

David P. Sterba
Chair
Honorable Paula A. Gomora
Vice Chair
William "Bill" Caisley
Frank B. Castiglione
Honorable Mary Ellen Coghlan
Elaine B. Johnson
Patrick O'Connor



Attorney Kathy D. Twine
*Executive Director &
General Counsel*
100 West Randolph Street
Suite 14-500
Chicago, IL 60601-3233
PHONE (312)814-5554
(800)227-9429
TDD (312)814-1881
FAX (312)814-5719

STATE OF ILLINOIS
JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 6, 2019

Contact: Attorney Kevin M. Fee
Sidley Austin LLP, 312 853-7919

**JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST MAURICIO ARAUJO,
JUDGE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, SIXTH JUDICIAL
SUBCIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS**

On June 6, 2019 the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board ("Board") filed a Complaint with the Illinois Courts Commission against Mauricio Araujo, Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Sixth Judicial Subcircuit, 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.

The Complaint alleges that Respondent engaged in a pattern of inappropriate and harassing behavior toward women with whom he has interacted in professional settings and in his official judicial capacity. It is alleged that in or around the Spring and Summer of 2012, on two separate occasions, Respondent made unwanted sexual advances toward a court reporter while alone with her in the confined space of an elevator at the Domestic Violence Courthouse in Chicago. It is also alleged that on August 15, 2016, Respondent made unwelcome sexual comments toward, and attempted unwanted physical contact with, a Chicago Police Officer while she was in his chambers at the George N. Leighton Criminal Court Building to obtain his signature on a search warrant. In addition, it is alleged that on September 11, 2018, Respondent made inappropriate and sexually suggestive comments about an Assistant State's Attorney after she appeared before him, and did so in the presence of another Assistant State's Attorney.

The Board's trial counsel, Attorneys Kevin M. Fee and Martha C. Clarke of Sidley Austin LLP, will prosecute the Complaint.

-ATTACHED IS A COPY OF THE COMPLAINT-

Visit our website at: www.illinois.gov/jib

COURTS COMMISSION OF THE
STATE OF ILLINOIS

In re MAURICIO ARAUJO,
Judge of the Circuit Court,
Circuit Court of Cook County
Sixth Judicial Subcircuit
State of Illinois

)
)
)
)
)
)

No. 19-CC-1

FILED

JUN 06 2019

[Signature]
Courts Commission Secretary

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 Mauricio Araujo, Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Sixth Judicial Subcircuit, 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. Respondent has engaged in a pattern of inappropriate and harassing behavior toward women with whom he has interacted in professional settings and in his official judicial capacity. In or around the Spring and Summer of 2012, on two separate occasions, Respondent made unwanted sexual advances toward a court reporter while alone with her in the confined space of an elevator at the Domestic Violence Courthouse in Chicago. On August 15, 2016, Respondent made unwelcome sexual comments toward, and attempted unwanted physical contact with, a Chicago Police Officer while she was in his chambers at the George N. Leighton Criminal Court Building to obtain his signature on a search warrant. On September 11, 2018, Respondent made inappropriate and sexually suggestive comments about an Assistant State's Attorney after she appeared before him, and did so in the presence of another Assistant State's Attorney.

2. Through this pattern of inappropriate behavior toward female professionals with whom he interacts, and through each individual incident, Respondent has engaged in conduct that was prejudicial to the administration of justice and brought the judicial office into disrepute.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

I. Background

3. In 2008, Respondent was elected Judge of the Cook County Circuit Court, Sixth Judicial Subcircuit. He was retained in November 2014, and continues to serve as a judge.

4. In September 2018 Respondent was placed on administrative leave in connection with the allegations discussed in paragraphs 25 - 30 below.

II. Respondent's Unwanted Sexual Advances Toward Court Reporter

5. In or around the Spring of 2012, Respondent presided over a courtroom in the Domestic Violence Courthouse at 555 West Harrison Street in Chicago, Illinois.

6. In or around the Spring of 2012, during regular courthouse hours, Respondent entered the elevator at the Domestic Violence Courthouse. Also in the elevator with Respondent was a court reporter who was in the courthouse for a professional assignment, and who regularly worked in the building (the "Court Reporter").

7. While the two were riding in the elevator together, Respondent made unwanted sexual advances toward the Court Reporter. Respondent moved within close proximity to the Court Reporter and, in a sexually suggestive manner, asked her "how much money" she wanted to have sex with him. The Court Reporter became uncomfortable, tried to move away from Respondent, and laughed in an unsuccessful attempt to defuse the situation. Respondent continued his advances anyway, assuring the Court Reporter that he was "not joking" with his

request and again asking her "how much" it would take. The Court Reporter refused to answer the offensive question and exited the elevator.

8. The Court Reporter was distressed and traumatized in the aftermath of the incident. However, she did not formally report the incident in part because she was concerned about negative ramifications on her career if she made accusations against a sitting judge.

9. A few weeks later, in or around the Summer of 2012, the Court Reporter again entered the courthouse elevator while she was on assignment at the Domestic Violence Courthouse. To her dismay, she again found herself alone with Respondent on the elevator. Like the last time the two had shared the elevator, Respondent moved within close proximity to the Court Reporter and repeated his sexual proposition from their last encounter, asking her "how much money" she wanted to have sex with him.

10. The Court Reporter was again extremely uncomfortable with the proposition. She moved away from Respondent and told him that she had a boyfriend. Respondent told her that did "not matter." The Court Reporter then admonished Respondent that she understood he was married. Respondent answered "it's OK." The Court Reporter again refused to respond directly to his request, leaving the elevator at her first opportunity.

11. The Court Reporter was again distressed and traumatized after this second sexual proposition from a sitting judge, but did not formally report the incident because of concerns about negative ramifications on her career.

12. The Court Reporter actively avoided the courthouse elevators after the second proposition from Respondent. She took the elevator by necessity when she was carrying her heavy court reporting equipment but otherwise tried to take the stairs whenever possible to avoid being alone with Respondent in the confined space of an elevator.

13. Later in the Summer of 2012, the Court Reporter sought to and obtained a transfer from the Domestic Violence Courthouse to the Daley Center. Her transfer was motivated in large part by Respondent's behavior toward her in the elevator, and her fear of further unwanted sexual advances from Respondent.

14. The Court Reporter elected to come forward with her allegations after she became aware of the media reports regarding Respondent's inappropriate behavior toward a female Assistant State's Attorney as alleged in paragraphs 25-30 below.

III. Respondent's Unwanted Sexual Advances, and Attempted Sexual Contact, With a Police Officer

15. In the Summer of 2016, Respondent presided over a criminal courtroom at the George N. Leighton Criminal Court Building at 2650 South California Avenue in Chicago, Illinois.

16. On August 15, 2016 a female officer of the Chicago Police Department (the "Officer") entered Respondent's chambers in order to obtain a search warrant.

17. At the time of the incident in August 2016, the Officer was a fifteen year veteran of the Chicago Police Department. The Officer had interacted with Respondent in connection with search warrants in the past, but the Officer had no personal relationship with Respondent whatsoever.

18. On August 15, 2016, the Officer approached the threshold of Respondent's chambers alone and knocked on Respondent's door. Respondent told the Officer to enter his chambers, which she did. At the time she entered Respondent's chambers, the Officer was in plain clothes but wearing her duty belt and protective vest.

19. As she entered Respondent's chambers with the unsigned warrant, Respondent approached the Officer quickly with his arms extended, then moved his face within close proximity with hers in an attempt to kiss the Officer on the mouth.

20. As Respondent moved his face toward hers, the Officer extended her arm to prevent him from coming any closer, loudly stating "back sir," a method she had learned during her police training for halting a potentially dangerous physical encounter. The Officer admonished Respondent, asking "aren't you married?" Respondent said that he was, but that it did not matter.

21. During this exchange the Officer became extremely uncomfortable and moved toward the window in Respondent's chambers, hoping that Respondent would not continue his advances in full view of the window overlooking the courthouse parking lot. The Officer then decided to leave chambers as soon as possible to avoid any further unwanted advances.

22. The Officer asked Respondent to accompany her out of his chambers so he could sign the warrant either in the courtroom or her squad car. Respondent agreed, leading the Officer up a small set of steps leading from his chambers to his courtroom. While Respondent was walking up the steps in front of the Officer, he attempted to grab her hand and told the Officer "just touch it." The Officer pulled her hand away and asked, "touch what?" Respondent then said "touch my butt." The Officer, who had become even more concerned by Respondent's escalating advances, placed her hand on Respondent's shoulder and gently shoved him into the courtroom so that she could move to a larger area that would allow her to move further away from Respondent.

23. Respondent finally signed the Officer's warrant in his courtroom and she left the building. The Officer was distressed and traumatized following the incident, and resolved to

avoid any situation that left her alone with Respondent in the future. She never sought a search warrant from Respondent by herself again, always arranging to have members of her team with her when she had occasion to encounter Respondent.

24. The Officer elected to come forward with her allegations after she became aware of the media reports surrounding Respondent's inappropriate behavior toward a female Assistant State's Attorney as alleged in paragraphs 25-30 below.

IV. Respondent's Offensive and Sexually Suggestive Comments About Assistant State's Attorney

25. On September 11, 2018, a female Assistant State's Attorney (the "ASA"), appeared before Respondent in a case that had been reassigned to Respondent.

26. The ASA and Respondent had been law school classmates from 1990-1993. Respondent and the ASA knew each other as classmates but were not close friends, though Respondent had made a sexual advance toward the ASA while in law school, which the ASA had rebuffed.

27. After the ASA's appearance before Respondent, she had a brief conversation with another Assistant State's Attorney in the hallway outside the courtroom.

28. While the ASA was outside the courtroom, Respondent complained in Spanish to his clerk that the ASA had not acknowledged him appropriately given that they were former classmates, stating that the ASA did not give him congratulations and acted like she did not know who he was.

29. Later that day, Respondent was in chambers with a male Assistant State's Attorney discussing a different matter. While Respondent was signing paperwork for this matter, he referenced the earlier encounter in his courtroom and said words to the effect of "You would think if you went to fucking law school with someone, they would say hi to you."

Respondent then referred to the ASA as a "bitch." The male Assistant State's Attorney suggested to Respondent that it was possible the female ASA did not recognize Respondent in his judicial robe. Respondent responded, saying words to the effect of "Maybe it's because I didn't have sex with her... or maybe it's because I did have sex with her." The male Assistant State's Attorney exited chambers, shortly thereafter learning from his colleagues that Respondent had been talking about the female ASA (his colleague in the State's Attorney's Office), about whom Respondent had similarly complained following her appearance before him.

30. As word of the inappropriate sexual comments spread through the courthouse, the Cook County States' Attorney's Office sent a memorandum to Respondent's presiding judge on September 18, 2018 describing and expressing concern about the incident. The incident also received local press coverage. Respondent was subsequently assigned to administrative duties as a result of this alleged conduct.

VIOLATIONS

COUNT I

INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL ADVANCES TOWARD COURT REPORTER

31. The Board incorporates paragraphs 1-30 above.
32. In or around spring of 2012, and as described above, Respondent made unwanted sexual advances toward a female Court Reporter on a courthouse elevator on two separate occasions.
33. These inappropriate and harassing advances caused the Court Reporter distress and trauma, and ultimately led her to seek a transfer to a different location to avoid further contact with Respondent.

COUNT II

INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL ADVANCES TOWARD POLICE OFFICER

34. The Board incorporates paragraphs 1-33 above.
35. On August 15, 2016, Respondent attempted to make unwanted sexual contact with a female Police Officer in his chambers. He did this first by attempting to kiss her on the mouth, then by physically moving her hand toward his backside, telling her to "touch his butt."
36. These inappropriate and harassing advances and physical contact caused the Officer distress and trauma, and ultimately led her to change her professional habits in order to avoid being alone with Respondent again.

COUNT III

INAPPROPRIATE AND SEXUAL COMMENTS REGARDING ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY

37. The Board incorporates paragraphs 1-36 above.
38. On September 11, 2018, Respondent made inappropriate and sexually suggestive comments in his chambers about a female Assistant State's Attorney, and did so in the presence of another Assistant State's Attorney who was the ASA's colleague.

39. Through the above-described pattern of inappropriate conduct toward women he encountered in a professional setting, and through each such incident described in this Complaint, 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.

40. Through the above-described pattern of inappropriate conduct toward women he encountered in a professional setting, and through each such incident described in this Complaint, Respondent also violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 62, Canon 2(A), 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.

41. Through the above-described pattern of inappropriate conduct toward women he encountered in a professional setting, and through each such incident described in this Complaint, Respondent also violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63, Canon 3(A)(3), which provides in pertinent part:

A Judge Should Perform the Duties of Judicial Office Impartially and Diligently

(3) A judge should be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity, and should require similar conduct of lawyers, and of staff, court officials, and others subject to the judge's direction and control.

42. Through the above-described pattern of inappropriate conduct toward women he encountered in a professional setting, and through each such incident described in this Complaint, Respondent also violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 63, Canon 3(A)(9), which provides in pertinent part:

A Judge Should Perform the Duties of Judicial Office Impartially and Diligently

(9) A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, and shall not permit staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control to do so.


PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the Judicial Inquiry Board charges that the above-described conduct of Judge Mauricio Araujo was prejudicial to the administration of justice and 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. Respondent has the right to file responsive pleadings to the charges within twenty-one (21) days after service of notice of this complaint.

Dated: June 5, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD
OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

By: 
One of its attorneys

Kevin M. Fee
Martha C. Clarke
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
One South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60603
(312) 853-7000 (phone)
(312) 853-7160 (fax)