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STATE OF ILLINOIS
JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 2, 2016

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**JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST VALARIE
E. TURNER, CIRCUIT JUDGE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY**

On December 2, 2016, the Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board filed a Complaint with the Illinois Courts Commission against Valarie E. Turner, Circuit Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, charging that Respondent is mentally unable to perform her duties.

The Complaint alleges that in August 2016, Respondent allowed Rhonda Crawford, a former law clerk/staff attorney for the Office of the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County to wear Respondent's robe, sit on the bench, and adjudicate traffic ticket cases assigned to Respondent at the Markham Courthouse. The Complaint further alleges that at the time of the August 2016 incident, Respondent then suffered and continues to suffer from memory loss, and is mentally unable to perform her duties.

The Board's trial counsel, Attorney John N. Gallo and Attorney Abigail B. Molitor, of Sidley Austin LLP, will prosecute the Complaint.

-ATTACHED IS A COPY OF THE COMPLAINT-

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4. On August 11, 2016, Respondent was assigned to Courtroom 098 at the Markham Courthouse for the traffic court calls beginning at 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 1:00 p.m.

Respondent presided over both the 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. court calls.

5. Crawford observed both the 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. court calls on August 11, 2016, while seated in the witness box in Courtroom 098.

6. When the court recessed for lunch after the 10:30 a.m. court call, Respondent introduced Crawford to prosecutor Luciano Panici Jr. and asked him if he had met "Judge Crawford." Crawford shook Panici Jr.'s hand and did not correct Respondent's erroneous characterization of Crawford as a judge. At that time, Panici Jr. believed that Crawford was a judge.

7. Later that afternoon, Respondent presided over the 1:00 p.m. court call in Courtroom 098. Again, Crawford sat in the witness box. At some point during the court call, Respondent said, "We're going to switch judges." Respondent stood up and gave her judicial robe to Crawford. Crawford put on the robe and sat in the judge's chair behind the bench while Respondent stood behind Crawford. Crawford then purported to preside over multiple traffic violations.

8. The clerk first called the case of defendant Maliq Giles, ticket YE-334-458. Crawford asked Giles if he had his insurance card, and Giles indicated that he did not. On the motion of Giles, Crawford purported to continue the matter to October 26, 2016, and wrote her disposition on the back of ticket YE-334-458.

9. The clerk then called the case of defendant Angel LaSalle, ticket YB-701-075. The police officer for the case was not in court. Panici Jr. moved to continue the matter. Crawford asked Respondent, "Can I deny his motion?" Respondent replied, "Yes, you can deny

the motion.” Crawford then purported to deny the motion to continue. Panici Jr. next made a motion to non-suit the matter, which Crawford purported to grant. Crawford then wrote her disposition on the back of ticket YB-701-075.

10. At some point during the 1:00 p.m. court call, the clerk called the case of defendant Kendrah Blackshear, ticket YE-250-620. The Village of Dolton had issued a ticket to Blackshear for failure to have a valid driver’s license. Blackshear presented a valid driver’s license to Panici Jr., who moved to non-suit the matter. Crawford purported to grant the motion.

11. Shortly after the conclusion of the 1:00 p.m. court call, Panici Jr. learned that Crawford was not a judge. Panici Jr. then informed Judge Marjorie Laws, the presiding judge in Markham, of the events that had taken place that afternoon in Courtroom 098.

12. Judge Laws left her office and found Respondent in Judge Camille Willis’s chambers in the Markham Courthouse. Judge Laws asked Respondent, “Val, is it true you gave Rhonda your robe and let her preside over tickets?” Respondent replied, “I thought she was a judge.” Judge Laws informed Respondent that Crawford was not a judge and instructed Respondent to stay in Judge Willis’s chambers until Judge Laws returned.

13. Judge Laws next found Crawford coming out of Courtroom 098 and confirmed that Crawford had presided over at least two traffic tickets. Judge Laws then returned to Judge Willis’s chambers and told Respondent that the matter would be reported to the Judicial Inquiry Board.

14. On August 17, 2016, the Executive Committee of the Circuit Court of Cook County met to discuss the allegations of improper conduct by Respondent. The Executive Committee concluded that the allegations posed a threat of injury to the public’s confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary and to the orderly administration of justice. As a

result, the Executive Committee issued Special Order No. 2016-42, removing Respondent from her judicial assignment and assigning her to restricted duties or duties other than judicial duties.

15. On September 1, 2016, Judge Laws reheard the three traffic tickets that Crawford presided over and dismissed each one *nunc pro tunc* to August 11, 2016. The Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County also sent letters to Giles, LaSalle, and Blackshear, notifying them that their tickets had been dismissed.

16. Respondent recently was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

17. Respondent has suffered and continues to suffer from memory loss, and is mentally unable to perform her duties.

Prayer for Relief

WHEREFORE, the Judicial Inquiry Board, charging that the Respondent is mentally unable to perform her duties, 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: December 1, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

JUDICIAL INQUIRY BOARD
OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

By: 

of its attorney

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