

SUPREME COURT OF LOUISIANA

No. 00-O-0392

IN RE: JUDGE PAMELA TAYLOR JOHNSON

LEMMON, J., Dissenting

The brochure for the Nuts and Bolts Seminar in Sandestin does not state the court officials for whom the program was designed, but the agenda for the two-and-one-half-day seminar appeared to target judges, court administrators and possibly senior staff attorneys, as well as prosecutors, public defenders and ranking law enforcement and probation officials. The program certainly was not designed for an entire staff of a juvenile judge, and clearly not for a receptionist. Public perception likely would be that the respondent judge used this as an opportunity for a staff trip at state expense to an exotic location.

Taking the staff to a seminar on political campaigns during the court's working days, while the employees were being paid with public funds, was totally without justification. To her credit, the respondent judge, upon recognizing the nature of the seminar, did not seek reimbursement of the registration fees.

Finally, the brochure for the two Reno seminars, entitled Summer College: The Role of the Judge and Basic Juvenile Justice Management Institute, indicated that the programs were designed for juvenile and family court judges and for court managerial and supervisory personnel, and not for minute clerks or receptionists.¹ They were not designed as an opportunity for a judge to take his or her entire staff on a week-long

¹The parties stipulated before the Commission that the program was not intended for persons in essentially clerical positions.

trip to an exotic location on public funds. Taking an entire staff to such a program at the expense of the taxpayers appears to the public to be an unjustifiable perk of governmental employment and was at best an exercise of extremely poor judgment in administering public funds.

Such misuse of public funds by a relatively new judge perhaps would have been better handled by the judicial conduct authorities with a stern warning and close supervision. However, the matter is now before this court on a recommendation for a minimum sanction, and I cannot in good conscience say that such a sanction is not warranted.