



Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission Indiana Commission on Judicial Qualifications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JUDICIAL COMMISSION FILES CHARGES AGAINST SENIOR JUDGE, FORMER LAPORTE SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

The Indiana Commission on Judicial Qualifications filed formal charges of judicial misconduct against the Honorable Walter P. Chapala, a Senior Judge and former Judge of the LaPorte Superior Court #1, the Commission announced today.

The Commission filed a "Notice of the Institution of Formal Proceedings and Statement of Charges" with the Clerk of the Indiana Supreme Court accusing Senior Judge Chapala of violating ethical rules for judges. The charges stem from the judge's conduct in two separate cases. In the first allegation, the Commission charges that Senior Judge Chapala, when he was the elected judge, suspended a significant portion of a man's prison term in the Department of Corrections in exchange for the man's father's \$100,000.00 contribution to two court programs. In the second allegation, the Commission charges that Senior Judge Chapala, also while an elected judge, instituted contempt proceedings against the Sheriff of LaPorte County for having lawfully returned Chapala's daughter-in-law's nephew over to Michigan authorities, then continued to preside over the nephew's Indiana case.

[The Clerk's Online Appellate Docket](#) lists the matter as public record under cause number 46S00-0810-JD-580. The filing includes a background detailing the events in which led to the charges.

Senior Judge Chapala is entitled to file an answer to the charges within 20 days, after which the Supreme Court will appoint a panel of three judges to preside over an evidentiary hearing and report its findings to the Indiana Supreme Court. If the Court finds the Commission proved its charges, it will determine the appropriate sanction, which could involve discipline against Senior Judge Chapala both as a senior judge and as an attorney.

The Commission on Judicial Qualifications is a seven member board that screens and investigates allegations of judicial misconduct. According to Commission attorney, Meg Babcock, "The Commission receives 300 to 400 complaints each year. Many are dismissed because they do not raise issues of ethical misconduct. However, when the Commission believes a judge has violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, it either cautions the judge or, as in this case, files public charges of misconduct. According to Supreme Court rules, the fact that a judge has retired does not strip the Commission of its ability to file charges for alleged misconduct during his or her elected term."

Senior Judge Chapala is represented by Kevin P. McGoff, (317) 635-8900.

The Charges against Senior Judge Chapala can be found at <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/jud-qual/docs/charges/chapala-102908.pdf>

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Indiana Courts www.IN.gov/judiciary