

Hot Topics Newsletter

GENERAL NOTICES

- For State Retirement updates, visit:
<https://sra.maryland.gov/members>
and for the newsletter:
https://sra.maryland.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/retireenews_feb2023_-_final_for_web.pdf?1677782761.
- All overnight lodging requests should be arranged through the AOC Travel Coordinator, Allison Leebrick, at allison.leebrick@mdcourts.gov, unless otherwise approved by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland, the State Court Administrator (SCA), or their designee.
- For the latest news, updates, payroll info, Hot Topics newsletters and more, check out the Senior Judge webpage, <https://mdcourts.gov/hr/seniorjudges>. Don't forget to save the link so you can refer to it at any time.



JUDGE JOHN FREDERICK FADER, III PASSES

Judge John Fader, father of Chief Justice Matthew Fader of the Supreme Court of Maryland, passed away on January 30, 2026. Judge Fader was Baltimore County through and through. He attended Towson Catholic High School, and served as a judge on the District Court of Maryland, sitting in Baltimore County from 1977 to 1982, at which point he was appointed to the Circuit Court for Baltimore County by Governor Harry Hughes. John sat on the Circuit Court as an incumbent judge until 2003 and as a Senior Judge from then until 2025.

The first in his family to attend college, he graduated from the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (where he met the woman he would marry in 1970) before entering the Evening Division of the University's law school, from which he graduated in 1968. Before his appointment to the District Court bench, John was a solo practitioner in Baltimore County, where he developed a strong practice in family law matters.

In addition to serving on the bench, John was very active in the broader legal community. He was active in the Baltimore County Bar Association and the Maryland State Bar Association. He spearheaded and guided the Senior Judge's Committee's efforts in regard to the prescription drug issue. He taught law school courses for more than two decades, most notably Family Law, as a beloved adjunct faculty member at both the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and the University of Baltimore School of Law. He was an original co-author of the first edition of the legal treatise Maryland Family Law and primary author of the second and third editions. Later editions were named Fader's Maryland Family Law in his honor. He is remembered for his tireless

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work ethic, his mentorship to young lawyers and judges, his kindness and thoughtfulness, his sense of humor, and his fairness. John was a devoted father and grandfather, an avid reader, a collector of Lionel trains, a fan of Baltimore sports teams, and devotee of Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, John Wayne, H.L. Mencken, and Patsy Cline. He is remembered for his devotion, his example, and his carpooling skills.

Those wishing to honor John's memory may make contributions to the University of Maryland at Baltimore, John F. Fader II Scholarship Fund, 220 North Arch Street, 13th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21201; Attn: Sally Bell, Account # 40616) or to the Little Sisters of the Poor.

JUDICIAL ETHICS AND DISCIPLINE

BY: TANYA BERNSTEIN, DIRECTOR AND
INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES

Last October I had the pleasure of presenting at Senior Judge Technology Day along with Derek Bayne, Esq., Deputy Assistant Investigative Counsel for the Commission on Judicial Disabilities. The focus of our presentation was judicial ethics and discipline and the process by which the Commission investigates complaints and determines the appropriate disposition. While these topics can be heavy and rather detailed, here are the top five questions that we are routinely asked and responses to the same.

1. *Does the Code of Judicial Conduct apply to senior judges?* Yes. The Code of Judicial Conduct applies to all judges, including retired judges sitting in senior status. Even more importantly, the Code applies at all times – it does not cease to exist once you take off your robe and go about your daily life. In other words, everything you do both inside and outside the courtroom must conform to the ethical obligations in the Code. While this might seem obvious, it is not uncommon for the Commission to receive complaints about a judge's behavior in circumstances wholly unrelated to their professional duties, such as at restaurants or other business

establishments, at sporting events, or at neighborhood gatherings. Whether you are in public or at a private function, everyone around you will have a cell phone with picture, video, and voice recording capabilities – ask yourself if you would want to see a picture or recording of you to make its way to the evening news or to the Commission.

An excellent resource for staying current on changes in the Code and ethical conduct generally is the website of the Judicial Ethics Committee (www.mdcourts.gov/ethics) and their published opinions in particular which cover many frequently seen but difficult issues.

2. *What are the most frequent allegations made against judges?* The most frequent allegations relate to demeanor – tone and volume of voice, jokes, comments, and facial expressions and body language to name a few. Be mindful that everything that you say and do is open to interpretation and can be seen and heard in different ways. The Commission recognizes and appreciates that judges – like anyone else – can have bad days, lapses in judgment, and momentary outbursts. Oftentimes, identifying stressors or triggers and developing coping mechanisms or more positive reactions can be the difference between an ill-timed joke and an appropriate response.

3. *When will judges be notified of complaints filed against them?* Unless a judge elects to receive notice of every complaint filed against them, judges will only receive notice of complaints if, during the course of an investigation, a subpoena seeking information or testimony is served by Investigative



Counsel or Investigative Counsel has determined that the judge's response is necessary to determine an appropriate disposition. Notifications from Investigative Counsel will arrive by regular and certified mail. Please make sure you accept the package and read it carefully before responding, and please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you need additional time to respond or to obtain counsel.

One important piece to the notification process is that the Commission and Investigative Counsel are required by Maryland Rule 18-402 to communicate with judges using their "address of record", which is defined as the contact information contained in the Attorney Information System (AIS). All judges are required to maintain current and preferred contact information in AIS pursuant to Maryland Rule 19-802. Many judges are surprised by this fact and often are unaware that they have AIS accounts – understandably assuming that the system only applies to practicing attorneys. As we cautioned the attendees at our presentation last October, I will caution you now: think long and hard about the mailing address that you use in AIS. Your first instinct may be to use a courthouse or judicial facility; however, you should consider how mail is handled at that location and whether you want anyone other than yourself opening correspondence from the Commission on your behalf. In our experience, most judges prefer using their home address in AIS for this reason. To alleviate safety and other concerns, it is important to note that judicial AIS accounts are not publicly available; rather, access to judicial accounts is restricted to only those Judiciary units and/or employees approved by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

4. *Is the judicial discipline process confidential?* Yes and no. All complaints, investigations, proceedings before the Commission and Judicial Inquiry Board, and dispositions are confidential except hearings on charges of sanctionable conduct or contested reprimands and the dispositions that result from those hearings. That being said, there are a number of discretionary and required disclosures that the Commission is permitted to make including disclosures to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland, the

Governor and President of the United States, Judicial Nominating Commissions, Bar Counsel, and law enforcement and/or prosecuting officials. For a full breakdown of the confidentiality provisions governing judicial discipline, please refer to Maryland Rule 18-407.

A note on security – in the event that the Commission receives any information that contains a direct or implied threat against a judge, their family or friends, their staff or courthouse at large, the rules permit the Commission to direct Investigative Counsel to immediately notify the judge, the Administrative Judge for that jurisdiction, and the Judicial Threat Management Center.

5. *Are judges permitted to use social media?* Yes. Use of social media by judges is permitted in Maryland but subject to the provisions of the Code and the Judiciary's internal guidelines (the latter of which are in the process of being revised by an appointed taskforce). Judges should be mindful of any information contained on their social media accounts as well as the accounts of friends, family, and even professional acquaintances. A good rule of thumb is if you are not permitted to say or do something in person, you are also not permitted to say or do it online. Regularly review your online footprint, including posts by others that you have been tagged in or identified, to make sure that you have not run afoul of your obligations under the Code. A very hard lesson often learned by today's youth can be equally applied here – even if your account is private, anyone can take a screenshot and disseminate it beyond your intended audience.

Another note on security – some information on social media can easily identify your location and other personal data that you may not have intended to share. Think about it – if you post in front of your home or your car, you may have unwittingly provided your home address, what your house looks like, the type of car you drive, and your license plate number. Similarly, if you post from your grandson's high school basketball game or that you belong to a certain house of worship, you may have exposed where someone could find you on any given Sunday or game day. The most innocent of information can

be used for the worst of intentions so please take that into account before sharing information online.

In addition to these common questions at our presentations, one subject matter that routinely draws surprise, regardless of audience, is the statistical data of Commission activity. The Commission has seen a staggering rise in the number of complaints filed against judges over the past ten years, climbing from 201 in FY 2016 to 645 in FY 2025, with the largest increase between FY 2024 and FY 2025 – jumping from 396 to 645. To date, the Commission has received more complaints in FY 2026 than the complaints received at the same time last fiscal year, so this trend does not appear to be tapering off anytime soon. It is important to note that, regardless of the number of complaints received, the percentage of complaints dismissed by the Commission has remained at a steady 94-98% over that same ten-year period.

If you are interested in learning more about the judicial discipline process in Maryland, I would encourage you to visit the Commission's website at www.mdcourts.gov/cjd, or join us at one of our 2026 courses at the Judicial College – *Judicial Disabilities – Understanding and Navigating the System* on June 2, 2026.

THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED



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1. The Judicial Needs Assessment Time Study began on March 2, 2026. Registration is now open for training sessions on how to use the web-based form. Please check the welcome email sent from workload@ncsc.org to your MdCourts.gov inbox for additional information.
2. Registration is now open for the 2026 Judicial Conference at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge, Maryland, happening April 29 to May 1, 2026.

3. MDEC was updated to Enterprise Justice (EJ) 2024.
4. First Quarter JIS Information Security Education and Awareness was due by March 4, 2026. Please complete the training to maintain access to non-business-related websites.
To access your current assignment, click: <https://training.knowbe4.com>.
Enter your **MDcourts.gov** email account (**firstname.lastname@mdcourts.gov**) and password.
5. To ensure you receive updates on matters affecting judicial retirees, please send your current contact information to the Senior Judges Committee at sjcommittee@mdcourts.gov. We encourage you to remind retired judges to do the same.



KAMINSKI'S KORNER



2025 JUDICIAL FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES

BY: DEBRA KAMINSKI

It's everyone's favorite time of year... Financial Disclosure Season! I know, I know — contain your excitement. Before you start digging through desk drawers, old emails, and that mysterious folder labeled "Important Stuff," take a deep breath. Rest easy... I'm here to help.

As a reminder, 2025 Judiciary Financial Disclosure Statements are due on or before April 30, 2026.

I strongly encourage you to file online since your information can be auto-populated from the previous year. If you are unable to file online, a paper form is available.

Below are several links that will assist you in filing your Statement:

Online Filing System:

<https://mdcourts-fds.advancedgrc.com/disclosure/filing.action>

Quick Reference Guide (instructions for navigating the online system):

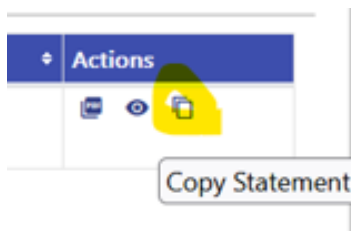
<https://www.mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/reference/pdfs/financialdisclosureonlineqrg.pdf>

Statement Instructions:

<https://www.mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/reference/docs/judicialfinancialdisclosuresinstructions.pdf>

How to Copy Your Data From Your 2024**Statement:**

- On your Dashboard, scroll down to **Past Filings** to locate your 2024 Statement.
- In the last column marked **Actions**, click the double square to make a copy of your 2024 Statement



- On the next screen, change the filing year to 2025 and the filing period to January 1, 2025–December 31, 2025
- For each Schedule that contains information, click the pencil icon to open the questions in order to edit your Statement for the 2025 filing period.
- It's important to click the **SAVE** button often while making changes to your Statement.
- Once your Statement is complete, click the **SUBMIT** button. This will send your Statement to my dashboard for review.

**Helpful Tips:**

For security reasons, please remember the following:

- Identify personal residences by county and state only

- Identify family members by their relationship to you rather than by name
- On Schedule A, you no longer need to report the name(s) of the person(s) you bought your property from
- When identifying securities for auto loans, list “vehicle” rather than the year, make, and model of your automobile(s)
- On Schedule G (Immediate Family Members Employed), you no longer need to report the employer’s name or the full address. The title and nature of the position held, along with the employer’s county and state, are all that are required.
- If attaching documents to your Statement, be sure to **redact** your **home address, account numbers, and beneficiaries’ names**.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you need assistance. I can be reached at (410) 260-1271 or via email at debra.kaminski@mdcourts.gov.

In Memoriam

❖ Hon. John F. Fader II
Circuit Court for Baltimore County

**THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL’S
SENIOR JUDGES COMMITTEE**

Hon. James A. Kenney III, Chair, Senior Judge
Hon. Deborah Sweet Eyler, Vice Chair, Senior Judge
Hon. Jean S. Baron, Senior Judge
Hon. Lynne A. Battaglia, Senior Judge
Hon. Lawrence R. Daniels, Senior Judge
Missy Gallagher, Court Administrator, Circuit Court for Dorchester County
Hon. Glenn T. Harrell, Jr. Senior Judge
Hon. Michele D. Hotten, Senior Judge
Hon. Steven I. Platt, Senior Judge
Hon. Irma S. Raker, Senior Judge
Sharon Reed, District Court Headquarters
Hon. Marcus Z. Shar, Senior Judge
Hon. Nancy B. Shuger, Senior Judge
Hon. Norman R. Stone III, Senior Judge
Hon. Dennis M. Sweeney, Senior Judge
Hon. Barbara B. Waxman, Senior Judge
Eliana Pangelinan, Staff

RETIREMENT SERVICES CONTACT LIST

Maryland State Retirement and Pension System – 1-800-492-5909

Shane Brown
sbrown@sra.state.md.us
410-625-5664

Social Security Administration (SSA)
www.socialsecurity.gov
1-800-772-1213

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
www.medicare.gov
1-800-633-4227

Maryland Supplement Retirement Plan (MSRP) – 1-800-545-4730

Angela Anderson
angela.anderson@maryland.gov
443-305-9055

Department of Budget & Management, Employee Benefits Division
410-767-4775

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Any questions regarding this issue, please contact Eliana Pangelinan at eliana.pangelinan@mdcourts.gov