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Committee on  
**PRIVACY and COURT RECORDS**  
Supreme Court of Florida

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Barbara T. Scott  
Kim A. Skievaski  
Elijah Smiley  
Walt Smith  
Larry Turner

July 22, 2004

The Honorable Chief Judge  
Judicial Circuit  
County Courthouse  
123 Second Street  
Tallahassee, FL 12345

Dear Chief Judge:

As you know, the Supreme Court of Florida recently created the Committee on Privacy and Court Records and directed it to study and make policy recommendations regarding the electronic dissemination of court records. The Committee is to report to the Supreme Court by July 1, 2005. I write to ask for your assistance as the chief judge of your judicial circuit in helping the Committee on Privacy and Court Records (the Committee) gain the benefit of the deep knowledge and perspectives of your judges and court staff regarding court records.

The issues before the Committee are profound, and the recommendations the Committee will make may have significant long-term implications for the interaction of Florida's courts with litigants, lawyers and the public. The electronic age has brought us many changes, and while these changes are generally positive, few would disagree that substantial challenges have emerged. Foremost among these challenges is protection of personal privacy. Florida courts collect a great deal of information about citizens, and the general openness of court records makes it possible for much of that information to move into the public domain. Emerging information management technologies allow personal information to be gathered, aggregated, analyzed, stored and transmitted to an extent unimagined only a few years ago. In acting to create policy in this area, the Supreme Court has expressed its intention to ensure that information about citizens contained in court files is managed in a manner consistent with law and the responsible administration of justice. For a full discussion I commend to you the 2001 report on this issue by the Florida Judicial Management Council, available on the Supreme Court Website.

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In approaching the development of policy recommendations, the Committee is very interested in gaining the benefit of the knowledge and experience of judges and court staff, including hearing officers, case management personnel, staff attorneys and others. Therefore I respectfully request that you bring this matter to the attention of the judges and staff and urge them to respond to the committee. This issue attracts considerable interest and discussion, and you may find it suitable for a brown-bag luncheon or similar forum. You may also want to discuss it at local bar association luncheons or similar events and encourage input to the committee from attorneys.

To facilitate input, enclosed are two documents: a "request for input" and a "court records matrix." These documents describe the issues before the Committee in greater detail and provide a format for a structured response. We hope they are helpful in that regard.

Any questions that may arise can be directed to me, any member of the Committee, or to Steve Henley with the Strategic Planning Unit of the Office of the State Courts Administrator. It would be very helpful if responses could be provided by October 1, 2004. I thank you for your consideration and your attention to this matter.

Best Regards,

Jon Mills

JM/SH

Enclosures

cc: Trial Court Administrator