

August 12, 2020

Honorable Judge Grace Dickler  
Via Electronic Email Only  
Richard J. Daley Center  
50 W. Washington  
Courtroom 1905  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Honorable Judge Dickler (and open letter to our community),

We wanted to take the time and thank you for sharing the information about the horrendous allegations and Four-Count Complaint against one of our colleagues David Pasulka, with the GAL/CR community. Many of us who have joined in this letter have been on the list for many years. We are deeply saddened by the allegations made by the "Jane Does" (victims), however, we are more disgusted by Mr. Pasulka's response, his "victim-blaming," and endless excuses. Rather than dwelling on this disgust, however, we are more interested in taking action so this does not happen any longer in our domestic relations community.

As I am sure you know, Erin Wilson and Rebecca Berlin Melzer had the vision to unite young female practitioners (all owners or partners in small firms) this past fall in a "Lady Lawyers who Lunch" group. The group began by meeting for lunch and networking together, as those in the group typically did not have firm colleagues to run ideas off of each other. This small lunch group has now expanded, and we are now 60+ women strong and counting. In fact, during the COVID pandemic, we have further bonded and now meet weekly. Each week we gather via Zoom and discuss many issues, such as court procedures, case issues, host guest lecturers (malpractice carriers, FLS, CPAs, etc.) and most recently, former Judge Berger (retired).

Our recent "webinar" with Judge Berger was inspired by a "call for action" to end this longstanding power imbalance and blasé attitude in our domestic relations division where men believe they can disrespect, dominate, and assault/rape the women in our legal community. That sounds harsh but the reality of the situation is that of the 60+ women in this email, many of us have been victims of this type of behavior. I have seen many comments lately of people who say: "how could one allow this to happen in this day and age of Weinstein and Epstein?" "Why didn't they just leave?" "Oh they are just kidding, toughen up." The sad part is that this is the type of attitude and comments that need to be changed--and these comments were (I cringe) from women in our community. Similar comments have been made by many male attorneys in our division as well.

We ask you to stand with us and let our community know that the women in our division will no longer endure this type of behavior ANY MORE even though some consider it innocent:

- Calling a woman "honey" "baby" "sweetheart" (in the hallways and at the bench)
- Rubbing a woman's back while before the bench
- Untying a woman's wrap dress outside the court's door
- Staring at a woman's chest at the bench, in the court, and in the office
- Commenting on a woman's behind as she walks away from the bench, in the court, and in the office
- Putting an arm around a woman's waist
- Putting a hand on a woman's thigh
- Standing over a woman while sitting in a chair or at a computer
- Requiring women's attendance at events outside of work hours to be "arm candy"
- Requiring attendance in the court and in the office to be "arm candy" for client consultations, client meetings, depositions, and at the office
- Requiring to "show clients a good time" outside of office hours
- Requiring women to drink alcohol at firm events
- Pressuring women to wear certain clothing and low cut tops
- Required to accept such inappropriate comments (and acts) as being "part of how the world exists" and to "suck it up and deal with it"
- Financial intimidation and emotional abuse if threatening to leave their employment or if they tell someone of their abuse
- Closing doors and refusing to allow a woman to leave
- Dismissing women's ideas and input and assigning substantive work to the males or assuming that the males should be the leaders on the cases and the women assigned secretarial and paralegal work
- Harassing women with excessive contact via email, text, and telephone

- Public shaming/blackballing women who have the courage to speak up
- Tragically, requiring women to perform sexual acts against their will

Our group's goal is rather simple, and we need your help: **BUILDING A RESOURCE COMMUNITY TO PROTECT ATTORNEYS FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND OTHER ISSUES** and it has to start from the top.

### **What can you do?**

We need the judges and firms across our division to:

- STAND UP and denounce the bad behaviors exemplified above and implement a ZERO TOLERANCE policy and let everyone know NO MORE!
- Take a stance and end the power dynamic and blackballing.
- Disband the “old boys club”.
- End the inappropriate comments directed at women about their appearance and/or life choices.
- Provide and promote a safe and advertised supportive forum for women to report instances of bad behavior exemplified above.
- Advocate for an overall systemic change in the profession.

We would love to see you organize division-wide seminars with sexual harassment experts to teach the community how to identify and end this atrocious behavior and show that, from the top down, it will no longer be tolerated.

WE hope you are with us.

WE want change.

WE are here with you, standing with you, to help this get accomplished.

As to our part, we are starting a group for associate attorneys to give them a safe place to discuss not only the inappropriate behavior we hope they are not experiencing, but also a group to network and build relationships such as the ones we now have.

The interesting part of this all is that there is already a national campaign that exists, and we are not reinventing the wheel! More information about this campaign can be found at <https://nomore.org/about/>. Interestingly enough, the mission of the No More organization, explained in brief below, aligns with what we want to accomplish:

- *The NO MORE Foundation is dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual assault by increasing awareness, inspiring action, and fueling culture change.*

- *NO MORE is a groundbreaking, global initiative comprised of the largest coalition of nonprofits, corporations, government agencies, media, schools, and individuals addressing domestic violence and sexual assault. We are committed to engaging, reaching, and working with people from diverse communities.*
- *We work to amplify and grow the movement to stop and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault, in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities around the world by creating and supporting innovative campaigns, partnerships, and tools that leverage the power of the media, entertainment, sports, technology, and collective action.*
- *With more than 1,400 allied organizations and over 40 state, local, and international chapters, NO MORE sparks grassroots activism, encouraging everyone—women and men, youth, and adults, from all walks of life—to be part of the solution.*

To end domestic violence and sexual assault, both within and outside of our division, we all need to be part of the solution. Educating yourself and others, helping a friend who is being abused, speaking up, and being an engaged bystander and advocate are all examples of things you can do to help.

We sincerely hope you join us!

Sincerely,

Tania K. Harvey	Jennifer L. Lavin	Lindsay B. Coleman
Erin Wilson	Rebecca Berlin Melzer	Mervate M. Mohammad
Michelle Sinkovits Ferguson	Jennifer R. Friedman	Jennifer Guimond-Quigley
Stephanie M. Charles	Angela Larimer	Kelly T. Bennett
Jenny J. Jeltres	Dayna L. Perlut	Stephanie E. Greenberg
Rachel Moore	Tanya Fajardo	Anne Schmidt
Masah S. SamForay	Diana Lopez	Rachel Boehm
Catherine Ryan	Jennifer Fletchall	Katherine Gipe Holmes
Allison G. Turoff	Megan Lopp Mathias	Eva Matela Kogut
Kellie Rose Bylica		