented by:
13	Presented by:
14	
15	Signature of Petitioner
16	organization of Tellifolds
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	FAILURE TO PROSECUTE THIS ACTION BY FAILURE TO APPEAR AT YOUR HEARING OR OTHERWISE MAY RESULT IN AN ORDER AND JUDGMENT REQUIRING THE PETITIONER TO PAY
24	THE FILING FEE AND SERVICE COSTS.
	APPLICATION/ORDER TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS (ORPRFP) - 2

3.1	GENERAL INFORMATION	
J.1	(a) Name: (b) Address:	(a)Spouse's Name:
	(c) Social Security #:	(c) Social Security #:
	(e) Date of Birth:	(e) Date of Birth:
3.2	FAMILY INFORMATION	
•	 (a) Persons whom you financially support (b) List names, relationship and address if 	: [Spouse [] Children [] Other different from yours:
3.3	EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION	
5.0	(a) Are you presently employed [Yes] No (b) Name & address of employer:	(a) Is your spouse presently employed [] Yes [] No (b) Name & address of spouse's employer:
	(c) Length of Employment:	(c) Length of Employment:
	(d) Occupation: (e) Other Sources of Income:	(d) Occupation: (e) Other Sources of Income:
3.4	INCOME AND ASSETS	3.5 EXPENSES AND DEBTS
571	(a) Gross monthly income (personal)	(a) Monthly living expenses (itemize): Rent/house payment
	(b) Gross monthly income (spouse) (c) Savings accounts	Food
	(d) Checking accounts (e) Stocks & Bonds	Utilities Transportation
	(f) Cash (g) Vehicles/boats/RV/motorcycles	Insurance
	(g) Vehicles/boats/RV/motorcycles	Medical & Dental
	(h) Home equity (sale value less amount owing)	Other (b) Debts: Name of Creditor Amount Owed
	(i) Other TOTAL ASSETS:	TOTAL OBLIGATIONS:
	COLLECTION OF DWD WIDW AND ON A STREET	AVE BY AMNIED THIS DOCUMENT AND THE
PRECEDI	ENALLY OF PERJURY, I DECLARE THAT I H. NG INFORMATION IS TRUE AND ACCURATE	AVE EXAMINED THIS DOCUMENT AND THE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND ABILIT
DATE	SIG	NATURE