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STATE OF ILLINOIS  
JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD  
PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 19, 2018

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JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST RONALD R. DUEBBERT, CIRCUIT JUDGE, 20<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

On April 19, 2018, the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board filed a Complaint with the Illinois Courts Commission against Ronald R. Duebbert, Circuit Judge, Twentieth Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois, charging Respondent with conduct that was prejudicial to the administration of justice and brought the judicial office into disrepute.

The Complaint alleges that on December 30, 2016, while being interviewed by police officers in connection with the criminal investigation of the murder of Carl Z. Silas, Respondent made statements he knew to be false and deceptive, and omitted facts that he knew were relevant to the matters the officers were investigating. Respondent's misrepresentations, deceptions, and omissions concerned facts that were relevant to an active murder investigation. The Complaint further alleges that on May 12, 2017 and June 9, 2017 Respondent also made statements he knew to be false and deceptive while testifying before the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board, and omitted facts during his testimony that he knew were relevant to the matters the Board was investigating. These misrepresentations, deceptions, and omissions were made under oath, and concerned facts that were relevant to the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board's investigation into Respondent's conduct.

The Board's trial counsel, Attorney Kevin M. Fee of Sidley Austin LLP, will prosecute the Complaint.

**-ATTACHED IS A COPY OF THE COMPLAINT-**

COURTS COMMISSION OF THE  
STATE OF ILLINOIS

**FILED**

APR 19 2018

*M. M. H.*  
Courts Commission Secretary

In re RONALD R. DUEBBERT,  
Judge of the Circuit Court,  
Twentieth Judicial Circuit of the  
State of Illinois

)  
)  
) No. 18-CC-1  
)  
)

**COMPLAINT**

Pursuant to Section 15(c) of Article VI of the Constitution of the State of Illinois, the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board ("Board") complains against Judge Ronald R. Duebbert, Judge of the Circuit Court, Twentieth Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois ("Respondent"), and charges Respondent with conduct that was prejudicial to the administration of justice and that brought the judicial office into disrepute.

**SUMMARY OF ALLEGATIONS**

1. On December 30, 2016, while being interviewed by police officers in connection with the criminal investigation of the murder of Carl Z. Silas, Respondent made statements he knew to be false and deceptive, and omitted facts that he knew were relevant to the matters the officers were investigating. Respondent's misrepresentations, deceptions, and omissions concerned facts that were relevant to an active murder investigation. On May 12, 2017 and June 9, 2017 Respondent also made statements he knew to be false and deceptive while testifying before the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board, and omitted facts during his testimony that he knew were relevant to the matters the Board was investigating. These misrepresentations, deceptions, and omissions were made under oath, and concerned facts that were relevant to the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board's investigation into Respondent's conduct.

## STATEMENT OF FACTS

### I. Background

2. Respondent is a Circuit Court Judge for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit of Illinois.
3. Before he was sworn in as judge, Respondent practiced law with Duebbert Law Offices in Belleville, Illinois.
4. Respondent met David Fields in 2013, and thereafter developed and maintained a close personal relationship with Fields.
5. In the summer of 2015, Fields pled guilty to aggravated assault on a pregnant person and was sentenced to a period of incarceration.
6. In August 2015, Fields reported to the Illinois Department of Corrections and began to serve his term of incarceration.
7. Respondent and Fields remained in contact during Fields's period of incarceration, including through telephone calls, written correspondence, and Respondent's multiple personal visits and attorney visits to Fields.
8. On October 24, 2016 Fields was released from incarceration on mandatory supervised release.
9. Beginning during the period when Fields was incarcerated, Respondent submitted multiple applications to the Illinois Department of Corrections seeking approval for Fields to reside in Respondent's home in Belleville, Illinois upon Fields's release from incarceration. These applications were initially denied based on the presence of firearms in Respondent's home, and upon his release Fields went to live at Fields's mother's home in Shiloh, Illinois.

10. Respondent subsequently agreed to remove certain firearms from his home so that Fields could move in with him. On or about November 4, 2016, Fields moved from his mother's residence to Respondent's residence in Belleville.

11. On November 8, 2016, Respondent was elected Judge of the Circuit Court for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit.

12. Fields continued to live with Respondent in Respondent's home for several weeks after the election. On or about December 2, 2016, Fields moved from Respondent's home back to his mother's home in Shiloh, Illinois.

13. On December 5, 2016, Respondent was sworn in as judge.

## **II. David Fields's Use of Respondent's Cellular Telephone**

14. Beginning in 2015 Respondent periodically provided David Fields with a cellular phone that Fields could use to communicate with Respondent (among others). In 2015, Respondent first provided Fields with this cellular telephone, which was associated with a phone number containing the digits 650 (hereinafter referred to at times as "the 650 phone"). The 650 phone was in Respondent's name and Respondent paid the monthly bill, but Fields was the phone's primary user when he had it in his possession, including for several months after Respondent first gave it to Fields in 2015.

15. Respondent also possessed and operated another cell phone with a phone number containing the digits 117 (referred to hereinafter as "the 117 phone"). Respondent used the 117 phone himself, including using it to communicate with Fields on the 650 phone.

16. Before he was incarcerated in 2015, Fields returned the 650 phone to Respondent, and it remained in Respondent's possession while Fields was incarcerated.

17. After Fields was released from custody in 2016, Respondent allowed Fields to regain possession of and use the 650 phone. Fields kept and used the phone for several weeks thereafter, including during the period when Fields lived in Respondent's home in November and December of 2016.

18. In or about mid-December 2016, Respondent retook possession of the 650 phone, which had previously been in Fields's possession.

19. At some later point, and prior to December 29, 2016, Fields contacted Respondent and requested that Respondent return the 650 phone to Fields again.

20. On the night of December 29, 2016, Respondent met Fields in a gas station parking lot in Belleville, Illinois. At that meeting, Respondent gave Fields a bag containing various personal effects belonging to Fields that had been stored at Respondent's home. Prior to or during this meeting, Respondent returned the 650 phone to Fields.

21. Respondent and Fields subsequently communicated during the night of December 29, 2016 through multiple text messages exchanged between the 117 phone, which was in Respondent's possession, and the 650 phone, which was in Fields's possession.

22. Early the next morning, at or about 5:00 a.m. on December 30, 2016, Carl Silas was murdered. The police investigating the murder identified Fields as a suspect soon thereafter.

23. Later that morning of December 30, 2016, Respondent received a call from a woman who was an acquaintance of Fields, and she informed Respondent that she had heard reports that Fields was involved in a murder.

24. Shortly after Respondent's call with Fields's acquaintance, Fields himself called Respondent from a phone belonging to a different female acquaintance of Fields. Respondent and Fields had a conversation lasting just over three minutes.

25. By no later than noon on December 30, 2016, Respondent was aware that Fields was a suspect in a murder.

### **III. Respondent's False and Misleading Statements to Police Officers**

26. At or about 1:15 p.m. on December 30, 2016, two police officers involved in the investigation of the Silas murder contacted Respondent and requested to speak with him. At approximately 3:45 p.m. that afternoon, the officers met Respondent at his home, where the officers conducted a video and audio recorded interview of Respondent in connection with the Silas murder investigation (the "Interview"). The Interview lasted approximately one hour.

27. During the Interview, the officers asked Respondent questions about the use and whereabouts of the 650 phone. During the line of questioning regarding the 650 phone, Respondent told the officers "The phone, I determined that it wasn't smart to let him [Fields] have that phone. So I took it back. Actually I didn't. My sister had it. So he doesn't have it right now." Respondent further told the officers that the 650 phone number "is not his [Fields's] phone number anymore."

28. One of the officers then asked Respondent: "Do you have that phone?" and Respondent answered: "I do." One of the officers asked Respondent: "How long ago did you have it back for? Roughly. I don't expect you to know the exact day." Respondent answered: "Early December, late November. I don't know. I said you gotta get your own phone here. And he said he would."

29. These statements were false and misleading, and Respondent knew them to be false and misleading at the time he made them. Respondent told investigators he had the 650 phone at the time of the Interview, and that he had gotten the phone back from Fields in early December or late November, suggesting Respondent had maintained continuous possession of

the 650 phone between late November or early December 2016 and the time of the Interview on December 30, 2016. But as Respondent knew, he had recently given the 650 phone back to Fields, and Fields had possession of the phone the night before the Interview. Fields had even used the 650 phone to communicate directly with Respondent mere hours before the murder the officers were investigating.

30. During the Interview, Respondent also made several statements regarding the status of his contact with Fields. Near the end of the Interview Respondent stated: “And if I think of anything else, if he contacts me, I’m going to one, tell him to turn himself in. Number two, I will let you know. But he hasn’t” – and, while pointing at his cell phone (the 117 phone) lying on the table in front of him – Respondent said “I mean, here it is. I’ll let you know everything.”

31. Later in the Interview, Respondent reiterated that he had not been contacted by Fields, stating the following: “And again, I haven’t. If I’m contacted, I will tell him exactly what I said, because I’m very worried.”

32. These statements were false and misleading, and Respondent knew them to be false and misleading at the time he made them. While Respondent told investigators Fields had not yet contacted him (so that Respondent could tell Fields “to turn himself in”), Fields had contacted Respondent earlier that very day. Respondent had a conversation with Fields – lasting roughly three minutes – that he did not reveal to the investigators.

33. In addition to these false and misleading statements, Respondent concealed multiple facts during his Interview that he knew were relevant to the investigation the officers were conducting.



34. In particular, at no point in the Interview did Respondent tell the police officers that Fields had regained possession of the 650 phone at or soon before Respondent's meeting with Fields on December 29, 2016 at the gas station.

35. At no point during the Interview did Respondent tell the police officers that Fields had repeatedly communicated with Respondent via text message from the 650 phone on the night of December 29, 2016.

36. At no point in the Interview did Respondent tell the police officers that he had spoken with Fields on the day of the Interview, December 30, 2016.

37. Respondent concealed this information from the officers despite searching and viewing the call log and text message history on the 117 phone in real time throughout the Interview, and despite identifying and informing the officers of other, less pertinent calls and communications that had occurred over the previous two days.

38. Respondent's misrepresentations, deceptions, and omissions related to facts that he knew were relevant to an active murder investigation.

39. Respondent knew that each of the statements and omissions noted above were untruthful and deceptive.

40. Respondent's conduct during his Interview was prejudicial to the administration of justice and brought his judicial office into disrepute.

#### **IV. Respondent's False and Misleading Testimony Before the Judicial Inquiry Board**

41. On May 12, 2017 Respondent appeared before the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board and testified under oath about the events at issue in the Board's investigation of his alleged misconduct. Respondent returned on June 9, 2017 and completed his sworn testimony before the Board about the same investigation.

42. Respondent testified before the Board that, at the time of the December 30, 2016 Interview, he believed the 650 phone was in Fields's possession, and that he told the officers during the Interview that the phone was in Fields's possession. This was false and misleading, and Respondent knew it was false and misleading at the time he made the statement. The 650 phone was in Respondent's possession at the time of the Interview, and that is what he told the police during the Interview.

43. Respondent further testified before the Board that soon after the Interview, he discovered the 650 phone was sitting in his garage, that he was "totally and utterly in shock and stunned" to find the phone, and that he thought "this is surreal. This is like a bad nightmare." When asked "[w]hy?", Respondent answered: "Because it couldn't be there because I had given him [Fields] the phone before." This was likewise false and misleading, and Respondent knew it was false and misleading when he made the statement. Respondent knew he had the 650 phone at the time of the Interview, which is what he told the police.

44. Respondent further testified before the Board that, during his December 30, 2016 Interview, he had informed the officers that he exchanged text messages with David Fields the night of December 29, 2016. This was false and misleading, and Respondent knew it was false and misleading at the time he made the statement. He told the police no such thing during the Interview.

45. Respondent further testified before the Board that Fields had contacted him on the morning of December 30, 2016, that Respondent had informed Fields on that call that he heard Fields was involved in a murder, and that Respondent advised Fields to turn himself in and get a lawyer. Respondent further testified that during his December 30, 2016 police Interview, he informed the officers that he had spoken with Fields earlier that morning and told Fields to turn

himself in. This latter statement (that he told the police of his recent conversation with Fields) was false and misleading, and Respondent knew it was false and misleading at the time he made the statement. He told the police no such thing during the Interview. In fact, Respondent told the police that he hoped to tell Fields to turn himself in if he heard from him, which he said he had not.

46. Respondent further testified before the Board that, during his December 30, 2016 Interview, he was truthful with the police and told them everything he knew that was relevant. Respondent further testified that he did not withhold any information he thought was relevant to Mr. Fields and the investigation that the police did not ask about. This testimony was false and misleading, and Respondent knew it was false and misleading at the time he made the statement. Respondent's statements to the police were not truthful, and he withheld significant relevant information during the Interview as described above.

47. Respondent's false and misleading testimony before the Board was prejudicial to the administration of justice and brought his judicial office into disrepute.

## **VIOLATIONS**

### **COUNT I**

#### **FALSE AND MISLEADING STATEMENTS TO POLICE**

48. The Board incorporates paragraphs 1-47 above.

49. During his video-recorded December 30, 2016 Interview with police, Respondent made what he knew were untruthful and deceptive statements regarding facts relevant to an active murder investigation, and omitted facts that he knew were relevant to that investigation.

50. In so doing, Respondent violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 61, which provides:

**A Judge Should Uphold the Integrity and Independence of the Judiciary**

An independent and honorable judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society. A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing, and should personally observe, high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved. The provisions of this Code should be construed and applied to further that objective.

51. Through this conduct, Respondent also violated the Code of Judicial Conduct,

Illinois Supreme Court Rule 62, Canon 2, which provides in pertinent part:

**A Judge Should Avoid Impropriety and the Appearance of Impropriety in All of the Judge's Activities**

(A) A judge should respect and comply with the law and should conduct himself or herself at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

(B) A judge should not allow the judge's family, social or other relationships to influence the judge's judicial conduct or judgment.

**COUNT II**

**FALSE AND MISLEADING TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD**

52. The Board incorporates paragraphs 1-47 above.

53. Respondent made what he knew were untruthful and deceptive statements, and omitted what he knew were facts relevant to the Board investigation, while testifying under oath before the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board On May 12, 2017 and June 9, 2017.

54. In so doing, Respondent violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 61, which provides:

**A Judge Should Uphold the Integrity and Independence of the Judiciary**

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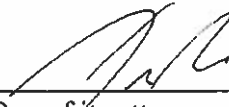
**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, the Judicial Inquiry Board, charging that the above-described conduct of Judge Ronald Duebbert constitutes conduct that was prejudicial to the administration of justice and that brought the judicial office into disrepute, prays that the Illinois Courts Commission, after notice of public hearing, make such order in accordance with Section 15 of Article VI of the Illinois Constitution as the Commission may deem appropriate.

Dated: April 18, 2018

Respectfully submitted,

JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD  
OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

By:   
One of its attorneys

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