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Subject: FW: Comment in support of Proposed New General Rule 40 Informal Domestic Relations Trials
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From: Terry J. Price [mailto:tprice@uw.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, July 7, 2021 6:07 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
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Dear Justices of the Washington Supreme Court:

This comment is in support of proposed rule IDRT [NEW] GR 40, the Informal Domestic Relations Trial Rule, that has been posted for comment on the Administrative Office of the Courts' website. The Court Recovery Task Force Family Law Subcommittee supports adoption of the proposed rule for the following three reasons:

1. According to the Administrative Office of the Courts annual Domestic Relations caseloads, currently only 3-4% of domestic relations matters per year go to trial. However, there are potentially many more cases with self-represented litigants where they likely settled because they are intimidated by the litigation itself. The option to go to a simplified trial rather than settle would give them more choices in the process, and possibly more just outcomes.
2. Thurston County has had good success with these trials in the last three years, and King County adopted a similar rule last year. Apparently, Clark County also uses a variation of the Informal Domestic Relations Trial rule. These three counties represent almost 40% of the state's population. In other words, this rule is already an option for a large proportion of Washington's population, and it would be fair to bring it to the rest of the state. Also, as noted on the Cover Sheet, our surrounding neighbor states (Oregon, Idaho and Alaska) all have variations of this rule as well.
3. There is no downside. If the parties do not want to avail themselves of the Informal Domestic Relations Trial rule, then they will not. But if they do, then the judges in these matters will have more robust guidance about how to deal with those matters.

This Informal Domestic Relations Trial rule will go a long way to helping litigants who cannot afford representation to get their fair day in court. We fully support the

proposed rule and encourage the Supreme Court to adopt it.

Sincerely, Terry Price, Chair, on behalf of the Family Law Subcommittee

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