



State of North Carolina
General Court of Justice
21ST Judicial District
FORSYTH COUNTY

WILLIAM Z. WOOD, JR.
SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

P.O. BOX 20099
WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA 27120

May 29, 2013

Rep. James L. Boles, Jr.
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 528
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

Re: Court Reporter positions

Dear Rep. Boles,

I am writing to advise you of my concerns regarding the possible elimination of 50% of the present Court Reporter positions. I do not believe the replacement of these Court Reporters with electronic recording equipment or contract court reporters would be either economical or practical.

In Forsyth County District Court, felony guilty pleas, Juvenile Court, and some domestic violence hearings have been "recorded" by means of an audio system for many years. These recordings are often garbled and totally inadequate.

My own experience with electronic recording equipment has shown that the recording becomes inaudible or garbled when two or more people speak at the same time. Two or more people frequently speak at the same time during trials. Lawyers often interrupt each other during arguments over motions. Lawyers and witnesses constantly interrupt each other during the question and answer process of testimony. A good, competent Court Reporter can ask that questions, answers and statements be repeated. Court Reporters have back-up recording capacity that an audio recording system lacks.

The time and cost of transcribing an audio recording is probably two or three times greater than the time and cost of transcribing a trial recorded by a Court Reporter.

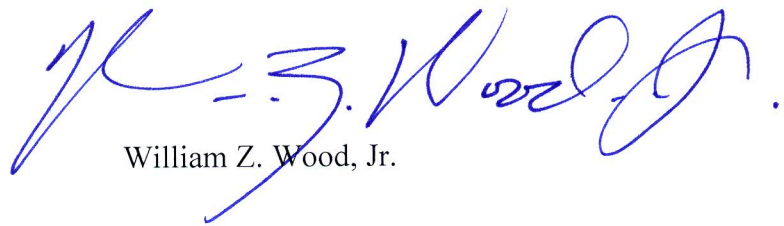
Contract Court Reporters are inadequate replacements for full-time Court Reporters. Most contract Court Reporters spend the great majority of their time taking depositions. Depositions are much slower-paced and are less confusing than trials. There are no jurors, bailiffs, spectators or other witnesses present at depositions. Certainly, crime victims and their families are not present at depositions. Depositions take place in smaller conference rooms with better acoustics than most large courtrooms. The presence of judges, spectators, victims, jurors, bailiffs, and other witnesses causes background noise and interruptions that contract court reporters are not used to dealing with.

Also, the most experienced and capable private Court Reporters have plenty of work and are not willing to work in the much more restrictive, difficult, and stressful courtroom environment for the lower State rate of pay.

If a contract court reporter or an audio recording system fails to provide an accurate transcript of a trial, then a re-trial becomes necessary. This is not only expensive, but it is unfair to the parties, witnesses and victims of crime.

Crime victims and their families deserve the State of North Carolina's best effort to provide them with fair trials, with first-rate professional court reporters, not second-rate audio recording or contract reporters who cannot succeed in the private sector. Our Court System must always focus on providing timely, just and fair trials to litigants, defendants and to crime victims and their families. This move to eliminate 50% of our Court Reporter positions would work to prevent this goal.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Z. Wood, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

William Z. Wood, Jr.