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Roth Judd
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PRESS ADVISORY
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Judge Ziegler acknowledges ethics violation

Pays \$5,000 penalty and Ethics Board's costs

In a statement provided to the Wisconsin Ethics Board, Judge Annette Ziegler has acknowledged that she violated the Wisconsin Ethics Code's standards of conduct by taking official action in lawsuits affecting West Bend Savings Bank, a bank of which her husband is a director.

Wisconsin law forbids officials of Wisconsin's government to act in matters affecting the financial interests of businesses with which they are associated.

Accompanying the judge's acknowledgment was the judge's personal check in the amount of \$5,000. The Ethics Board will deposit the \$5,000 penalty to the state school fund.

Judge Ziegler also agreed to pay the Ethics Board's costs of prosecuting the Ethics Board's complaint against her. The Board estimates those costs to be approximately \$12,000.

The Ethics Board's director, Roth Judd, said that the Ethics Board had determined to ask the reserve judge scheduled to hear the case to:

- Adopt the substance of the Ethics Board's investigators' report
- enter a declaration of the judge's violation of the statute
- impose a \$5,000 penalty, and
- assess Judge Ziegler the costs of prosecution.

Judd said, "Judge Ziegler's admission, decision not to contest the investigators' report, and payment of penalty and costs achieved every result the Ethics Board

sought. Consequently, the hearing that had been scheduled for tomorrow is not needed and has been canceled.”

Judd added, “Citizens confidence in our state’s officials is keenly important. To demonstrate that they are fair and neutral, judges should not participate in or adjudicate cases involving parties with which they or members of their immediate families are associated; Judge Ziegler did. Even so, the Ethics Board found no evidence that Judge Ziegler used her position to obtain any financial gain or advantage for herself or for her family.”

State law limited the Ethics Board’s review to 26 cases involving West Bend Savings Bank that were assigned to Judge Ziegler during the last three years. The Ethics Board has asked the Judicial Commission to conduct its own review of Judge Ziegler’s actions in these and additional cases affecting the bank and business in which her family held an investment.

The Ethics Board began its investigation of Judge Ziegler in March 2007 and filed its complaint against the judge on April 18.

END

Copies of these documents, all released April 18, 2007, are available under the “News & Notices” section of the Ethics Board’s website, <http://ethics.state.wi.us>:

- Preliminary Findings of Fact and Report of Investigation
- Complaint
- Order setting hearing
- Letter to Judicial Commission

PERTINENT PROVISIONS OF *WISCONSIN STATUTES*:

<p>19.46 Conflict of interest prohibited (1) . . . no state public official may:</p> <p>(a) Take any official action substantially affecting a matter in which . . . an organization with which the official is associated has a substantial financial interest.</p> <p>19.42 Definitions. In this subchapter:</p> <p>(1) “Anything of value” means any money or property, favor, service, payment, advance, forbearance, loan, or promise of future employment</p> <p>(2) “Associated”, when used with reference to an organization, includes any organization in which an individual or a member of his or her immediate family is a director</p> <p>(11) “Organization” means any corporation, partnership, proprietorship, firm, enterprise, franchise, association, trust or other legal entity other than an individual or body politic.</p>
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