

Name: Judge Ronald Lowe

Date: 10/24/2024

ADM File Number: 2023-26

Comment:

Allow me to begin by acknowledging your need to address public concerns. My need is for you to consider options that do not result in private information being distributed to whomever wants to look at it and the potential for misuse of that information as well as the effect such reporting will have in discouraging qualified candidates from seeking to serve on the bench.

I will be retiring at the end of December after 30 years on the bench. I have planned to be available to serve as a visiting judge for those courts who needed someone to do so. If I have to disclose the information you are requesting judges to disclose in the proposed amendment I will chose to not serve as a visiting judge.

Not as an act of "taking my ball and going home" but as an act of protecting my family and myself from the abuse this information disclosure can result in.

I have had liens filed on my property by sovereign citizens. I have had threats made to my safety. We have had photos of specific citizens who have threatened the court and/or its judges posted behind the clerks and court officer desks. I have had to take those photos home and acquaint my wife with the images in order for her to protect herself and our children.

I took peace in the knowledge that where I lived, where my wife worked or where my children went to school was not easily discovered to those who threatened me.

The local public schools appear to have a better understanding of this then those who proposed this amendment. The school had, it may still have as my children graduated years ago, a policy that parents could opt to not have there children identified by name if they happened to be in a photo of some school activity. I chose to opt out for the safety of my children.

I am not so naïve to believe that if someone wants to find where i live, where my wife works or where my kids go to school that they cannot do so by spending time with the internet. But there was comfort in knowing they had to work to discover the private information rather than just look it up on a site maintained by the SCAO to simplify their mischief.

I also have recently been enlightened as to how little the state does for a judge being attacked financially with the filing of liens. When i contacted the SCAO about a sovereign citizen filing such liens (a person who had done so against the judges, prosecutors and staff of another district court who was assigned to me due to recusals and who never appeared in my court before she filed the liens on my court administrator and myself) they said I had to make use of my local insurance policies and attorneys before the Attorney General could get involved. So my local funding unit has spent thousands of dollars clearing wrongfully placed liens. If you are going to simplify parties like sovereign citizens access to information that they can abuse perhaps you could also adopt some law that compensates judges for out of pocket expenses to protect themselves, compensate funding units for such expenses or mandate that the Attorney General act on the judges and courts behalf n such situations.

And perhaps those laws could expedite relief from wrongfully filed liens. Because in Michigan you need to file an action to quiet title. If you are looking to buy a house or do anything that would require disclosure to a bank of your financial status and they run a check they are not excited about lending you money when all you can say is "its wrongfully encumbering my property, we have filed the lawsuit, in months or years it will be cleared."

Those financial attacks that the State does nothing to protect its judges from, or even cure, will be even more likely if the the proposed amendment is adopted and the State requires judges to disclose the targets for these financial attacks.

As an alternative perhaps this information could be disclosed to the SCAO and maintained by them as confidential. If a question arose regarding the judge having a financial interest the disclosed financial records could be reviewed in private by the SCAO and only a conflict would then be publicly disclosed.