

OCTOBER 13, 2011

VIA FAX: 815-338-0248
McHenry County Trial Court Administrator
2200 N. Seminary Ave
Woodstock, Illinois 60098

RE: Political Decor

Mr. James D. Wallis,

Have you read the writing of each and every shirt cascading down the courthouse stairwell? In case you are accustomed to using one of the back entrances, the McHenry County tradition of prominently hanging judicially and politically charged laundry is in full bloom. Have you read every one of them?

I have not. I have, however, read enough of them to know that they are ***completely inappropriate decor*** to hang anywhere in a courthouse. This display is incredibly powerful. Obviously, that is their point. It is also the problem. They are powerfully one-sided. To put them up in a quiet corner is inappropriate enough. To hang them across three levels of stairs used by jurors, witnesses and courtroom observers is unacceptable.

Are you endorsing the message on each shirt? Are you sanctioning a use of the legal terms “abuse” or “battery” that is different than what the law defines? Those shirts are. Do you honestly believe that jurors entering the building should be pre-disposed to these messages prior to having to sit on a jury for domestic battery? Unless you are willing to stand behind the message on each shirt and you honestly believe they are not affecting, the shirts need to come down. Now. If you do not believe the shirts are affecting people, they are not fulfilling their mission and should come down anyway.

The courthouse should not be backing such a blatant, one-sided, skewed message in full view of those who will be judged and those who must sit in judgment. If you were wrongfully accused of domestic abuse, how would you feel knowing your jurors were walking up those stairs? The criminally accused deserve fairness. The constitution demands it. This is not fair.

If you are unwilling to take down the display, I ask now for permission to conduct a similar exhibit next month. I propose we get orange shirts- ones that match those given to the inmates- and allow for messages from people wrongfully accused of domestic battery. They can talk about how the allegations cost them their jobs or ruined their lives. I am even willing to attempt to contact Gary Gauger to see if he will do a question-and-answer about how it feels.

Please take down the shirts immediately.

Sincerely,

Matt Haiduk