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Comment:

The official comment to MRPC 6.5 begins, "A lawyer is an officer of the court who has sworn to uphold the federal and state constitutions, to proceed only by means that are truthful and honorable, and to avoid offensive personality. It follows that such a professional must treat clients and third persons with courtesy and respect. For many citizens, contact with a lawyer is the first or only contact with the legal system. Respect for the law and for legal institutions is diminished whenever a lawyer neglects the obligation to treat persons properly. It is increased when the obligation is met."

This proposed amendment of MCR 1.109, which gives the multitude of individuals involved in our state's legal system the opportunity to clarify their identity to a court and to be acknowledged properly so that one's identity is not a distraction from the legal issues being considered, is consistent with MRPC 6.5 and a sensible extension of the obligation all Michigan lawyers and judges already hold.

It appears some of the comments listed in opposition to this proposed amendment come from those who want to treat those they disagree with disrespectfully. Our profession's goals of professionalism and civility are strengthened, not harmed, by this proposed rule. I admire the Supreme Court's willingness to consider the topic of personal pronouns and the efficiency of the amendment's language as written.