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January 15, 2008

David Paull, Executive Director
Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards
2025 Center Pointe Blvd., #180
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

Dear Mr. Paull,

I am writing to you with concerns regarding Judge Stephen Aldrich serving the Fourth Judicial District. As you know, WATCH is a volunteer organization that sends monitors to observe hearings focused on cases of violence, particularly against women and children. In that capacity, we had a monitor observe Judge Aldrich in felony arraignment court on Monday and Tuesday, January 7 and 8, 2008.

Both days, our monitors returned with general comments regarding an overly casual atmosphere in the courtroom and specific comments regarding statements made in the courtroom by Judge Aldrich that were inappropriate and insensitive. I have listed them below:

- “Maybe you should do the bar-b-queing from now on” – said to a man who was allegedly stabbed by his wife
- “I don’t know if you’re stupid or evil” – comment made to a defendant
- “Maybe we can convert Guantanamo into a civilized place where we could send people when they can’t go back to Mogadishu” – statement made to a defendant from Somalia who was placed on an INS hold
- “With all the women running for president, there’s no one left to make things right” – comment made in response to a clerical error in file
- “You’re going to be in custody for another week at least. You might as well renew your jail library card” – comment made to a defendant

I sent an email to Judge Aldrich regarding his behavior and I also notified Judge Margaret Daly, presiding judge for the Felony Block, and Mark Thompson, Director of Court Administration. They are limited in what action they can take.

It is my hope that the Board on Judicial Standards will investigate Judge Aldrich and find a way to hold him accountable for violating Canon 3 of the Minnesota code of Judicial Conduct. He was undignified, discourteous, and made biased comments in the courtroom.

Please contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Marna Anderson
Executive Director