

Citizens Legislative Alert

Last week, the Florida Legislature introduced a bill, *SB 2108* and *HB1121* proposing to shift court related services and responsibilities from the Clerk of the Circuit Court to Court Administration, an organization which reports directly to the Judiciary. **This change, if adopted, would eliminate the system of checks and balances in government as we know it today.**

The Clerk of the Circuit Court, an elected official, has historically performed the court related services on behalf of the citizens and, in the process, ensured that a system of checks and balances was in place and operated in the public interest. This system of government has worked well for the citizens of Florida for over 100 years.

In addition, the bill would have wide ranging impact on who collects, disburses and uses court fines and fees to fund the Florida court system. **If passed, judges would have the ability to set and collect fines and/or fees and then allocate those same funds to pay for their salary, support staff and office expenses.** The term "cash register justice" describes what could potentially result if this legislative effort is successful. **All control of the court system would then be in the hands of the lawyers and the judges.** It is likely this change will result in higher taxes to support the larger court system and bureaucracy.

Finally, the bill was filed by Representative Ellyn Bogdanoff right before the legislative session began with little public knowledge or debate.

As a concerned citizen and public official, I urge you to contact your local legislator and Governor Crist today and tell them that you want checks and balances in state government, including the court system and that you support an independently elected Clerk of Courts who performs these functions on behalf of the public.

I ask you to send an email, letter or make a telephone call to your local legislator TODAY.

Go to www.CollierClerk.com Notices to learn more and access an electronic legislator contact lists or link to the Editor of the Naples Daily News.

Respectfully,

Dwight E. Brock, Clerk

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