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November 12, 2009

Mark Thompson, Judicial District Administrator
C-1251 Courts Tower
300 South Sixth Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55487

Dear Mark:

I am writing to you on behalf of WATCH, the Domestic Abuse Project and the Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project. Each of these organizations is committed to ending violence against women and helping to create a justice system that deals effectively with incidents of domestic violence. I am following up with you regarding the following comment made by Judge Stephen Aldrich on October 21, 2009, in an order for protection hearing: "I've been married forty-five years. We've never considered divorce, a few times murder maybe."

This comment is especially disturbing in light of the number of women who are victims of domestic homicide each year in Minnesota. It takes a great deal of courage for domestic violence victims to seek legal protection. Often, their first encounter with the justice system in relation to their abuse is when seeking an order for protection. Many women seek an order because they are fearful of being seriously injured or murdered by the respondent. The last thing a petitioner needs to hear in this situation is a joke about domestic homicide. Moreover, intended or not, this comment expresses empathy for and alignment with the respondent abuser. It is completely inappropriate and takes away from the seriousness of the proceedings and the incident that brought the petitioner to seek protection.

The residents of Hennepin County deserve judicial officers who uphold the Judicial Code of Conduct and exemplify fairness and respect. Judge Aldrich's extensive history of poor demeanor undermines the integrity of the court. As you are aware, WATCH has made complaints to District Court leadership and the Board on Judicial Standards previously. I am aware that you met with Judge Aldrich regarding this comment, but previous managerial attempts to alter Judge Aldrich's behavior have not proven successful and I am doubtful that your recent intervention will result in the necessary changes. Therefore, I am writing to request that you encourage Judge Aldrich to step down from his judicial seat. If District Court does not succeed in its efforts to have Judge Aldrich step down, we ask that he be removed from presiding in any court proceeding in family court as well as cases involving crimes of a personal nature.

We feel we have no choice but to make this information public, since we believe the public has a right to know about the inappropriate conduct of this elected judge, and

official channels for resolving these concerns have been unsuccessful. In addition, we have written a letter to the Board on Judicial Standards making the same request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marna Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marna Anderson
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable James Swenson, Chief Judge, Fourth Judicial District
 The Honorable Tanya Manrique, Family Justice Center, Fourth Judicial District
 David Paull, Executive Secretary, Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards
 Lolita Ulloa, Managing Attorney, Victim Services, Hennepin County Attorney's
 Office
 The Honorable Stephen Aldrich, Fourth Judicial District
 Carol Arthur, Domestic Abuse Project
 Rana Fuller, Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project