

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
July 23, 2014

It is dismaying to see that a disgraced former county judge, Steven N. deLaroche, is a candidate for circuit judge in the August 26th primary.

Mr. deLaroche resigned as county judge February 8, 2007. Florida's Judicial Qualifications Commission, the agency responsible for disciplining or removing errant judges, had charged him with six (6) initial violations alleging corrupt acts while on the bench in charges filed in July 2006.

Following a personal appearance at an evidentiary hearing before an Investigative Panel of the Judicial Qualifications Commission on July 13, 2006, to answer these initial six counts, Mr. deLaroche was charged with three additional counts, citing three instances of knowingly presenting false and/or misleading testimony and a false and/or misleading affidavit at the hearing. In its order of October 12, 2006, the panel found, by a greater than two-thirds supermajority, that probable cause existed on all of the charges, including the findings of presenting the false/misleading testimony and affidavit.

Mr. deLaroche was looking at formal proceedings to be removed from office.

Rather than face the commission again, he resigned his office. The case was ultimately dismissed, as the commission's sanction, i.e. removal from office, had been achieved. At that point, there was no necessity to proceed to the formal hearing. It is clear that the case was dismissed in March 2007 only because Mr. deLaroche resigned from office. The dismissal states, "The basis for the dismissal is Judge deLaroche's resignation and Governor Crist's acceptance of his resignation."

Six years later, Mr. deLaroche had the audacity to run for Clerk of the Circuit Court against incumbent Diane Matousek and another candidate. He came in third in the three-party race after Ms. Matousek publicized his sordid record.

Now, Mr. deLaroche has "loaned" his judicial campaign in excess of \$130,000 and apparently seeks to buy his way back to judicial office by financially overwhelming his opponents.

During the present campaign, Mr. deLaroche has been claiming that he was charged with having "simply mishandled one traffic ticket." This is nonsense.

The "one mishandled ticket" is described in the charging instrument detailing multiple separate instances of judicial corruption. Then, after presenting false testimony about the matter, Mr. deLaroche was charged with three additional counts of what was essentially perjury. The final Amended Notice of Formal Charges, which lays all of this out in detail, is at:

www.floridasupremecourt.org/pub_info/summaries/briefs/06/06-1376/Filed_10-12-2006_AmendedFormalCharges.pdf

The general counsel for the Judicial Qualifications Commission pointed out to the press when Mr. deLaroche qualified that prior misconduct, while a lawyer or a judge in another capacity, can be the basis for renewed charges. There is every reason to believe that this would happen should Mr. deLaroche be elected; he may well be subjected to early removal. We should not take that chance. His ethics, as currently displayed, are suspect when he blatantly mischaracterizes the depth and extent of the serious charges that led to his forced resignation.

As a former chief circuit judge in the Seventh Judicial Circuit, I have a keen interest in preserving and protecting the excellent judiciary we now enjoy. There are impeccable candidates in each of the several judicial races at stake in this election season. Mr. deLaroche is not among them.

Sincerely,

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