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November 30, 2015

BY FACSIMILE - 273-4436

Raymond M. Schlather, Esquire
Schlather, Stumbar, Parks & Salk, LLP
200 East Buffalo Street
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Re: Municipal courts task force

Dear Ray:

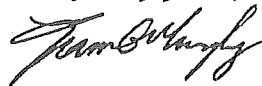
I write to expand my comments to you at the time of the October 14 meeting I could not attend.

In the interim, I read our colleagues' comments about town and village courts. Regrettably, many of their anecdotes are accurate. With a practice that covers six counties and experience in courts across the United States, I've had such experiences myself, but those same observations of favoritism, prejudice and laxness with rules apply with equal force to lawyer-judges. A law degree is not a cure-all for the venality described in my colleagues' comments. The solution must include lawyers speaking truth to abused power and truth to our colleagues who exploit such venality: Such prejudice, favoritism and game-playing undercut our legal system and, as a result, the foundation of our society.

While there might be some benefit to centralizing the arraignment process (particularly off-hours), there is a great drawback to a district court. As one of the few lawyers with an office outside Ithaca and as a senior lawyer who still accepts assigned counsel cases, I see first-hand the great hardship clients in outlying towns have in getting even to a town court, especially in winter – let alone in trying to meet with lawyers who are not in their town. At first blush, there will be little savings in replacing part-time magistrates with one or two full time lawyer-judges and the required clerks and office space. Thus, requiring such clients to appear repeatedly in a centralized district court will not save much and the savings will likely be spent tracking clients down for missing court, to say nothing of the additional impact on clients repeatedly missing entire days of work to be in Court and other such burdens.

There are a number of issues about judges which can and should be addressed. Focusing solely on magistrate judges, however, is a disservice to the magistrates, the Bar and our clients.

Very truly yours,



LGBM/lm

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