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SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA  
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April 8, 2015

Florida Supreme Court  
Office of the Clerk  
500 South Duval Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1927

Honorable Judges:

COMMENTS: RE: SC15-497

Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, Proposed Amended Rule 2.240: Judicial Attire  
"During any judicial proceeding, robes worn by a judge must be solid black with  
no embellishment."

Like all judicial change in our great county, over its two hundred plus years, we must always, slowly, and with great thought and wisdom, allow for growth and change, and adapt.

The issue of judicial robes, like any other issue before the Florida Supreme Court for consideration, should be considered on a case-by-case basis, not with an overly broad paint stroke, especially when implementation of a Rules change is one of first impression.

A judge sitting in judgment need not be required to have the literal appearance of severity (black, unadorned robes), only solemnity. We as judges, must also be perceived as humane, approachable, fair and impartial. There is no "one size fits all" on the Bench, inside or out, any longer.

Historically, the respect was accorded austere, plain black judicial robes designed for my brethren, at the time, older, somber appearing men.

I wear a simple white lace collar on my plain black robes to add a touch of femininity to the dignity of the robe.

It is equally important for the Florida Supreme Court to acknowledge that we now have a diverse Bench.

The Robes may not be a fashion statement but a modicum of tasteful self-expression that respects the office and the robe must be permitted the safe-keepers of the Constitution. We too, must be permitted to benefit from its protections, as well.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,

Merrilee Ehrlich, Circuit Court Judge, 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit