



**JOHN A. CRAWFORD**  
**Clerk of the Circuit Court / Comptroller**  
**Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners**  
**Nassau County**



March 6, 2009

Dear Editorial Board Editor,

Of the many issues you are monitoring during the upcoming legislative session, one issue that deserves your thoughtful consideration is the role of Florida's Clerks of Court and Comptrollers and the funding of the judicial system. We welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the changes being proposed by some Florida judges and urge you to editorialize in favor of the best interests of the public, our ultimate authority and constituency.

The office of the Clerk was established in the Florida Constitution to maintain a system of checks and balances within the judicial branch and within county government. We believe it is essential that the fundamental responsibilities of the Clerk, which are protective of the public, remain within the scope of these independently elected Constitutional officers.

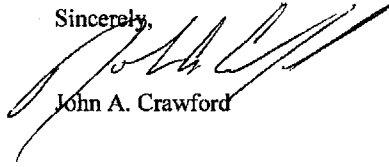
There is an organized effort underway by various Florida judges to move vital duties of the Clerk, particularly relating to court record preservation, to administrators who are appointed by and report to the judges themselves. We oppose this move and believe it represents a breach in the important separation of powers between the Clerks and the judiciary.

As independently elected Constitutional officers, the Clerks answer first and foremost to the public. As such, they put the public's interests, protection and convenience first. Judges preside over cases and courtrooms. Their actions in cases are documented in court files, through which they are held accountable to the public. The preservation of case files and court records should not be handled by an employee of the judges but by an impartial, independent custodian who answers to the citizens of Florida.

On the issue of funding, we support the effort to create a dedicated, stable, adequate funding source for the judicial branch of government, including Florida's state attorneys and public defenders. We are committed to work with the Legislature and the Judiciary to identify and establish this funding mechanism and believe the Clerks may play an integral role through our collection of court fees. However, we must set the record straight with regard to false information recently spread about our own budgets. This misinformation campaign seems intended to fuel efforts to grab Clerks' office funding and duties under the guise of efficiency and reform.

Please get the facts before you weigh in on these issues, which have lasting and serious implications for the public. I look forward to discussing these with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John A. Crawford', written over the printed name.

John A. Crawford