



RALPH VAN PELT, JR.
JUDGE, SUPERIOR COURT
LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
October 4, 2016

OFFICE: 706-965-4047
FAX: 706-965-6246

875 LAFAYETTE STREET
RINGGOLD, GEORGIA 30736

Jon B. Wood

[REDACTED]
LaFayette, Georgia 30728

SUPERIOR COURT
CATOOSA COUNTY, GA
FILED IN OFFICE

10/3/2016
Lucy Baker
CLERK/DEPUTY CLERK

Re: Administrative Designation Order dated September 28, 2016

Dear Mr. Wood:

I am in receipt of your letter dated September 27, 2016 and the above referenced order. The order on its face references O.C.G.A. Section 15-1-9.1, a copy of which is enclosed. The code section is titled "Requesting judicial assistance from other courts." The portion you cite is prefaced by "As used in this Code section, the term:".

This code section has nothing to do with how someone becomes Chief Judge other than by some implication that this person has become so by one way or another. In any event, it clearly does not authorize you, acting alone, without a majority of the Judges of the Circuit, to say that pursuant to this Code section you are appointing someone Chief Judge effective the day after you leave office.

You had told me very clearly in the past months that you were "staying out of" the question of who that next Chief Judge would be. I do not find this order consistent your proclamations to me and other people.

You surely recall our conversation on Monday, September 26, 2016 and recall me telling you for the first time that I have reported matters concerning Judge Graham to Richard Hyde. Let me flesh that out for you here.

Beginning some five years ago, I approached you in person on more than one occasion to inform you that Judge Graham had resumed her prior practice of verbally abusing court personnel and attorneys. Some of these people also reported this to you, on at least one occasion in writing. Your response to these reports to you as Chief Judge boiled down to saying "Wow, if Richard Hyde finds out about this, she's gone."

To my knowledge, you took no action on any of the complaints. (I suggest that you review Code of Judicial Conduct Rule 2.15.) Upon realizing finally that you were not going to take any action, I called GBI Director Vernon M. Keenan who had filed the 2009 JQC complaint over

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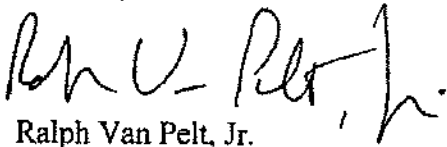
Judge Graham's verbal abuse of local law enforcement and GBI Special Agent Del Thomasson. Director Keenan asked if I would be willing to talk to Richard Hyde and I agreed to do so.

Subsequently, I have, at some risk to myself, assisted then JQC Investigator Hyde in obtaining proof of Judge Graham's actions. In your cover letter, you state that you expect the remaining three judges to have "constructive discussions" about changes in this Circuit. Allow me to inform you that as soon as Judge Graham's father learned that I might be considering not respecting his daughter's authority, he read your order to a third party and sent me a message through them that there would be "a blood bath" if I did not submit. So much for "constructive discussion"!

Going back on you prior commitment virtually guarantees that there will not be a "smooth and seamless" transition. I find it even more dumbfounding that despite knowing about many (but not all) of Judge Graham's actions since 2009, you went ahead and signed this order.

Enjoy your retirement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph Van Pelt, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ralph Van Pelt, Jr.

RVPjr/rvpjr

enclosures