

**YASHIBA G. BLANCHARD
PROBATE JUDGE,
JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL**

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CASE NO. 67

COMPLAINT

The Judicial Inquiry Commission of the State of Alabama (hereinafter “the Commission”) files this Complaint against Probate Judge Yashiba G. Blanchard (hereinafter “Judge Blanchard”), Probate Judge for Jefferson County, Alabama. The Commission alleges and charges as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Judge Blanchard has served as the presiding probate judge since January 2025. She presides over adoptions, conservatorships, guardianships, involuntary commitments, trusts, wills, and estates.

2. Judge Blanchard has exhibited a pattern and practice of failing to diligently discharge her judicial duties by:

a. Failing to timely hold probable cause hearings in involuntary commitment cases, in violation of Ala. Code § 22-52-8 and by limiting the number of cases to be heard on dockets;

b. Failing to promptly and efficiently handle other probate

cases causing inexcusable delay; and,

c. Making frequent and inappropriate requests for appointments of special probate judges.

3. Judge Blanchard demonstrated a pattern and practice of bias and intimidation against attorneys appearing in her court by:

a. Improperly removing attorneys as conservators in violation of black-letter, statutory requirements;

b. Abusing her power of contempt by holding an attorney in contempt;

c. Filing unfounded State Bar complaints against attorneys appearing in her court;

d. Filing a baseless police report against attorneys appearing in her court in which Judge Blanchard claims she feared for her safety;

e. Ordering an unwarranted forensic accounting of estates under the supervision of certain attorneys without providing notice or an opportunity to be heard; and,

f. Requiring clerks to issue successor letters of conservatorship to the new general county guardian and

conservator without any indication of a bond amount.

4. Judge Blanchard took judicial action in a case in which she had previously served as an attorney.

5. Judge Blanchard has exhibited a pattern and practice of bullying and retaliating against probate court staff.

6. Judge Blanchard has allowed another court official subject to her direction and control to bully, harass, intimidate, and retaliate against probate court staff.

7. Judge Blanchard has failed to maintain competence in administrative duties.

8. This Complaint charges Judge Blanchard with violations of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics (hereinafter "the Canons") for these acts and failures. Judge Blanchard's conduct has degraded the public's confidence in the integrity of the judiciary and brought the judicial office into disrepute. Judge Blanchard's delay and lack of attention in handling her cases have harmed the litigants, protected persons, respondents, family members, attorneys, healthcare professionals, healthcare services, and others who have business before the Probate Court.

9. In essence, Judge Blanchard's failure to promptly dispose of the business of this court has created a disservice to the citizens of Jefferson County as citizens are unable to receive the services that only the Probate Court can provide and are seeking court services elsewhere.

II. FACTS

10. The Probate Court of Jefferson County consists of two judges, the Place 1 Judge, who serves as the Presiding Judge, and the Place 2 Judge.

11. Both judgeships were elected in the November 2024 cycle.

12. On January 20, 2025, Judge Blanchard was sworn in as the Place 1 Presiding Judge.

13. Jefferson County Probate Court has two divisions, the Birmingham Division and the Bessemer Division.

14. The Birmingham Division's case load is substantially greater.

A. PATTERN AND PRACTICE OF FAILING TO DILIGENTLY DISCHARGE JUDICIAL DUTIES

1. Havoc Created in Involuntary Commitments

15. After the election, Judge Blanchard suggested to the newly elected Place 2 Judge to not hold hearings until April 2025.

16. However, the Place 2 Judge explained to Judge Blanchard

that delaying involuntary commitment hearings was not possible as those proceedings are time sensitive pursuant to state law.

17. From January 2025 until September 19, 2025, the Place 2 Judge heard all involuntary commitment proceedings.

18. On September 19, 2025, Judge Blanchard entered an administrative order that all involuntary commitments would be assigned evenly between the two probate judges.

19. On September 30, 2025, nine months after taking the bench, Judge Blanchard heard her first involuntary commitment docket.

20. Judge Blanchard was sometimes 30–45 minutes late to hear these dockets, and on at least one occasion over an hour late, wherein the patients, social workers, psychiatrists, and patients' families were forced to wait on Judge Blanchard, wasting valuable time and resources.

21. Judge Blanchard told her staff on one occasion that she was late to her involuntary commitment docket because she had three dogs to walk.

22. On November 17, 2025, Judge Blanchard emailed the mental health coordinator about not evenly dividing involuntary commitments between the two judges and instructed him to comply with her September

19, 2025, administrative order.

23. The mental health coordinator had the Place 2 Judge hear more cases than Judge Blanchard in order to timely hear the cases and to protect the rights of this vulnerable population, their families, other patients needing care, and strained hospital resources.

24. On November 18, 2025, Judge Blanchard was over an hour late in starting her involuntary commitment docket.

25. She heard four cases and took a recess. After approximately 10 minutes, Judge Blanchard's assistant returned canceling the other two cases left to be heard and informing the parties that the cases would be heard on December 2, 2025—fourteen days later.

26. The reason Judge Blanchard had to cancel these hearings was because she was running late for a meeting of the Jefferson County Citizen's Supervisory Commission, of which she serves as chair pursuant to her position as presiding probate judge, that is set by rule of the Jefferson County Personnel Board.

27. One of the two cases abruptly canceled involved a respondent that was to be discharged from inpatient care and sent home.

28. The hospital emailed Judge Blanchard and her staff three

times requesting a hearing so that this respondent may be discharged and not suffer “avoidable undue emotional distress,” while remaining in the hospital pending a hearing.

29. In its second request on November 18, 2025, the hospital explained to Judge Blanchard and her staff the effect of failing to hold timely hearings in involuntary commitment cases.

With the cancellation and the rescheduling of her hearing to December 2, this patient will now remain hospitalized for an additional two weeks solely due to the lack of timely access to the hearing process. This not only prevents her from being home with her family for Thanksgiving, but it also generates unnecessary hospitalization costs and creates avoidable emotional distress for the patient and her loved ones.

Beyond this single case, the cancellation of the docket disrupts unit flow, delays care for other patients needing admission which can pose a threat to public safety and places our staff in untenable operational positions. *It is difficult to reconcile today’s action with our shared responsibility to ensure patients receive timely due process and appropriate, least-restrictive care.* The sequence of events today reflects a disregard for the rights of our patients, the time and safety of their families, and the operational efficiency of the hospital.

(Italics in original.)

30. On November 20, 2025, after the third request explaining that the respondent was lying in bed crying and upset, Judge Blanchard held the hearing and discharged the patient.

31. On November 20, 2025, Judge Blanchard held a mental health probable cause hearing for a respondent involuntarily detained on November 2, 2025, in violation of Ala. Code § 22-52-8(a).¹

32. On November 24, 2025, Judge Blanchard's judicial assistant sent the following instruction from Judge Blanchard to staff concerning pausing the scheduling of cases:²

1. The cases that are currently on the docket need to be organized as such: For Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday

¹ § 22-52-8. Holding of probable cause and final hearings generally.

(a) When any respondent sought to be committed has any limitation imposed upon his liberty or any temporary treatment imposed upon him by the probate judge pending final hearings on such petition, the probate judge, at the time such limitation or treatment is imposed, shall set a probable cause hearing within seven days of the date of such imposition. If, at such probable cause hearing, the probate judge finds that probable cause exists that the respondent should be detained temporarily and finds that temporary treatment would be in the best interest of the respondent, the probate judge shall enter an order so stating and setting the date, time and place of a final hearing on the merits of such petition.

(b) The final hearing shall be held within 30 days of the date that the respondent was served with a copy of the petition seeking to commit the respondent.

² Note that when the presiding circuit judge met with Judge Blanchard concerning her mishandling of involuntary commitment proceedings the presiding circuit judge explained to Judge Blanchard, "You don't do a trophy for doing good. We are not queens and kings. People are not going to bow down to you."

the timeframe needs to be from 10 AM to 2 PM.^[3] For Tuesday, the time frame needs to be from 11 AM to 3 PM. There needs to be a maximum of four cases set a day. The court schedule is Monday-Thursday. Any extra cases need to be moved to another day. I recommend rescheduling cases starting off at the latest date that hearings are scheduled and moving back to the earliest date that hearings are scheduled to meet the 4 case a day guideline.

2. Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month is to be reserved for scheduling commitment hearings. No other types of cases are to be set. For commitment hearings, the maximum number of cases that can be set in one day is 6. Those hearings can continue to be scheduled at 9:30 AM.

3. Thursdays are to be reserved for final settlement hearings.

4. Cases that require a jury trial will have a whole day devoted to them.

(Emphasis added.)

33. The limitation of no more than six involuntary commitment cases set on a singular docket held only twice a month failed and continues to fail to meet the needs of this vulnerable population in Jefferson County.

³ In an earlier email, Judge Blanchard had instructed her staff to not schedule any cases from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. so that she could take a lunch break. She routinely takes breaks lasting fifteen to twenty minutes during dockets after starting the docket late.

34. On average, Jefferson County Probate Court handles fifteen involuntary commitment cases per week or sixty per month.

35. With Judge Blanchard's limiting instruction to hear only 12 involuntary commitment cases per month, she would handle only 20% of these involuntary commitments leaving the remaining 80% (or approximately 48) of cases to be handled by the Place 2 Judge.

36. The Jefferson County Probate Court's mental health coordinator ultimately assigned the cases that had to be heard to avoid due process violations to the other judge. This placed that employee at the risk of retaliation for defying Judge Blanchard's previous administrative order regarding the even distribution of involuntary commitment cases. See ¶¶ 212–24, *infra*.

37. Due to the uncertainty of Judge Blanchard's actual availability to hear cases and her self-imposed limitations on cases and dockets, staff routinely waited to serve patients with their petitions until the staff received hearing dates from Judge Blanchard to avoid violating those patients' due process rights. This caused extended hospital stays for respondents.

38. On December 2, 2025, Judge Blanchard untimely held four

probable cause hearings wherein three respondents were originally involuntarily detained on October 31, 2025, and one was originally involuntarily detained on November 4, 2025, all in violation of Ala. Code § 22-52-8(a).

39. On December 8, 2025, the presiding circuit judge sent a hand-delivered letter to Judge Blanchard informing her that the presiding circuit judge had received complaints from the hospital, staff,⁴ patients, and the hospital police concerning involuntary commitment hearings—referencing a lack of consistency with hearings and last-minute cancellations.

40. On December 11, 2025, Judge Blanchard provided the presiding circuit judge with a written response to the December 8, 2025, letter. Judge Blanchard provided the following pertinent misrepresentations:

Regarding the complaints about docket scheduling, all facilities—not only [hospital]—receive advance notice of any potential cancellations (due process is upheld/ complied by

⁴ On December 10, 2025, at 5:58 p.m., Judge Blanchard ordered the mental health coordinator, the only staff employed by the Jefferson County Probate Court present in court for these matters, to immediately report to the Bessemer office on December 11, 2025, despite the fact that he had to be present in the Birmingham office for an involuntary commitment docket that morning with the other judge.

myself and my clerks as to the proper rescheduling of cases). These cancellations are extremely rare and occur only in situations involving pre-planned obligations such as elections-related meetings, dockets that extend beyond assigned times, or essential training and development (pre-planned conferences).

To streamline communication and ensure accurate and timely responses, I respectfully request that all complaints related to mental commitment hearings—including hearing cancellations—be directed to my office. I will extend the same courtesy to your chambers should issues arise under your jurisdiction. As you are aware, the mental commitment docket was divided in October 2025 to improve efficiency. While transitional challenges are expected, all facilities were appropriately notified, and necessary adjustments were considered.

41. On December 16, 2025, Judge Blanchard met with the presiding circuit judge about the complaints concerning involuntary commitment hearings and an estate matter that was continued six times.

42. During the meeting, Judge Blanchard denied violating due process rights and disagreed that an estate was continued six times.

43. The presiding circuit judge told Judge Blanchard that Judge Blanchard needed to take responsibility and further that the presiding circuit judge believed Judge Blanchard was canceling matters as Judge Blanchard canceled on the presiding circuit judge several times.

44. On January 28, 2026, the mental health coordinator delivered

a letter to Judge Blanchard's judicial assistant that stated:

Judge Blanchard has stated we need to communicate in re: to her schedule for commitment hearings. **As of today, we have approximately 120 of the alleged mental health patients/respondents on the pick-up list that are in the community waiting to be placed in our mental health beds.** Their due process starts once they are picked up and served.

Pursuant to §22-52-8(b), the court has 30 days to conduct the final hearing once the respondent is served. To accomplish this and to abide by Judge Blanchard's Administrative Order, I need for each Judge to have at least two days set aside each week with no more than twelve (12) hearings per week or twelve (12) hearings every other week. Is there any way we can get together sometime soon to discuss this? I am open to any other suggestions you might have.

(Emphasis added.)

45. From September 30, 2025, to December 31, 2025, Judge Blanchard heard approximately 44 involuntary commitment cases.

46. From January 1, 2026, to May 21, 2026, Judge Blanchard heard 55 of her approximately 62 involuntary commitment cases. Seven cases assigned to her were heard by a specially appointed probate judge.

2. Delay in Other Probate Court Cases

47. Judge Blanchard has demonstrated a pattern and practice of failing to manage probate court cases promptly and efficiently, affecting litigants, protected persons, respondents, family members, attorneys,

and others who have business before the Probate Court concerning time-sensitive matters.

48. Judge Blanchard routinely continued cases and canceled dockets.

49. The following examples demonstrate the effect of Judge Blanchard's delay on conservatorships, guardianships, wills, and estates:

a. **Case No. 24BHM002126 (Estate)**: On May 27, 2025, an objection to a late creditor claim was filed. The Court set a hearing for November 3, 2025, but later continued the hearing and reset it for December 8, 2025. The Court again continued the hearing and reset it for March 2, 2026. The Court, then, continued the hearing without providing a future date. On February 19, 2026, the attorney filed a motion to recuse based on a bar complaint⁵ Judge Blanchard filed against the attorney. As of May 13, 2026, the Court has not issued a ruling on the attorney's motion and further failed to set this matter for a timely hearing. May 27, 2026, will be a year that the objection has been pending, preventing the widow

⁵ In October 2025, Judge Blanchard filed a bar complaint against an attorney in the case. On February 12, 2026, the Alabama State Bar dismissed the complaint. See ¶¶ 181–96, *infra*.

from closing her late-husband's estate and further enduring additional attorney's fees of \$4,500.00.

b. **Case No. 24BHM001364 (Estate)**: On April 14, 2025, an objection to a creditor claim was filed. On August 4, 2025, Judge Blanchard had a hearing but failed to rule or enter an order as of May 13, 2026. The attorney filed proposed orders on September 12, 2025, and February 4, 2026. Since the creditor claim is still pending, this estate cannot be closed causing additional money in attorney's fees to be charged to the estate.

c. **Case No. 24BHM002048 (Estate)**: On June 23, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed that involved minors. It was set for final hearing on September 11, 2025. The Court rescheduled the final hearing set for October 6, 2025, which may have been a staff error. The Court rescheduled the hearing for October 16, 2025. The Court reset the hearing for January 26, 2026. The Court reset the hearing for March 12, 2026, without a future hearing date. Judge Blanchard continued the final hearing in this matter at least four times as of May 13, 2026, causing the personal representative financial harm. The personal representative had to request time off

from his hourly employment for each hearing in advance and could not get back on the work schedule after each continuance. The continued delays of this case caused great emotional distress to the personal representative.

d. **Case No. 21BHM002666 (Estate)**: On December 11, 2025, an attorney filed a motion to withdraw. On February 19, 2026, an attorney filed a motion to recuse. On February 23, 2026, an evidentiary hearing was set. After arriving at court, the attorney was told it would be continued. At the time, a special probate judge was on the bench. The court set the matter for a hearing on June 2, 2026.

e. **Case No. 24BHM001436 (Estate)**: On January 6, 2026, an attorney filed a motion of insolvency to resolve and close an estate. The court set the matter for June 11, 2026. A hearing on this matter is routine and brief in nature, but necessary to close the estate.

f. **Case No. 23BHM002999 (Conservatorship)**: On May 8, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On September 19, 2025, Judge Blanchard held a final hearing. As of May 18, 2026,

Judge Blanchard failed to issue a decree of final settlement or a discharge of the conservator and his surety—pending more than seven months without a ruling.

g. **Case No. 08BES042808 (Conservatorship)**: On September 2, 2025, a petition to transfer venue was filed by the family. As of May 18, 2026, no hearing date has been set—pending more than 8 months without a hearing date.

h. **Case No. 23BES000876 (Conservatorship)**: On May 13, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. A hearing date was set for August 20, 2025, but canceled by the court. As of May 18, 2026, no hearing date has been set—pending one year without holding final hearing.

i. **Case No. 2011BHM212288 (Conservatorship)**: On June 5, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On January 2, 2026, a final hearing was set for June 4, 2026—almost one year after the petition was filed.

j. **Case No. 22BHM000523 (Conservatorship)**: On May 13, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On January 2, 2026, a final hearing was set for May 28, 2026—over one year after

the petition was filed.

k. **Case No. 2016BHM227336 (Conservatorship)**: On July 31, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On December 23, 2025, a final hearing was set for May 21, 2026. On April 28, 2026, the final hearing was reset for May 29, 2026—almost ten months after the petition was filed.

l. **Case No. 24BHM001893 (Conservatorship)**: On May 8, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. The family appeared and filed a motion to appoint a successor conservator. On November 6, 2025, Judge Blanchard held a hearing and denied the family's petition. As of May 18, 2026, the final settlement has not yet been reset—more than one year has passed since the filing of the petition for final settlement.

m. **Case No. 2007BES041675 (Conservatorship)**: On August 25, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On October 29, 2025, a final hearing was set for February 4, 2026. On December 2, 2025, the February 4 docket was canceled due to Judge Blanchard having a conference and reset for March 18, 2026. The March 18, 2026, hearing was canceled without a future hearing

date.

n. **Case No. 2007BES041674 (Conservatorship)**: On August 25, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On October 29, 2025, a final hearing was set for February 4, 2026. On December 2, 2025, the February 4 docket was canceled due to Judge Blanchard having a docket⁶ and reset for March 18, 2026. The March 18, 2026, hearing was canceled without a future hearing date.

o. **Case No. 2005BES40146 (Conservatorship)**: On June 2, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On October 29, 2025, a final hearing was set for February 4, 2026. On December 2, 2025, the February 4 docket was canceled due to Judge Blanchard having a conference and reset for March 18, 2026. The March 18, 2026, hearing was canceled without a future hearing date.

p. **Case No. 22BHM002428 (Conservatorship)**: On May 30, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On December 23,

⁶ This appears to be an error entered in the Benchmark case management system and should have reflected that Judge Blanchard had a conference.

2025, a final hearing was set for April 30, 2026. The Court continued the April 30 hearing and reset for May 29, 2026—almost a year after filing the petition for final settlement.

q. **Case No. 2000BHM119782 (Conservatorship)**: On May 22, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On January 6, 2026, a final hearing was set for June 4, 2026—over one year after filing the petition for final settlement.

r. **Case No. 23BES000769 (Conservatorship)**: On August 25, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On December 29, 2025, a final hearing was set for May 20, 2026. On April 30, staff informed the attorney that the May 20 hearing was no longer set and failed to provide a future hearing date.

s. **Case No. 24BES000638 (Conservatorship)**: On June 27, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On August 20, 2025, a final hearing was set for November 19, 2025. On November 18, 2025, the hearing was canceled due to Judge Blanchard having an emergency. On January 20, 2026, a final hearing was set for June 17, 2026—almost one year after filing the petition for final settlement.

t. Case No. 20BHM002182 (Conservatorship): On November 14, 2024, a petition for final settlement was filed. The final hearing was set on the five following dates: February 13, 2025, April 17, 2025, June 12, 2025, August 14, 2025, and September 18, 2025. Judge Blanchard continued each of these five settings. On September 25, 2025, Judge Blanchard held the final hearing and entered the final decree.

u. Case No. 23BHM000816 (Conservatorship): On June 5, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. On December 23, 2025, a final hearing was set for May 29, 2026—almost one year after the filing of the petition for final settlement.

v. Case No. 2013BHM219606 (Conservatorship): On July 16, 2025, a motion for order directing liquidation of accounts was filed. On November 17, 2025, a family member filed a motion for substitution of conservator and guardian. As of May 18, 2026, neither motion has been set for a hearing—over ten months after the filing of the first motion.

w. Case No. 2012BES045273 (Conservatorship): On May 8, 2025, a petition for final settlement was filed. The court

continued the August 20, 2025, hearing and reset for October 1, 2025. The court continued the October 1 hearing and reset for June 17, 2026—thirteen months after filing the petition for final settlement.

x. **Guardianships**: On January 15, 2026, an attorney reached out to the presiding circuit judge’s office complaining that the attorney had filed three guardianship cases with proposed orders in November 2025 and that the cases are “completely gridlocked.” The attorney further expressed frustration on behalf of the attorney’s clients. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services had dismissed two of the cases for delay causing the attorney to re-file and the attorney’s clients to repay filing fees. See Estate of E.G.P.M., Case No. 25BHM00068; Estate of A.B.C., Case No. 25BHM00066; Estate of F.D.S.T., Case No. 25BHM00524.

50. Probate staff in both division offices have received constant complaints concerning delays by Judge Blanchard. These complaints were from attorneys, interested parties, families, and individuals needing services from the Probate Court, complaining that Judge

Blanchard was continuing cases, not setting cases, being consistently late for dockets and hearings, canceling dockets, and not issuing orders. This consistently occurred in both offices.

51. The Bessemer office never knows if Judge Blanchard is going to show up for her two docket days scheduled per month. If she does show up, Judge Blanchard is always late to hear the docket.

52. The following illustrate canceled and continued dockets and hearings and last-minute time changes, which all caused havoc on the parties involved:

a. On April 22, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that her docket set for May 22, 2025, was continued due to a scheduling conflict without providing a future hearing date.

b. On June 23, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that her docket set for July 17, 2025, was continued due to her being out-of-town without providing a future hearing date.

c. Later, on June 23, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff rescheduled two cases originally set for July 17, 2025, to

September 4, 2025. When staff emailed the attorneys about the resetting, one of the attorneys responded, “Thank you!! Just hoping we do not have a continuance because I am so worried that my client is going to die.” Judge Blanchard’s staff responded, “Oh I completely understand. I have another case on this docket in the same predicament. Prayers to all parties.”

d. On July 23, 2025, at 3:32 p.m., Judge Blanchard’s staff informed attorneys of changes for hearings scheduled for the next day. One case, In the Estate of L.W., was moved up from 1:30 p.m. to 11:45 a.m. and the other two hearings were continued without providing a future hearing date.

e. On August 13, 2025, Judge Blanchard’s staff informed attorneys that her docket set for August 20, 2025, was canceled affecting Case No. 23BES000367, In the Matter of B.S., without providing a future hearing date.

f. On August 15, 2025, Judge Blanchard’s staff informed attorneys that the hearing scheduled In the Matter of L.W., Case No. 22BHM001846, for August 28, 2025, was

continued without providing a future hearing date.

g. On August 22, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that the hearing scheduled In the Estate of H.F., Case No. 21BHM002666, for August 27, 2025, was continued without providing a future hearing date.

h. On September 2, 2025, at 8:48 a.m., Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that Judge Blanchard would be out of the office on September 4, 2025, and that the docket consisting of six estate cases was continued. The email did not provide a future docket date. The following day, Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 2:01 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that she would be at the court in the morning and that the same six estate matters could be heard beginning at 9:30 a.m. the next day.

i. On September 10, 2025, at 11:44 a.m., Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that the September 12 morning docket would be moved up beginning at 8:00 a.m. with six cases. At 2:33 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff sent another email that her afternoon docket would be heard in the

morning. Guardians ad litem and family members had to make last-minute arrangements to attend the newly adjusted times.

j. On September 18, 2025, at 3:52 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that the September 19 docket would be starting at 7:30 a.m. and concluding by 10:45 a.m. Some of the cases were originally set for 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

k. On September 23, 2025, at 1:53 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff canceled a hearing In the Matter of K.M., Case No. 25BHM01102, set for September 24, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. without providing a future hearing date.

l. On September 23, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff canceled a hearing In the Estate of S.B., Case No. 25BHM001158, set for September 29, 2025, without providing a future hearing date.

m. On October 1, 2025, Judge Blanchard had six conservatorship hearings set in Bessemer starting at 2:30 p.m. Three hearings were canceled around noon.

n. On October 2, 2025, at 5:06 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff emailed attorneys that the settlement docket consisting of 12 cases set for the following day was moved up from starting at 11:00 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. Judge Blanchard advised that she wanted to be done with her docket by 11:00 a.m. On October 3, 2025, Judge Blanchard failed to show up for the 7:45 a.m. docket until 8:00 a.m.

o. On October 3, 2025, at 1:19 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff canceled a hearing In the Matter of L.W., Case No. 25BHM01846, set for October 8, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. without providing a future hearing date.

p. On October 20, 2025, at 8:31 a.m., Judge Blanchard's staff emailed an attorney that a hearing set for that day would be rescheduled from noon to 1:30 p.m. concerning In the Estate of M.M., Case No. 24BHM002050.

q. On November 18, 2025, at 1:51 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that her docket set for November 19, 2025, was canceled affecting In the Matter of C.D., Case No. 23BES000422, without providing a future

hearing date.

r. On November 25, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff informed attorneys that the hearing In the Estate of H.F., Case No. 21BHM002666, for December 1, 2025, had been continued without providing a future hearing date.

s. On Friday, December 5, 2025, at 4:09 p.m., Judge Blanchard's staff informed an attorney that a hearing set in Case No. 24BHM002126 for Monday, December 8, 2025, at 10:30 a.m., was continued due to lack of service. On Monday, December 8, 2025, at 8:14 a.m., an attorney reached out to Judge Blanchard's staff explaining in great detail that service had been perfected and requested that the hearing be heard that day. Twenty-two minutes before the scheduled hearing time, at 10:08 a.m., Judge Blanchard's staff emailed the attorneys stating, "I did more research on this case and service was perfected on it. However, we will not be able to hear it today. We will get you a new date set as soon as possible."

t. On December 9, 2025, Judge Blanchard's staff

informed attorneys that her final settlement docket set for January 29, 2026, was continued as she was going to be out of the office without providing a future hearing date.

3. Frequent and Inappropriate Requests for Appointments of Special Probate Judges

53. On October 23, 2025, Judge Blanchard contacted the Tenth Judicial Circuit's presiding judge's office and spoke with that judge's judicial assistant.

54. During that conversation, Judge Blanchard explained that she wanted to request that the presiding judge enter a blanket order for a local attorney to cover her judicial duties on days that she has election conferences, while she is in the office so she can get work done, and for the month of December so that she could work on orders from home.

55. The presiding judge's judicial assistant explained to Judge Blanchard that blanket orders are not entered and that an administrative order would be entered for specific dates.

56. On November 6, 2025, Judge Blanchard's judicial assistant emailed the presiding circuit judge's judicial assistant requesting an order appointing a local attorney to sit in the Probate Court from November 10, 2025, through November 25, 2025.

57. The presiding circuit judge's judicial assistant asked for a reason for the request.

58. Judge Blanchard's judicial assistant emailed in response: "Per Judge Blanchard, the reason for the request is that [the attorney] will be sitting on the bench with Judge Blanchard and he will be helping her with cases on these dates."

59. The presiding circuit judge's judicial assistant responded by email that the presiding circuit judge followed the same standard of the Alabama Supreme Court of requiring a reason such as incompetence, illness, or absence. The judicial assistant further stated that the presiding judge "has never appointed someone to help an elected official without having some understanding of the reason for the unavailability."

60. On November 20, 2025, Judge Blanchard requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on December 1, 2, and 3, 2025, for a scheduled absence.

61. On November 20, 2025, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the three dates requested.

62. On February 13, 2026, Judge Blanchard requested the

appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on February 17, 2026, due to a scheduled absence.

63. On February 13, 2026, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the date requested.

64. On February 13, 2026, Judge Blanchard requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on February 18 and 19, 2026, due to a scheduled absence.

65. On February 17, 2026, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the two dates requested.

66. On February 19, 2026, Judge Blanchard requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on February 23, 24, and 26, 2026, due to a scheduled absence.

67. On February 23, 2026, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the three dates requested.

68. On March 20, 2026, Judge Blanchard requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on March 24

and 25, 2026, due to a previously arranged matter.

69. On March 23, 2026, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the two dates requested.

70. On April 10, 2026, Judge Blanchard requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on April 13 and 15, 2026, due to the Alabama Probate Judges' Association's Spring Conference.

71. On April 13, 2026, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the two dates requested.

72. On April 10, 2026, Judge Blanchard requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve in her place on April 14 and 16, 2026, due to the Alabama Probate Judges' Association Spring Conference.

73. On April 13, 2026, the presiding circuit judge entered an order assigning an attorney to serve as a special probate judge for the two dates requested.

74. Late in the afternoon on April 27, 2026, Judge Blanchard

requested the appointment of a special probate judge to serve for her on April 28 and 29, 2026, due to a “prescheduled community engagement function.”

75. On April 28, 2026, the presiding judge denied the requests in writing and had the denial letter to Judge Blanchard delivered to her and the attorney that Judge Blanchard had requested be appointed as special probate judge. When the attorney received the letter, he was on the bench hearing cases despite not having received the proper appointment from the presiding circuit judge.

76. The presiding circuit judge stated in the denial, “While important, community events, in my opinion, do not take priority over managing of the docket, especially given the frequency of your recent Special Judge requests.”

77. On May 6, 2026, Judge Blanchard provided a written response to the Commission’s complaint received and served on her. In that response, Judge Blanchard requested that the Commission consider the following:

As part of my continuing efforts to bring our scheduling current and reduce backlog, I have requested our presiding Circuit Court judge appoint a special temporary probate judge so that we might have

additional capacity to set and dispose of hearings and trials. Despite my aggressive efforts to handle the backlog, I am frustrated that this request was denied by [the presiding circuit judge].

B. BIAS AND INTIMIDATION AGAINST ATTORNEYS APPEARING IN PROBATE COURT

1. Improper Removal of Attorneys I. Ripon Britton, Jr. and Gregory H. Hawley as Conservator in Over 140 Cases

78. Attorneys I. Ripon Britton, Jr. (hereinafter, “Attorney Britton”) and Gregory H. Hawley (hereinafter “Attorney Hawley”) formerly served as the general county conservators of Jefferson County pursuant to an appointment by the previous presiding probate judge. According to Ala. Code § 26-2-26, their appointments expired upon the expiration of the term of the previous presiding probate judge.

79. On January 30, 2025, Judge Blanchard entered an Administrative Order (hereinafter “the January 30 Administrative Order”) appointing a new general county conservator and purporting to remove Attorney Britton as conservator in at least 140 cases (hereinafter “the affected cases”). This Order was recorded in the land records of Jefferson County but was not entered in any specific case at the time it was issued.

80. In some cases, Mr. Britton was appointed as conservator

pursuant to his role as the general county conservator. In other cases, Mr. Britton was appointed as conservator pursuant to a nomination by an individual that held a higher statutory priority for appointment as conservator.⁷

81. Ala. Code § 26-2A-143 provides, in pertinent part, “The court, on petition or on its own motion, may remove a conservator for good cause, upon notice and hearing, or accept the resignation of a conservator.”⁸ The Comment to Ala. Code § 26-2A-143 provides, “Notice, as required by this section, is given in accordance with Section 26-2A-134(b).”

82. Ala. Code § 26-2A-134(b) provides, “Notice . . . of any hearing on a petition for order subsequent to appointment of a conservator or other protective order must be given to the protected person, any conservator of the protected person’s estate, and any other person as

⁷ Ala. Code § 26-2A-138 allows certain individuals in the order of priority for appointment as conservator to designate in writing a substitute to serve as conservator instead.

⁸ Many sections of Ala. Code Title 26, Chapter 2A, were amended by the Alabama Legislature in Ala. Act 2026-488. Those amendments are not effective until January 1, 2027, and do not have any impact on the allegations in this Complaint regarding Judge Blanchard’s failure to comply with those sections of Alabama law.

ordered by the court.”

83. Judge Blanchard failed to make a finding of good cause to support Attorney Britton’s removal as conservator in the affected cases as required by Ala. Code § 26-2A-143.

84. Judge Blanchard failed to provide notice of her administrative order purporting to remove Attorney Britton as conservator in any of the affected cases in accordance with Ala. Code § 26-2A-134(b) as required by Ala. Code § 26-2A-143.

85. Judge Blanchard failed to hold a hearing on the removal of Attorney Britton as conservator in any of the affected cases as required by Ala. Code § 26-2A-143.

86. After receiving a copy of the January 30 Administrative Order from the new general county conservator, Attorney Edmond Earle, Attorney Britton had two informal meetings with Judge Blanchard and Attorney Earle in February 2025, to discuss his resignation as conservator from many of the affected cases.

87. Following those meetings, Attorney Britton began the process of transferring the affected cases to Attorney Earle and taking steps to resign from many of the affected cases.

88. In late March 2025, Judge Blanchard began directing her staff to enter the January 30 Administrative Order in specific cases, some of which were assigned to the Place 2 Judge.

89. On April 2, 2025, Attorney Britton hand-delivered a seven-page letter to Judge Blanchard and the Place 2 Judge explaining his position that the January 30 Administrative Order failed to comply with the statutory requirements of Ala. Code § 26-2A-143, and, thus, failed to legally remove him as conservator in the affected cases.

90. After receiving the letter, the Place 2 Judge requested a meeting with Judge Blanchard. During that meeting, the Place 2 Judge provided her opinion that the best thing to do would be to set the affected cases for status hearings to determine whether it would be prudent to remove Attorney Britton as conservator on a case-by-case basis.

91. When the Place 2 Judge explained this to Judge Blanchard, Judge Blanchard asked the Place 2 Judge if she intended to defy the January 30 Administrative Order.

92. The next day, on April 3, 2025, Judge Blanchard issued another Administrative Order (hereinafter “the April 3 Administrative Order”) requiring:

.....

3. That the Clerk of Court shall place the January 30, 2025, Administrative Order appointing Edmond Earle, Esq., as the General County Guardian and Conservator for Jefferson in all active cases in the Jefferson County Probate Court (Birmingham/Bessemer Division in all Judge of Probate case files at the direction of the Presiding Judge), this order shall be filed in all records, files, and related documentation currently under the purview of the previous County Conservators, to include the Honorable I. Ripon Britton and/or the Honorable Gregory H. Hawley. All cases shall be transferred to Edmond Earle effective immediately as of March 1st, 2025, except cases that are at final settlement as stated in the courts [sic] January 30, 2025, Administrative Order. All assigned clerks are to execute the above task as given to them by the Presiding Judge.

.....

5. That the Honorable Edmond Earle, shall take immediate possession and control of all cases in which the January 30, 2025 [sic] states, this order has been filed in the Probate Court of Jefferson County (Birmingham and Bessemer) previously.

6. That the transition and transfer process of all cases shall be conducted expediently in a manner that ensures continuity and accuracy in handling county matters and shall not be stalled.

7. That all previously appointed Jefferson County Conservator cases to included; [sic] Judge King, Judge Friday and Judge Naftel and any County Conservator cases currently under Judge Blanchard and Judge Moore are to have the Clerk of Court enter administrative order [sic] (place the orders into all files as directed by the Presiding Judge) and issue Successor Letters to Edmond Earle and staff shall provide full cooperation and support to facilitate this transfer.

8. As to the court's Administrative Order dated January 30, 2025, only cases that are at final settlement or partial settlement stage shall be set for hearing by this court. Cases not ready for Final or Partial shall transfer to The Honorable Edmond Earle by this order of court.

9. This Administrative Order shall take effect upon its issuance.

93. At the time the April 3 Administrative Order was entered, Judge Blanchard still had not made any finding of good cause to support Attorney Britton's removal as conservator, given notice, or held a hearing, in accordance with Ala. Code § 26-2A-143.

94. Additionally, Judge Blanchard's April 3 Administrative Order contradicts her own January 30 Administrative Order in her refusal to set cases "not ready for Final or Partial" settlement for hearing.

95. Ala. Code § 26-5-7 requires "a final settlement of the conservatorship" to be made "on the death, resignation, or removal of the conservator."

96. Thus, Judge Blanchard's refusal to comply with black-letter law regarding the holding of final settlement hearings following her purported removal of Attorney Britton as conservator made it virtually impossible for Attorney Britton to fully comply with the January 30

Administrative Order.

97. On April 11, 2025, Attorney Britton began to file Motions to Alter or Amend in 10 cases where the January 30 Administrative Order had been filed arguing that the January 30 Administrative Order was invalid because of Judge Blanchard's failure to comply with the black-letter, statutory requirements of Ala. Code § 26-2A-143.

98. Subsequently, on April 14, 2025, Attorney Britton filed petitions to remove these 10 cases and others to the Jefferson County Circuit Court.

99. On April 21, 2025, Judge Blanchard, sua sponte, issued a Show Cause Order for Contempt (hereinafter "the Show Cause Order") in each of the 10 cases in which the January 30 Administrative Order had been entered. The Show Cause Order states:

You [referring to Attorney Britton] are in Contempt of the court's previous Administrative Order entered on the 30th day of January 2025, . . . and a Show Cause hearing has been set April 24, 2025, at 2:30 pm, before this Honorable Court, for you to appear to show why you should not be held in contempt regarding cases mentioned in "Exhibit B".

100. Attorney Britton's alleged contumacious conduct constituted constructive contempt, not direct contempt, and, thus, was subject to the requirements of Rule 70A(c) of the Alabama Rules of Civil Procedure.

101. No petition for contempt had been filed to initiate a contempt proceeding in accordance with Ala. R. Civ. P. 70A(c)(1).

102. Attorney Britton was not provided with sufficient notice of the contempt proceeding against him in accordance with Ala. R. Civ. P. 70A(c)(2).

103. Attorney Britton was emailed the Show Cause Order, which is not a valid method of perfecting service of a petition under the Alabama Rules of Civil Procedure, on April 21, 2025, at 4:41 PM, three days before the contempt hearing was set to be heard.

104. Ala. R. Civ. P. 6(c) requires that notices of hearing be served at least 5 days before the time specified for the hearing.

105. Despite the inadequate notice of the contempt proceeding, Attorney Britton obtained counsel and filed a nine-page written response to the Show Cause Order on April 24, 2025, the day of the contempt hearing.

106. In his response to the Show Cause Order, Attorney Britton outlined the efforts that he had taken to substantially comply with Judge Blanchard's January 30 Administrative Order, which included 12 cases that had already been transferred to Attorney Earle, 26 cases in which

Attorney Britton or Attorney Hawley had filed resignations as conservator or guardian and were awaiting the court's acceptance, and four cases in which final settlements had been filed in order to close out Attorney Britton's management of the estate and to effectuate the transfer of those cases to Attorney Earle. In addition, Attorney Britton argued that Judge Blanchard's failure to comply with the Rules of Civil Procedure applicable to contempt proceedings denied him due process. Attorney Britton also argued that the January 30 Administrative Order was not lawful because Judge Blanchard failed to comply with the black-letter, statutory requirements for removing a conservator and, thus, could not serve as the basis for a charge of contempt.

107. At the contempt hearing on April 24, 2025, Judge Blanchard did not take any testimony or receive any evidence. Judge Blanchard heard arguments from Attorney Britton's counsel only.

108. During the contempt hearing, Judge Blanchard had to stop the hearing to let attorneys and litigants that were waiting in the hall know that she would not get to their case that day and that their hearing would be continued.

109. Despite not hearing any testimony or receiving any evidence,

Judge Blanchard entered an order (hereinafter “the Contempt Order”) finding Attorney Britton in contempt “[b]ased upon the representations of [Attorney Britton’s counsel].” Judge Blanchard ordered that Attorney Britton comply with her January 30 Administrative Order with respect to the 10 cases in which the Show Cause Order had been entered by May 2, 2025, or he would be sanctioned with a fine of “\$100 per day per case for up to 14 days.” If Attorney Britton failed to comply within 14 days, Judge Blanchard would issue a writ of arrest.

110. In one of the 10 cases in which Judge Blanchard entered the January 30 Administrative Order, the April 3 Administrative Order, the Show Cause Order, the Contempt Order, and the Order Vacating Contempt, Judge Blanchard had previously served as counsel for the protected person.

111. Following the issuance of the Contempt Order, Attorney Britton handed over the 10 cases that were the subject of the contempt hearing. To avoid further possible threats of contempt, Attorney Britton, his counsel, and Attorney Earle began meeting to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the orderly transfer of cases from Attorney Britton to Attorney Earle.

112. Judge Blanchard acknowledged the agreement and had been involved in negotiations regarding its terms.

113. On June 4, 2025, the same day that the Memorandum of Understanding was acknowledged by Judge Blanchard, Judge Blanchard entered an Order Vacating Contempt purporting to vacate her prior Order finding Attorney Britton in contempt.

114. In the Order Vacating Contempt, Judge Blanchard states in paragraph 3, “The Court expressly acknowledges and appreciates the efforts, cooperation, and good-faith participation of Mr. Britton and his counsel in working toward full compliance with the Court’s prior directives and the Court’s January 30, 2025, Administrative Order to resolve this matter.”

115. As explained in paragraphs 86–87 and 106, supra, Attorney Britton had already begun substantially complying with the January 30 Administrative Order by transferring cases to Attorney Earle.

116. Judge Blanchard’s bad-faith refusal to acknowledge Attorney Britton’s efforts prior to the contempt proceeding and the Memorandum of Understanding exhibits an abuse of the contempt power to force Attorney Britton’s compliance with an order that failed to comply with

black-letter, statutory due process requirements and, also, was not in the best interest of the protected persons under Attorney Britton's care.

117. On November 20, 2025, Judge Blanchard distributed a memorandum addressed to the Place 2 Judge and the deputy probate judge informing them of a new policy for clerks to issue letters of conservatorship to Attorney Earle, even in the absence of an order indicating a bond amount.

118. This policy is in clear violation of Ala. Code § 26-2A-139 which requires a judge to set a bond for a conservator according to a set formula.

119. Judge Blanchard acted in bad faith when she attempted to remove Attorney Britton as conservator without complying with the statutory requirements for removing a conservator and when holding Attorney Britton in contempt for his purported failure to comply with the January 30 Administrative Order.

120. Judge Blanchard told her confidential judicial assistant at the time that her reason for removing Attorney Britton as conservator from the affected cases was simply that she did not trust him. In other words, there was no "good cause" such as a breach of fiduciary duty or misappropriation of estate assets which supported Attorney Britton's

removal.

121. Furthermore, the timing of the Show Cause Order being issued on April 21, 2025, shows that Judge Blanchard's Show Cause Order was not issued due to purported contumacious conduct on the part of Attorney Britton, but in response to valid legal challenges to Judge Blanchard's January 30 Administrative Order posed by Attorney Britton, specifically, the Motions to Alter or Amend pursuant to Ala. R. Civ P. 59 and 60 filed on April 11, 2025, and the Petitions for Removal to Circuit Court pursuant to Ala. Code § 26-2-2 filed on April 14, 2025.

122. Moreover, Judge Blanchard's actions prior to taking the bench and after the Memorandum of Understanding, as alleged in ¶¶ 123–74, *infra*, show that Judge Blanchard holds a severe bias against Attorneys Hawley and Britton that is both personal and extrajudicial.

2. State Bar Complaint Against Attorney Britton

123. On October 27, 2025, the Alabama State Bar received Judge Blanchard's complaint against Attorney Britton seeking his suspension or disbarment.

124. The State Bar's complaint form directs the complainant to state specifically what the attorney did or failed to do and to include all

important dates, times, and places, advises that the subject attorney will receive a copy of the complaint; and requires the complainant to certify that the information he or she is providing is true and accurate to the best of his or her knowledge.

125. In the section of the complaint form devoted to the complainant's personal information, Judge Blanchard provided her home address.

126. Judge Blanchard claimed that Attorney Britton's alleged ethical violations occurred from "February 2025 – Current."

127. Judge Blanchard accused Attorney Britton of "deliberate[ly] attempt[ing] to foster an atmosphere of intimidation, harassment, undermining [her] authority and the integrity of the court" and "encourag[ing] [] clerks, judges, and others to defy administrative rules and general court policies."

128. Further, Judge Blanchard accused Attorney Britton of being part of "a group of attorneys who are participating in a malicious campaign to collude and distribute disturbing misinformation while creating a hostile environment to make [her] look incompetent and incapable of doing [her] job as the Presiding judge of probate court."

129. Judge Blanchard attributes Attorney Britton's alleged unprofessional conduct to his association with Attorney Hawley, who she claimed had a negative opinion of her while she was an attorney.

130. Judge Blanchard provided nothing to support her conclusory allegations, which were based entirely on her personal opinions and hearsay, except an email from then-Attorney Blanchard to Attorney Hawley. That email reads:

Good morning [Attorney Hawley]

I am in receipt of your email. First, I do not have to explain anything to you or anyone else about my attorney fees (what I charge my clients) and about the work contracted by Mrs [sic] [M.F.B.] as to my office.

I have had enough with your insults even with your eluding [sic] to me being a "crook" on the phone in front of my staff a week ago.

You need to check the internet while googling your NAME!

Rumor is your [sic] the crook.

Believe me your reputation is not good in Jefferson County or in the news.

If the bullying continues [Attorney Hawley], I will report you to the bar and notify my husband because this is personal.

You were out of line in the hearing yesterday and have been every time I speak with you.

Mr. [J.D.] is privy to my attorney fees and to the work his cousin requested for my office to perform by Ms. [M.F.B.].

Ms. [M.F.B.] signed my contract in my presence and in the presence of my staff.

You can take this email as a warning because I have had enough of you.

Furthermore, get out of your feelings and honestly defend your 400 plus clients.

Regards,

Yashiba

131. This email was in response to an email exchange that occurred in December 2021, in which Attorney Hawley questioned a \$30,000 deposit into the account of then-Attorney Blanchard's client, for whom Attorney Hawley had been appointed temporary conservator, which had been paid as a retainer, and whether then-Attorney Blanchard was charging the respondent \$575 per hour to represent her in the guardianship and conservatorship proceeding.

132. Attorney Britton, in his response to the bar complaint, noted several fundamental deficiencies and offered that Judge Blanchard's complaint "confused normal professional disagreement . . . with 'unprofessional conduct.'"

133. On Monday, January 26, 2026, the State Bar notified Judge Blanchard that it would “take no further action in this matter at this time.”

3. January 29, 2026, Order for Forensic Accounting in 146 Cases

134. On January 29, 2026, three days after Judge Blanchard received notice of the dismissal of her State Bar complaint against Attorney Britton, Judge Blanchard entered an order (hereinafter “January 29 Forensic Accounting Order”) directing a “forensic accounting” be done in all estates turned over to Attorney Earle by Attorneys Britton and Hawley.

135. The January 29 Forensic Accounting Order also preapproved any fees associated with the forensic accounting to be paid from each estate precluding the opportunity for the interested parties and Judge Blanchard to determine whether the fees charged for the forensic accounting were reasonable or beyond the fair value of the services rendered.

136. The January 29 Forensic Accounting Order was entered without providing due process to any of the interested parties.

137. No petition or motion had been filed requesting an accounting.

138. Judge Blanchard did not provide notice or an opportunity to be heard to any of the protected persons, their families, or Attorneys Britton or Hawley as to whether a forensic accounting was necessary.

139. The January 29 Forensic Accounting Order affected approximately 146 cases. Fourteen of those cases were not conservatorship estates and, thus, had no estate of which a forensic accounting could be performed.

140. Of the remaining 132 cases subject to the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order, a discharge had already been granted in 77 of the cases and a final order had been entered in 75 of the cases, meaning that any remaining monies had been distributed and the case had been closed.

141. A petition for final settlement had already been heard in 18 of the cases and were waiting for an order from Judge Blanchard either on final settlement or discharge.

142. Only 37 out of the approximately 146 cases had not had a final settlement hearing at the time of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order. 22 of those cases had final settlement hearings set, work was in progress for a final disposition on 10 of those cases, and the remaining 5 were awaiting a hearing date to be set.

143. Judge Blanchard claimed in her Response to the Commission that her reason for issuing the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order was because Attorney Britton and Attorney Hawley failed to provide a full inventory of all estates under their supervision that included the values of real property, which she had requested on October 9, 2025, to allow her to determine the sufficiency of the bond in each matter.

144. However, in determining the appropriate amount for a conservator's bond, "the value of any land which the [conservator], pursuant to Section 26-2A-152(d), lacks power to sell or convey without court authorization" is subtracted. Ala. Code § 26-2A-139.

145. Thus, Judge Blanchard's insistence on ascertaining the value of real property in each estate to adequately assess bond is without merit.

146. Furthermore, on December 4, 2025, Attorney Britton provided an inventory containing the total value of the accounts of each estate, the total bond amount, and the settlement status of each estate as of December 1, 2025, all of which is necessary for Judge Blanchard to adequately assess the sufficiency of his bond in each case.

147. On January 8, 2026, Attorney Britton filed an updated inventory with the same information as of January 6, 2026.

148. Judge Blanchard did not raise any deficiency in either of these inventories provided by Mr. Britton at the time they were filed.

149. In fact, Judge Blanchard did not specifically indicate that she was requesting the value of real property be included in the inventories until January 14, 2026, in an email from Tamarah Wilson to Attorney Britton.

150. A follow-up email was sent to Attorney Britton on January 28, 2026, requesting an updated inventory including the value of all assets in each estate. Attorney Britton replied to that email on January 29, 2026, stating that he would provide the requested information.

151. Judge Blanchard's immediate issuance of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order only one day after Attorney Britton was put on notice that Judge Blanchard was requesting a complete inventory of each estate that included the value of real property did not allow Attorney Britton a reasonable time to comply with Judge Blanchard's request.

152. Instead, Judge Blanchard attempts to justify her issuance of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order based on her perception of Attorney Britton as defiant and simply refusing to comply with her

orders.

153. On February 17, 2026, Attorneys Britton and Hawley filed a petition in the Jefferson County Circuit Court seeking a writ of mandamus and/or a writ of prohibition restraining Judge Blanchard from taking any action to enforce or implement the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order and an emergency motion to stay the enforcement of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order while the petition was pending.

154. On February 23, 2026, the judge assigned to hear the petition granted the emergency motion to stay and issued an order prohibiting any further action to enforce or implement the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order pending resolution of the petition.

155. Despite the order prohibiting enforcement or implementation of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order, Judge Blanchard entered an amended version of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order in 35 cases.

156. The amended January 29 Forensic Accounting Order added three exhibits that were not included with the initial version which were submitted to Judge Blanchard by Attorney Earle via email on February

8 and 9, 2026: (A) a list of 35 cases submitted by Attorney Earle, (B) a list of 80 cases that “ha[d] been successfully transferred” to Attorney Earle by Attorney Britton, and (C) email communications between Judge Blanchard and Attorney Earle.

157. The date of the amended January 29 Forensic Accounting Order remained January 29, 2026, even though it included exhibits that Judge Blanchard did not receive until February 8 and 9, 2026.

158. The amended January 29 Forensic Accounting Order was entered in 35 cases on March 3, 2026, even though a copy of the order prohibiting enforcement or implementation of the order had been personally served to Judge Blanchard’s office the day that it was entered.

159. On March 3, 2026, Attorneys Britton and Hawley filed a petition seeking to hold Judge Blanchard in contempt for attempting to enforce or implement the amended version of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order.

160. Judge Blanchard via her staff continued to enter the amended January 29 Forensic Accounting Order in cases as late as March 6, 2026.

161. In her response to the petition for contempt, Judge Blanchard claimed “excusable neglect” in that she had not seen the order prohibiting

enforcement or implementation of the January 29 Forensic Accounting Order at the time of its entry and had already instructed her staff to enter the Order prior to its entry.

162. On March 30, 2026, the judge that was assigned to hear the petition dismissed the petition on jurisdictional grounds.

163. On April 1, 2026, Attorneys Britton and Hawley appealed the dismissal of the petition to the Alabama Supreme Court.

4. **Accusing Attorneys Britton and Hawley of Harassment**

164. On January 28, 2026, Judge Blanchard received a phone call from Ms. Alyce Mann, a former employee of Attorney Britton's firm whose employment had been terminated, regarding a letter dated January 7, 2026, addressed to Attorney Earle and his wife and copied to Judge Blanchard.

165. In the letter, Ms. Mann accused Attorneys Britton and Hawley of financially exploiting the protected persons under their care.

166. Ms. Mann also states that Attorney Britton asked her if she knew Attorney Earle's home address in April 2025.

167. On January 29, 2026, Judge Blanchard filed a supplemental police report in which she stated that she had received a phone call from

Ms. Mann regarding the letter addressed to Attorney Earle and copied to Judge Blanchard and that she felt threatened by Attorney Britton based on Ms. Mann's allegation in the letter that Attorney Britton had asked for Judge Blanchard's home address.

168. As stated in paragraph 164, supra, the letter was addressed to Attorney Earle and his wife, not Judge Blanchard. Judge Blanchard was only copied as a recipient. Therefore, Judge Blanchard's perception that Attorney Britton was asking for her home address is unreasonable.

169. On February 2, 2026, photographs of Attorneys Britton and Hawley were posted at the security checkpoints of the Jefferson County Courthouse based on the report made by Judge Blanchard.

170. On February 3, 2026, attorneys representing Attorneys Britton and Hawley met with the circuit's presiding judge regarding the photographs.

171. That same day, the presiding circuit judge met separately with Judge Blanchard and representatives of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

172. Judge Blanchard told the presiding circuit judge that she did not trust Attorneys Britton or Hawley and did not want them in her

courtroom.

173. After learning of the photographs, Attorneys Britton and Hawley fled the City of Birmingham and hired criminal defense counsel fearing that they would be arrested if they tried to enter the courthouse.

174. Attorney Britton had hearings scheduled to take place before the Place 2 Judge that day that were ultimately handled by his law partner.

5. Motions to Recuse filed by Attorneys Britton and Hawley

175. From February 11, 2026, to March 3, 2026, Attorneys Britton and Hawley, collectively, filed 92 motions to recuse in cases that were assigned to Judge Blanchard.

176. The motions to recuse alleged that Judge Blanchard held a bias against Attorneys Britton and Hawley based on the filing of State Bar complaints against them and the acts leading up to their photographs being posted at the security checkpoints of the Jefferson County Courthouse.

177. Judge Blanchard has not ruled on any of those motions.

178. On March 30, 2026, Attorney Britton filed a petition in the Alabama Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus directing Judge

Blanchard to rule/grant the pending motions to recuse.

179. In late April 2026, Judge Blanchard set some of the motions for hearing in late May and early June 2026.

6. Bias or Prejudice Against Attorney Lindsey Eastwood

180. Attorney Lindsey Eastwood (hereinafter “Attorney Eastwood”) practices exclusively in Probate Court and frequently appeared in Judge Blanchard’s court.

181. On October 20, 2025, the State Bar received a complaint filed by Judge Blanchard against Attorney Eastwood for alleged unprofessional conduct that occurred from February 2025 until the filing of the complaint.

182. In that complaint, Judge Blanchard accused Attorney Eastwood of exhibiting unprofessional conduct towards her staff and during hearings.

183. Judge Blanchard claimed that she received constant complaints from her staff regarding Attorney Eastwood’s unprofessional conduct.

184. Judge Blanchard also alleged that Attorney Eastwood “spreads falsehoods/ untruths (negativity)” about Judge Blanchard to

other probate attorneys and the public “to purposefully damage [her] image, character, [her] name, and to damage [her] career as a Judge,” and that she is part of “a group of attorneys who are participating in a malicious campaign to collude and distribute disturbing misinformation while creating a hostile environment to make [her] look incompetent and incapable of doing [her] job as the Presiding judge of probate court.”

185. Judge Blanchard’s allegations against Attorney Eastwood could not be further from the truth.

186. According to several members of the staff of the Jefferson County Probate Court, Attorney Eastwood has never been rude or disrespectful to them, nor have they ever witnessed Attorney Eastwood engage in any unprofessional conduct.

187. Moreover, while serving as Chair of the Probate Section of the Birmingham Bar Association, Attorney Eastwood frequently communicated and coordinated with Judge Blanchard and Probate Court staff regarding several bar events associated with the Probate Court and assisted with Judge Blanchard’s transition into office by keeping probate attorneys in Jefferson County apprised of new policies and procedures that Judge Blanchard had adopted.

188. Attorney Eastwood even donated money to and volunteered with Judge Blanchard's campaign.

189. Judge Blanchard also complained about Attorney Eastwood contacting a retired circuit judge that Judge Blanchard had asked to fill in for her at a continuing legal education ("CLE") event concerning a judicial update of the Jefferson County Probate Court co-hosted by the Solo and Small Firm and Probate Sections of the Birmingham Bar Association.

190. The CLE took place on June 11, 2025. Judge Blanchard was set to speak at the CLE. However, Attorney Eastwood, who was not involved in the organization of the CLE and was only meant to introduce the speakers, learned on June 10, 2025, the day before the CLE was to take place, that Judge Blanchard would be out of town for a conference. Judge Blanchard never notified any of the organizers of the CLE that she would not be able to attend.

191. Upon learning that Judge Blanchard would not be able to attend and that Judge Blanchard had independently secured a substitute speaker, the organizers of the event attempted to reach out to Judge Blanchard to inform her that they would not need the retired circuit

judge to fill in because the CLE was pertaining to Probate Court only and that the Place 2 Judge, who was already expected to speak at the event, would be able to fill the time.

192. After the organizers were unable to get in contact with Judge Blanchard, the organizers reached out directly to the retired circuit judge that Judge Blanchard had asked to fill in to inform her that she did not need to present at the CLE. Attorney Eastwood did not reach out to the retired circuit judge.

193. That evening, on June 10, 2025, Judge Blanchard called Attorney Eastwood accusing her of impropriety for “going over her head” and canceling the retired circuit judge’s appearance at the CLE and saying that it “reflected poorly on [Judge Blanchard].”

194. Following that phone call, Attorney Eastwood sent the following text message to Judge Blanchard:

I’m very sorry for what happened. I am only in charge of introducing the speakers tomorrow since the event planners are out of town. I asked for speaker biographies and that is how I found out about the whole thing. I hate this put you in a bad position, but no one was trying to undermine anyone. People were just trying to communicate and understand this afternoon. Understandably, at the conference you were not able to let us know where things stood. They should have waited to hear from you before they did anything. They were just trying to focus it on probate judges.

I am pulling for you at every angle and trying to support you in all the ways so please do not place blame for this one [sic] me. I support you.

195. Attorney Eastwood received notice of the State Bar complaint on December 10, 2025, and, after obtaining counsel, submitted a written response on January 7, 2026.

196. The State Bar's Office of General Counsel dismissed the complaint on February 12, 2026.

197. The Friday before Attorney Eastwood received the complaint, December 5, 2025, the Probate Section held its annual CLE seminar. Judge Blanchard spoke to a group of approximately 100 attorneys. During her speech, Judge Blanchard publicly praised both Attorneys Eastwood and Britton.

198. After receiving the State Bar complaint in December, Attorney Eastwood filed 22 motions to withdraw as guardian ad litem and 32 motions to recuse in cases before Judge Blanchard.

199. In the motions to recuse, Attorney Eastwood alleges that Judge Blanchard has a personal bias against her and, thus, should recuse from all cases in which Attorney Eastwood serves as the personal representative of an estate, counsel for a party or creditor, or a guardian

ad litem or administrator ad litem.

200. Judge Blanchard has failed to rule on the motions to recuse as of the filing of this complaint.

C. PATTERN AND PRACTICE OF BULLYING AND RETALIATION AGAINST PROBATE COURT STAFF

201. Beginning when she took office in January 2025 and continuing to the present, Judge Blanchard has consistently bullied and retaliated against probate court staff who are classified employees under the Jefferson County Personnel Board.⁹

202. The first day that Judge Blanchard began working at the Probate Court, she called one employee into her office and asked the employee if they liked the Chief Clerk Amanda Reid. The employee

⁹ See, e.g., Jinks v. Ala. Jud. Inq. Comm'n, 375 So. 3d 755, 763 (Ala. 2022) (removal of judge warranted for—among other things—“inappropriate expression of anger” toward staff); In re Blocton, No. 60, Final Judgment at 5 (Ala. Ct. Jud. Dec. 10, 2021) (removal of judge warranted for—among other things—“engag[ing] in a pattern of abuse of staff”); In re Shea, 759 So. 2d 631 (Fla. 2000) (removal of judge warranted for engaging in a pattern of hostility and antagonistic behavior towards lawyers, court staff, and other judges); In re Goshgarian, Order (Ill. Courts Comm’n, Nov. 18, 1999) (judge suspended for—among other things—retaliating against a court reporter); In re Flournoy, 990 P.2d 642 (Ariz. 1999) (judge suspended for shouting at lawyers and litigants, belittling lawyers in front of clients, and demeaning and threatening the court clerk).

responded that they did like Ms. Reid and had no issues with her. Judge Blanchard then said, “Oh, I forgot you all like kissing white ass.”¹⁰

1. Moving Staff to Bessemer

203. Less than two months after taking office, on March 11, 2025, (at 1:40 a.m.) Judge Blanchard ordered certain employees who had been assigned to the Birmingham Division to report to the Bessemer Division. She did this with no warning and minimal notice. The affected employees were directed to report to Bessemer two days later, on March 13, 2025. According to Judge Blanchard, additional staff was needed in Bessemer “for operation purposes” and “to accommodate the staff shortage” in Bessemer. Judge Blanchard stated in her email: “The request made to me by [Ikecona “Ike” Freeman] and [Gwendolyn Barber] (Judge Izzi) was specifically for ‘record clerks’ and for ‘judicial clerks.’” This was a

¹⁰ This an ethical violation in and of itself. See, e.g., In re Blocton, No. 60, Final Judgment at 5 (Ala. Ct. Jud. Dec. 10, 2021) (removal of judge warranted for—among other things—“engag[ing] in a pattern and practice of making inappropriate comments—for example, calling one judge an ‘Uncle Tom’ and another judge a ‘fat bitch’ and calling an employee a ‘heifer.’”). But it also evinces an irrational animus that Judge Blanchard held toward Ms. Reid that would come to dominate Judge Blanchard’s conduct and behavior toward Ms. Reid. As it was Judge Blanchard’s first day, Ms. Reid had not yet had an opportunity to do anything to antagonize Judge Blanchard, so the only logical conclusion is that Judge Blanchard was driven by personal animus.

complete fabrication and a pretext for her true motives for moving staff. Most of the staff moves were made to punish and retaliate against employees for perceived slights against Judge Blanchard.

204. In fact, Ms. Freeman made no request for any clerk, much less multiple clerks. Likewise, Ms. Barber did not request multiple clerks and did not request any “record clerks” or “judicial clerks.”¹¹ Ms. Barber was surprised when she found out that Judge Blanchard was sending multiple clerks.

205. Indeed, moving staff to Bessemer made little sense from a logistical standpoint, and Judge Blanchard was well aware of this. In an email that Judge Blanchard sent to staff and to fellow judges on March 21, 2025, she said that the “open cases Probate Court in the Birmingham Division totaled 742 as of January 21, 2025,” while the “open cases in Probate Court in the Bessemer Division totaled 172 as of January 21, 2025.” In other words, there were more than four times the number of open cases in the Birmingham Division versus the Bessemer Division.

¹¹ The Bessemer Division was in need of a single recording clerk (this is different from a record clerk, which will be discussed below). Indeed, they had gone through the entire interview process and were preparing to hire a recording clerk when Judge Blanchard took office and shut down the hiring process. No additional clerk was ever hired.

206. If anything, Bessemer was overstaffed, and the Birmingham Division had far greater need for the clerks that Judge Blanchard sent to Bessemer. Some days, certain staff did not have enough work to occupy their time.

207. For example, Judge Blanchard decided to reopen the record room in Bessemer and assigned a clerk to sit in the room full time.¹² At one time, the record room did have a full-time staff position, but the Jefferson County Commission had eliminated it years prior because there were very few customers coming in who needed to use the record room. And when customers did come in, an employee could take time from their other tasks to assist them. Multiple people tried to explain the situation to Judge Blanchard, but she had General Services put a desk in the record room and assigned a clerk to sit in there full time anyway. Once the record room was reopened, there was very little foot traffic. Some days, no customers came into the record room at all, and the clerk had nothing to do all day. After several months of having very little to do, the

¹² This “record clerk,” which Judge Blanchard referred to in her email, would be different from a “recording clerk.” The Recording Department is where a customer would come for assistance with filing a deed, mortgage, lien, contract, etc. The record room in Bessemer is where older, original documents reside.

clerk was retrained to do e-recording.

208. Ms. Barber even made a request to Judge Blanchard that the clerks be sent back to Birmingham because the need there was greater. Judge Blanchard refused and never offered any sort of reasoning or explanation for why the employees should stay in Bessemer.

209. Moving staff to Bessemer with minimal notice and no legitimate reason had a detrimental effect on the morale and mental health of staff and significantly increased the daily commute for some staff who were originally hired to work in the Birmingham Division.

210. For example, one clerk had an upcoming medical procedure that was not taken into account when Judge Blanchard ordered the employees to move to Bessemer with only two days' notice. The clerk sent an email to Judge Blanchard expressing multiple concerns about the move. Judge Blanchard did not respond to most of the issues raised by the clerk, including the matter of the scheduled medical procedure. Judge Blanchard merely reiterated that the clerk was to assist "with daily operations until operations in Bessemer are up to part [sic]."¹³

¹³ The stated reasons that Judge Blanchard offered as justification for moving employees to Bessemer, when she provided them at all, were

211. Another clerk sent an email to Judge Blanchard and to the Place 2 Judge on August 28, 2025, asking if she could be moved back to the Birmingham Division because her sister was dying of cancer. The clerk liked to visit her sister in the evenings after work and assist with her daily needs, and the commute to Bessemer—which was 35–40 minutes longer through heavy traffic—made visiting her sister more difficult. The Place 2 Judge expressed to the employee in person that there was nothing she could do because Judge Blanchard was the Presiding Judge of the Probate Court. Judge Blanchard never responded to the email at all. Shortly thereafter, the clerk’s sister died. The clerk was unable to make it to the hospital in time to say goodbye because she was stuck in traffic driving to the hospital from Bessemer.

212. Nine months later, Judge Blanchard ordered the Mental Health Coordinator, Glenn Newton (who was hired by the Jefferson County Commission in 2007 and has worked in the Birmingham Division since that time), to report to the Bessemer Division. Her stated reason was entirely pretextual. In reality, she ordered him to report to Bessemer

always vague. She claimed additional clerks were needed in Bessemer “for operation purposes” or “operational support and operational needs” or “daily operations” or “staff support” with no further explanation.

to punish and retaliate against him.

213. As with the other employees she moved to Bessemer, Judge Blanchard provided Mr. Newton with very little notice. She sent him an email on December 10, 2025, after work hours at 5:58 p.m., and ordered him to report to Bessemer the following morning, despite the fact that he had to be present in Birmingham the morning of December 11, 2025, for an involuntary commitment docket with the Place 2 Judge.

214. The stated reason for moving Mr. Newton to Bessemer was “the Jefferson County’s Probate Court’s initiative in enhancing and expanding mental health services to and at the Bessemer Probate Office.” However, aside from ordering Mr. Newton to report to Bessemer, Judge Blanchard took no steps whatsoever to “enhance[] and expand[] mental health services to and at the Bessemer Probate Office.” All mental health intake still took place in the Birmingham Division. And Judge Blanchard still required Mr. Newton “to perform [his] usual duties, assisting both [her]self and [the Place 2 Judge] with commitments.” Mr. Newton was required to physically sit with Judge Blanchard in her courtroom in Birmingham during commitment hearings (which she held virtually). There was no legitimate reason for Mr. Newton to be in Bessemer.

215. The true reason that Judge Blanchard ordered Mr. Newton to move to Bessemer was retaliation for taking actions that were meant to protect the due process rights of patients and that Judge Blanchard (improperly) considered to be “insubordinate.”

216. On September 19, 2025, Judge Blanchard entered an administrative order that all involuntary commitments would be assigned evenly between the Place 1 and Place 2 probate judges. Yet, she refused to hear more than six cases per day. See ¶¶ 32–33, supra. Mr. Newton was well aware that commitment cases must be heard pursuant to the statutory requirements of Ala. Code § 22-52-8 and that detaining a patient in violation of that statute violates their due process rights. See Burson v. State, 707 So. 2d 260, 261 (Ala. Civ. App. 1997).

217. Because Judge Blanchard refused to hear enough cases to prevent the due process rights of patients from being violated, that resulted in the Place 2 Judge picking up the slack and hearing more of those cases, upwards of 50 per month compared to less than 12 per month by Judge Blanchard.

218. Regardless, Judge Blanchard laid the blame for this disparity on Mr. Newton. Judge Blanchard engaged in in-person “counseling” with

Mr. Newton. In an email sent to Mr. Newton on November 17, 2025, Judge Blanchard reiterated that “all Mental Commitment cases are to be divided equally amongst [the Place 2 Judge] and myself per my directives as your supervisor.” She went on to say, “This has not been happening and you are not processing these as I instructed after many verbal requests and in-person requests. Under no circumstances should the dockets be divided in any other way unless you receive directives from me (or through Andrew who is a conduit of me). Your actions and conduct are insubordinate and adverse to my instructions.”¹⁴

219. On December 8, 2025, the presiding circuit judge had a letter hand-delivered to Judge Blanchard informing her that she had received complaints regarding Judge Blanchard’s commitment hearings. See ¶ 39, supra.

220. Two days later, on December 10, 2025, at 5:58 p.m., Judge Blanchard sent the email to Mr. Newton ordering him to report to Bessemer the following morning.

¹⁴ The following day, Judge Blanchard was over an hour late for her involuntary commitment docket and canceled a hearing for a patient who was prepared to be discharged—which would have allowed the patient to spend Thanksgiving with their family—rescheduling the hearing for December 2, 2025. See ¶¶ 24–30, supra.

221. On December 11, 2025, the Place 2 Judge sent an email to Judge Blanchard expressing concern because she had “been informed that I am limited to six cases” per day. Despite the fact that Judge Blanchard had told Mr. Newton in person to limit the number of cases for the Place 2 Judge to six per day, despite the fact that Judge Blanchard issued an administrative order on September 19, 2025, requiring the cases to be split equally, despite the fact that Judge Blanchard repeatedly admonished Mr. Newton for failing to follow her administrative order, and despite the fact that Judge Blanchard instructed her judicial assistant to send an email on November 24, 2025, that stated, “the maximum number of cases that can be set in one day is 6,” Judge Blanchard responded to the Place 2 Judge’s email with: “Please advise I have no idea of what you are speaking to in you [sic] email below.”¹⁵

222. On January 28, 2026, Mr. Newton sent a letter to Judge Blanchard’s judicial assistant Mr. Richards stressing the importance of complying with Alabama Code § 22-52-8 to ensure that the due process rights of patients were not being violated.

¹⁵ This is the same type of gaslighting behavior that others have experienced from Judge Blanchard. See ¶ 289, n.23, *infra*.

223. On March 19, 2026, Judge Blanchard sent an email to the deputy probate judge directing that Mr. Newton should have a workstation in Bessemer only and ordering that his workstation in Birmingham “be disassembled [sic] immediately.”¹⁶

224. Despite the fact that Judge Blanchard had described Mr. Newton’s reassignment to Bessemer as “temporary” in the email she sent on December 10, 2025, her directive to disassemble his furniture on March 19, 2026, confirms that she had no intention of ever allowing him to return to Birmingham, where he had worked for nearly two decades.

225. This is the same duplicitous strategy that Judge Blanchard utilized against the other employees that she ordered to report to Bessemer. When Chief Clerk Reid informed the affected staff members that they were being “transferred” to Bessemer, Judge Blanchard sent an email to Ms. Reid disputing that characterization. In an email sent on

¹⁶ This judge’s title is Deputy Judge of Probate for the Jefferson County Probate Court, Bessemer Division. This position has the same duties and responsibilities as the Chief Clerk for the Birmingham Division and has the authority to hear “non-controversial” matters. That includes adoptions, name changes, consent settlements, and petitions for probate of will. As Presiding Judge of the Probate Court, Judge Blanchard has appointing authority for the position. Judge Blanchard allowed the deputy probate judge to engage in harassment and intimidation of the probate court staff.

March 14, 2025, Judge Blanchard stated, "This email is a follow up email confirming that you met with the appropriate staff (those chosen for support for Bessemer) and made corrections as to your conversations regarding those staff members being permanently transferred to Bessemer." Judge Blanchard instructed Ms. Reid to tell the staff "that you miscommunicated that they were being 'transferred' permanently."

226. Judge Blanchard portrayed the move as temporary because a permanent transfer would have required her to follow proper Jefferson County policies and procedures, while she had more flexibility to move employees around on a temporary basis. However, she had no intention of allowing those employees to ever come back to Birmingham and repeatedly dismissed their efforts to return.

227. Judge Blanchard made comments to multiple employees revealing that she had no intention of ever allowing them to return. Although Judge Blanchard indicated in emails that the move was temporary, she told one clerk in March 2025 that she had the authority to make it permanent. She told another clerk, "I put you where I want you to be at" and that the clerk would not be coming back to Birmingham.

228. Eventually, when it became clear that Judge Blanchard would

never allow the employees to return, some employees¹⁷ reached out to the county manager and Chief Executive Officer of the Jefferson County Commission, and the county attorney.

229. On April 10, 2026, the county manager sent an email to Judge Blanchard notifying her that Chief Clerk Reid must report back to Birmingham the same day, April 10, and that the three other clerks that Judge Blanchard moved to Bessemer must return to Birmingham “no later than June 8, 2026,” allowing “ample time for you to fill the existing vacancies and ensure operational continuity.” The county manager stated: “This e-mail serves as formal notification that employees currently working under an unapproved reassignment at the Bessemer Courthouse Probate Department must return to their designated on-site work location at the Birmingham Courthouse Probate Department. Our records indicate there were four reassignments made affecting members of the Probate Department that was never submitted through the required approval process per PBJC Rule 11.9 and County procedure and

¹⁷ These are Merit System employees. They were hired by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County, not Judge Blanchard. The job was offered by “the Jefferson County Commission,” not Judge Blanchard. Their appointing authority is the county manager, not Judge Blanchard. And they must follow lawful directives from their appointing authority.

therefore are not authorized.”

230. Judge Blanchard responded to the county manager’s email two hours later and disputed his authority as county manager. She stated that “as the Department head for the Jefferson County Probate Court (Birmingham and Bessemer), I have instructed my staff to include the Chief Clerk Amanda Reid and all other staff (you have mentioned in your emails) as employees of the Jefferson County Probate Court directives otherwise and for them to remain in the Besser Probate Office for departmental ‘operational support and operational needs’.”

231. The county manager also sent an email to Mr. Newton the same day, April 10, 2026, copying Judge Blanchard, which stated: “This e-mail serves as confirmation of your required return to your designated work location at the Birmingham Courthouse Probate Department effective immediately.”

232. Judge Blanchard responded less than an hour later, stating: “I am in receipt of your email and I have instructed my staff to include Mr. Newton an employee of the Jefferson County Probate Court directives otherwise to remain in the Bessemer Probate Office for departmental ‘operational support’.”

233. Shortly thereafter, the same day, April 10, 2026, the deputy probate judge sent an email to the five affected employees, copying Judge Blanchard. It stated, "Report to assigned your work location, Bessemer Probate."

234. Presented with competing instructions, Chief Clerk Reid and Mental Health Coordinator Newton reported to Birmingham on April 10, 2026, as instructed by their appointing authority, the county manager. They were then swiftly retaliated against by Judge Blanchard for following lawful directives of their appointing authority.

235. On April 20, 2026, at 12:19 p.m., Judge Blanchard's judicial assistant, Mr. Aaron Lewis,¹⁸ sent an email to Mr. Newton, summoning him to Judge Blanchard's courtroom for a meeting 11 minutes later at 12:30. Present at the meeting were Judge Blanchard, the deputy probate judge, Mr. Lewis, and Judge Blanchard's bailiff, Mr. James Dozier. Judge Blanchard presented Mr. Newton with a "second notice regarding your failure to report to your assigned office as previously directed." It stated that "[f]ailure to comply with this directive may result in further

¹⁸ Judge Blanchard's prior judicial assistant, Mr. Andrew Richards, resigned at the beginning of March.

disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination of employment.” It also commanded that “[a]ll personal items are to be removed from the Birmingham location immediately.” Mr. Newton refused to sign.

236. Judge Blanchard took even more extreme steps to retaliate against Chief Clerk Reid. On Friday, April 17, 2026, at 12:38 p.m., Judge Blanchard sent an email to multiple parties, including Ms. Reid, Mr. Lewis, the deputy probate judge, and Mr. Dozier, the subject line of which was: “Birmingham Office- to be cleared today by General Services.” The email stated that Ms. Reid “should still be located at the Bessemer Probate Court as I directed her.” The email also directed that Judge Blanchard’s judicial assistant Mr. Lewis would be moving into Ms. Reid’s office in Birmingham and that General Services should “store all furniture in Amanda’s office in the lockers up stairs while assisting her.” Ms. Reid was to be moved from an office to a cubicle.

237. On April 20, 2026, Mr. Lewis sent an email to Ms. Reid, Judge Blanchard, the deputy probate judge, and Mr. Dozier stating that Judge Blanchard “has requested that all furniture in Amanda Reid office to be removed from the office and stored in probate’s locker.”

238. On April 23, 2026, Ms. Reid was summoned to Judge Blanchard's courtroom at approximately 3:00 p.m. Ms. Reid was in the middle of conducting a will docket, but Judge Blanchard ordered her to report immediately, resulting in a delay in the final hearing, which was scheduled for 3:00. At the meeting were Judge Blanchard, Mr. Lewis, and two other individuals. At the meeting, Judge Blanchard gave Ms. Reid a verbal warning for failing to vacate her office swiftly enough. Ms. Reid responded that she was never provided with any boxes or moving materials. Judge Blanchard said that she would get General Services to get boxes for Ms. Reid. Yet, Judge Blanchard did not follow through on that assurance. Ms. Reid asked how she could continue to do her work. Judge Blanchard advised her to get a laptop. Ms. Reid expressed concern that she could not secure sensitive materials in a cubicle. Judge Blanchard replied that those could be locked in a jury room. Judge Blanchard also claimed that she would submit an official IT support ticket to move Ms. Reid's office equipment to her new location. She never did. Ms. Reid submitted her own IT support ticket. IT responded that the equipment would be moved Monday, April 27, 2026. Despite having no boxes or moving materials, Ms. Reid spent several hours on April 23 and

24, 2026, moving her things to her new location.

239. Ms. Reid's new location at the Birmingham office was a cubicle in Room 150. Located at another cubicle directly behind Ms. Reid's cubicle was Judge Blanchard's bailiff, Mr. Dozier.¹⁹ Ms. Reid no longer feels safe working under these conditions.

240. On April 24, 2026, Ms. Reid went to her former office to print Judge Blanchard's docket. When Judge Blanchard discovered she was there, Judge Blanchard summoned Ms. Reid to her office. Judge Blanchard directed Ms. Reid to sit on the couch next to the deputy probate judge, which Ms. Reid found intimidating. Judge Blanchard yelled at Ms. Reid for failing to vacate her former office quickly enough.²⁰ Ms. Reid informed Judge Blanchard that she had been printing out Judge Blanchard's docket. Judge Blanchard asked if there was a printer in the

¹⁹ Mr. Dozier has been described as highly intimidating, not just by other employees but also by attorneys who practice in Judge Blanchard's courtroom. At Judge Blanchard's direction, he does not allow anyone into her courtroom unless they are directly involved with the case, even for cases that should be open to the public. Everyone else is forced to wait in the hall. If you try to enter the courtroom, Mr. Dozier will "bite your head off." He has aggressively gotten in the face of attorneys.

²⁰ This is consistent with Judge Blanchard's behavior in other contexts. Indeed, she even yelled at the presiding circuit judge during a meeting with her on December 16, 2025.

cubicle room. Ms. Reid replied that there was not, since IT was not going to be moving the printer until Monday, April 27, 2026. Judge Blanchard then left the room for a short time with the deputy probate judge. When they returned, Judge Blanchard told Ms. Reid that as her department head and direct supervisor, she was ordering Ms. Reid to return to Bessemer. Ms. Reid reminded Judge Blanchard that her appointing authority the county manager had directed her to report to Birmingham. Judge Blanchard then told Ms. Reid that she was going to write her up.

241. Later that day, April 24, 2026, the deputy probate judge summoned Ms. Reid to a desk outside of Judge Blanchard's office. Judge Blanchard was not present. Ms. Reid was served with a "Notice to Employee of Contemplated Disciplinary Action," signed by Judge Blanchard and signed by the deputy probate judge as "Hand Delivered." It listed "Insubordination" as Ms. Reid's infraction and stated: "You refused to report to the Bessemer Division to handle 'operational support & needs' as told/instructed by your Department Head which constitutes 'insubordination' while remaining in office after you were told to move from on (2) occasions [sic] in the Birmingham Division after being told several times." In the section for specific incidents, Judge Blanchard

listed “Failure to return to assigned duty station in Bessemer Courthouse fro [sic] ‘operational needs/support’” and “Failure to move to office as told on two occassions [sic] by email and once verbally.”

242. The deputy probate judge also presented Ms. Reid with a “second notice regarding your failure to report to your assigned office as previously directed.”²¹ It instructed Ms. Reid to “report to your designated work location at the Bessemer Courthouse” and that “[f]ailure to comply with this directive may result in further disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination of employment” and that “[a]ll personal items are to be removed from the Birmingham location immediately.” Ms. Reid refused to sign.

243. On both Ms. Reid’s letter and Mr. Newton’s letter, there were blank lines where Judge Blanchard filled in their names and dates. Otherwise, the bodies of the letters were identical.

244. On April 30, 2026, Ms. Reid provided a written response by email to Judge Blanchard, copying appropriate Jefferson County employees, including the county manager and the county attorney.

²¹ It is unclear what the first notice would have been, but Ms. Reid believes that a verbal warning given by Judge Blanchard the day prior, April 23, 2026, to return to Bessemer may have been the first notice.

245. The next day, May 1, 2026, the county attorney responded to all and stated, "I have reviewed this matter as presented. All request[s] to initiate disciplinary actions originate with review, evaluation and preparation by this office. We review these request[s] to ensure their appropriateness as well as any legal implications that may result from their initiation. That did not occur in this instance. Disciplinary action will not lie where an employee is acting at the lawful direction of his or her appointing authority."

246. Judge Blanchard responded to the email three days later on May 4, 2026. In the email, Judge Blanchard asked if the county attorney was "representing Ms. Reid in this matter" and if "another authority is supervising probate staff" and "providing Ms. Reid with her daily assignments." Judge Blanchard reiterated that "there are tasks that I need performed in Bessemer by Ms. Reid," although yet again, those tasks are not specified anywhere in the email.

247. Less than an hour later, May 4, 2026, the county attorney responded, stating: "My email, along with the supporting authority states the procedure for disciplinary actions against Merit System Employees. The email does not reference day to day operations or assignments. I

along with members of this office represent Jefferson County, this includes potential appeals to the Personnel Board by employees which is why the Commission vest[s] this process with us.”

248. Despite the written response provided by Ms. Reid on April 30, 2026, and despite the communication from the county attorney informing Judge Blanchard that she failed to initiate disciplinary actions in the appropriate manner, Judge Blanchard sent another email to Ms. Reid on May 5, 2026, in which she wrote, “you have been instructed to report to Bessemer.”

249. Ms. Reid responded to Judge Blanchard’s email less than three hours later, May 5, 2026, copying the county manager and the county attorney. In that email, she stated: “My appointing authority is [the county manager], and he has directed that I am to report to Birmingham, and I intend to follow that directive.”

250. Twenty minutes later, May 5, 2026, Judge Blanchard responded by email. In that email, Judge Blanchard stated: “As the Chief Clerk of Probate, it’s not within your ‘purview’ or ‘job duties’ to determine how the Bessemer Courthouse should operate (function) and with what staff.” She went on to state: “In closing, all of my staff reassignments have

been authorized by me as the department head and for a good reason (operational needs/ staff support).”

251. On May 13, 2026, Judge Blanchard met with Ms. Reid and verbally notified her that she would be written up for “insubordination” for failure to report to the Bessemer Division.

252. Ms. Reid sent an email to Judge Blanchard the following day, May 14, 2026, attaching a written response to the verbal notification, and copied the county manager and the county attorney.

253. The county attorney responded to all by email the following day, May 15, 2026. The final paragraph of the email states: “To be clear, the county manager’s directive is that the Chief Clerk[’s] Office is to be in Birmingham and that her day to day functioning as contemplated in her job description should be performed here. Nothing in that directive means that the Clerk is prohibited from going to Bessemer as necessary to fulfill her duties. It is important however to understand that as the Chief Clerk she is authorized to direct and delegate subordinate staff to achieve the directives of the Department Head.”

254. The other three employees who were directed by the county manager and county attorney to return to the Birmingham Division on

June 8, 2026, all fear that Judge Blanchard will retaliate against them and attempt to discipline them upon their return to Birmingham.

255. Judge Blanchard's actions in moving multiple employees to the Bessemer Division when the needs in the Birmingham Division were much greater, in addition to being bullying and retaliatory behavior, had the effect of exacerbating the problems with delay experienced in the Birmingham Division.

2. January 5, 2026, Meeting

256. On December 23, 2025, the deputy probate judge sent an email to all of the probate staff in Bessemer. It stated: "Please be advised, Judge Blanchard will be holding a mandatory meeting with the Bessemer staff on January 5, 2026 at 8:30am. Please make plans to be present." That would have been the first Tuesday of 2026.

257. At the meeting on January 5, 2026, for well over an hour, Judge Blanchard told staff that if anyone went "over her head" and talked to the Jefferson County Commission's Human Resources Department (hereinafter "HR"), any other Jefferson County authorities, or "anyone," it would be treated as "insubordination" and that employee would be disciplined, including suspension or termination.

258. Judge Blanchard told employees that if anyone tried to report her to HR, they had first better make sure that they themselves are “clean.”

259. Judge Blanchard told employees that they might assume that any complaints would remain confidential, but in reality “people come tell me.” And that “any time you complain, it gets back to me.”

260. At that meeting, Judge Blanchard declared that she was the “ultimate authority” and that she had no boss. She told the staff that whatever she says goes.

261. Judge Blanchard also threatened to take away mileage reimbursements if the employees did not comply with her commands.

262. Judge Blanchard’s warning not to speak with anyone outside the Probate Court was intended to be and was taken as a threat by the employees she spoke to.

3. Response to Lawful JIC Subpoena

263. On April 13, 2026, the Commission issued a lawful subpoena to Ms. Reid in her official capacity as “Chief Clerk, Jefferson County Probate Court” to provide certain probate court case files pursuant to its authority under Ala. Const. art. VI, § 156(d) and Rule 7 of the Alabama

Rules of Procedure for the Judicial Inquiry Commission.

264. On April 20, 2026, Ms. Reid received the subpoena from the Commission.

265. The same day, April 20, 2026, Ms. Reid notified the county attorney by email and attached the subpoena. The county attorney directed Ms. Reid to comply with the subpoena according to its deadlines because responding to it was mandatory, not discretionary. The deadline for complying with the subpoena was May 1, 2026.

266. On May 5, 2026, Judge Blanchard learned that Ms. Reid had responded to a lawfully-issued subpoena from the Commission. The same day, Judge Blanchard sent an email to Ms. Reid, the deputy probate judge, and her judicial assistant, Mr. Lewis, in which she indicated that any and all tasks assigned by herself and the deputy probate judge should be completed before complying with a lawfully-issued subpoena from the Commission. Judge Blanchard stated: "Please advise that all assigned office work is to be performed **first** and myself with [the deputy probate judge] are to be reported to if [sic] are deviating from your daily tasks for any and all requests or demands" (emphasis added). Judge Blanchard directed the deputy probate judge to "make sure all tasks for Bessemer

has [sic] been completed and are being worked on.” And Judge Blanchard reiterated to Ms. Reid that “there is outstanding work that must be completed in Bessemer per my directives and [the deputy probate judge]’s directives.”

267. Less than three hours later, Judge Blanchard sent a second email to Ms. Reid, the deputy probate judge, and Mr. Lewis. Judge Blanchard stated: “Amanda please advise me as to whom directed you to answer a JIC -subpoena [sic] when you have been served a notice for ‘disciplinary actions’ initiated by me this month.”

268. Judge Blanchard also stated in the email: “Please refer to [the deputy probate judge] so that all subpoena requests can be executed and fulfilled by whomever she assigns to completed [sic] the request (a person that is no [sic] undergoing disciplinary actions).”

269. Shortly thereafter, the same day, Ms. Reid responded to Judge Blanchard’s first email, copying the county manager and the county attorney. She informed Judge Blanchard that responding to a Commission subpoena was mandatory, not discretionary, and that she had checked with the county attorney and followed his directions to respond to the lawfully-issued subpoena.

270. Twenty minutes later, Judge Blanchard responded by email that she was “in total disagreement with your email response.” She went on to state: “Again, you have been given a verbal warning as to your outstanding assignments and as to your insubordinate conduct, Amanda.”

4. **Manufacturing Performance Issues and Additional Retaliation Against Chief Clerk Amanda Reid**

271. When Judge Blanchard discovered that Ms. Reid had complied with a lawfully-issued subpoena from the Commission, the retaliation and bullying continued and intensified. In addition to the issues discussed above, Judge Blanchard also attempted to manufacture a performance issue regarding dockets and consent settlements.²²

272. On May 13, 2026, Judge Blanchard presented Ms. Reid with a Performance Improvement Plan. Ms. Reid refused to sign it. Although the document listed several supposed “Areas of Concern” without elaboration, the thrust of the document was that Ms. Reid was “not completing tasks” (i.e., consent settlements and docket preparation).

273. Regarding preparing dockets, Judge Blanchard imposed

²² Consent settlements had not traditionally been part of Ms. Reid’s job duties. She took on the task amid staffing changes in Bessemer.

conditions on Ms. Reid that made completion of the task much more difficult. For example, case files were typically held in Judge Blanchard's chambers or in her judicial assistants' offices, but Judge Blanchard had revoked Ms. Reid's badge access to those areas. Ms. Reid repeatedly emailed other staff looking for files between December 2025 and April 2026, including Judge Blanchard's former judicial assistant, Mr. Richards, but responses to those emails were often delayed or never came at all.

274. Additionally, as discussed above in ¶¶ 238–39, supra, Ms. Reid was forced to move out of her office with very little warning in late April 2026. Judge Blanchard had Ms. Reid's office cleared out, the furniture stored, and moved her to an open cubicle area next to Judge Blanchard's bailiff, Mr. Dozier. Judge Blanchard did not ensure that Ms. Reid had access to a computer or a printer to complete the task of preparing dockets. And when Ms. Reid attempted to access her former office to print things out for Judge Blanchard's docket, she was summoned to Judge Blanchard's office where Judge Blanchard proceeded to scream at and reprimand her and attempted to initiate formal disciplinary actions against her for not vacating the office quickly

enough.

275. Likewise, regarding the consent settlements, the conditions that Judge Blanchard imposed, as discussed above, made their completion more difficult. Moreover, some files were boxed up and moved to a storage locker along with Ms. Reid's furniture when Judge Blanchard had her office cleared out, which Ms. Reid did not discover until later.

276. Judge Blanchard ordered Ms. Reid to go to Bessemer once a week to pick up the physical consent settlement files. There was no reason for this, as Ms. Reid could access the files virtually through the Probate Court's online system. And traveling to and from Bessemer for a purposeless task wasted time that Ms. Reid could have been spending on her other tasks, including actually completing the consent settlements.

277. On April 29, 2026, the deputy probate judge sent Ms. Reid an email stating: "You were given the responsibility of handling consent settlements within the Bessemer Probate office. There are several cases that need to be completed. Please ensure that each consent settlement is handled with accuracy, timeliness, and professionalism." Ms. Reid responded two hours later with, "I am continuing to complete the consent settlements."

278. On May 4, 2026, at 3:32 p.m., the deputy probate judge sent an email to Ms. Reid, copying Judge Blanchard and her judicial assistant, Mr. Lewis, that stated: "Please complete the consent settlements in Bessemer by close of business on Wednesday, May 6, 2026." That was the entire body of the email. No reason was given why all of the consent settlements needed to be completed in two days. It was an impossible task.

279. On May 4, 2026, at 3:33 p.m., one minute after the deputy probate judge sent her own consent settlement email, Judge Blanchard responded and stated: "Please confirm these have been completed Amanda."

280. After Judge Blanchard became aware that Ms. Reid had complied with a lawfully-issued subpoena from the Commission, she became especially insistent that the consent settlements needed to be completed immediately. In an email sent May 5, 2026, Judge Blanchard stated in reference to the subpoena: "Please advise that all assigned office work is to be performed first and myself with [the deputy probate judge] are to be reported to if are deviating from your daily tasks for any and all requests or demands." She went on to say, "please meet with [the deputy

probate judge] while making her privy of your deviations from your daily tasks” and told the deputy probate judge to “make sure all tasks for Bessemer has [sic] been completed and are being worked on.” Judge Blanchard closed with, “Again, Amanda there is outstanding work that must be completed in Bessemer per my directives and [the deputy probate judge]’s directives.” In a follow-up email sent the same day, Judge Blanchard told Ms. Reid that she was available “to touch bases on the incomplete tasks that I have brought to your attention on last week / this week.”

281. Despite the obstacles that Judge Blanchard placed in her way and despite the impossibility of the task, Ms. Reid worked diligently to complete as much as she could. On May 6, 2026, at 4:33 p.m., Ms. Reid sent an email to Judge Blanchard and the deputy probate judge explaining in detail “the status of the Bessemer consent settlements.”

282. On May 7, 2026, Judge Blanchard sent a follow-up email to the deputy probate judge and Ms. Reid asking, “Judge were these tasks performed timely?” Less than an hour later, the deputy probate judge responded: “They have not all been completed. Of the twenty-one cases, six need to be completed, two that need the petition scanned in, one with

an outstanding claim, two have an outstanding cost bill, and one has an outstanding claim. It appears that nine have been completed and a new one came in today.”

283. On May 12, 2026, the deputy probate judge sent an email to Ms. Reid asking her to “please send me an update on the status of the Consents Settlements.” Judge Blanchard responded to the email the same day and stated: “Aaron please schedule a meeting for all included on this email [only Mr. Lewis, Ms. Reid, and the deputy probate judge] so we can formally discuss this in the record.”

284. The following day, May 13, 2026, Judge Blanchard presented Ms. Reid with the Performance Improvement Plan. The “Date Issued” is listed as May 6, 2026, the same arbitrary deadline that Judge Blanchard and the deputy probate judge had given Ms. Reid to complete the consent settlements, and one day after Judge Blanchard learned of the Commission’s subpoena.

285. Despite the purported purpose of the Plan being “to provide a clear pathway to meet the expectations of the Probate Judge’s Office,” it is vague. One of these “Areas of Concern” was “Professional Conduce [sic].” The “Observed Issue” in that area was “Insubordination.” Yet,

nothing in the Plan explains what the supposed “Insubordination” was. It claims that Ms. Reid was “[n]ot following directives.” Yet, nothing in the plan identifies which directives she supposedly refused to follow.

286. Judge Blanchard and the deputy probate judge were aware that Ms. Reid could access the consent settlements virtually through the Probate Court’s online system, and the only justification they had given her to travel back and forth from Bessemer at that time was to pick up the consent settlement files. On May 14, 2026, the deputy probate judge sent an email, copying Judge Blanchard, Judge Blanchard’s judicial assistant Mr. Lewis, and four other employees (but not Ms. Reid), which stated: “Do not do any scans on consent settlements unless you receive directives from Judge Blanchard.”

287. In short, Judge Blanchard and the deputy probate judge gave Ms. Reid tasks, hindered or eliminated her ability to complete them, then attempted to discipline her for it, with the transparent end goal being “termination of employment” if Ms. Reid failed to “demonstrate significant and sustained improvement in the areas identified,” which were left vague.

288. However, the retaliation and bullying behavior from Judge

Blanchard involving the dockets and consent settlements was nothing new. Even more so than with other employees, Judge Blanchard directed her ire toward Ms. Reid. From early in her tenure, Judge Blanchard attempted to manufacture performance issues for Ms. Reid in an apparent attempt to portray her as “insubordinate” and/or incompetent.

289. On February 10, 2025, less than a month after taking the bench, Judge Blanchard held a meeting in which she instructed Ms. Reid to order work cell phones for Ms. Reid and two others because it was easier for Judge Blanchard to contact them that way outside of normal business hours. Ms. Reid put in the order. On February 13, 2025, the Communications Coordinator for IT confirmed by email that he had issued the cell phones. Two days later, February 15, 2025, Judge Blanchard sent an email to several employees and IT ordering that IT “discontinue the issuance of any more cell phones.” Judge Blanchard then sent an email to Ms. Reid only in which she claimed that she had never directed Ms. Reid to order cell phones at any meeting. Ms. Reid sent a follow-up email the same day expressing surprise and reminding Judge Blanchard of the directive she gave at the meeting on February 10. Judge Blanchard sent an email less than 30 minutes later saying, “I do not

recall giving these instructions.”²³

290. On March 10, 2025, Judge Blanchard informed Ms. Reid verbally that she would be transferring four clerks from Birmingham to Bessemer. Judge Blanchard also had conversations with others in which she portrayed the staff moves as a “transfer.” Ms. Reid spoke to several clerks, notifying them of the transfer. On March 12, 2025, in response to an email from one of those clerks, Judge Blanchard sent an email stating that “the word ‘transfer’ was never mentioned in emails” and claimed that the clerk “received miscommunications from” Ms. Reid. On March 14, 2025, Judge Blanchard sent an email to Ms. Reid admonishing her for “miscommunicat[ing] that [the clerks] were being ‘transferred’ permanently” and directing her to “correct any misunderstandings relayed to them.”

291. On April 9, 2025, Judge Blanchard’s former judicial assistant, Mr. Richards, at Judge Blanchard’s direction, sent an email to

²³ The issue of Judge Blanchard giving verbal instructions, then claiming later to never have given them is not restricted to Ms. Reid. Multiple people have described frequent “gaslighting” behavior by Judge Blanchard. Employees discovered that they needed to document everything in writing because Judge Blanchard would “play games.” Indeed, Ms. Reid even began sending emails to herself to have a contemporaneous record of certain behavior and events.

Ms. Reid falsely accusing her of “not consult[ing] with me to ask about her calendar before you schedule a case,” resulting in the “appear[ance] that she is cancelling court cases.” Ms. Reid responded to the email 40 minutes later stating: “Good morning, Andrew and Judge Blanchard. As you know, I have attempted to discuss your docket with you multiple times since you began your term and I have always been told that you were ‘working with [another employee]’ on that.” Several hours later, Judge Blanchard wrote back, “The statements made in the email reply are not true Amanda.”²⁴

292. On April 29, 2025, a meeting took place between Judge Blanchard, Mr. Richards, and Ms. Reid. Almost a week later, on May 5, 2025, Judge Blanchard sent an email to Ms. Reid titled “Verbal Counseling Meeting Recap.” In the email, Judge Blanchard accused Ms. Reid of “misconduct” and a “‘verbal outburst at an employee’ in my

²⁴ The issue of Judge Blanchard’s calendar was not restricted to Ms. Reid. Judge Blanchard was very secretive about her calendar and required everyone to coordinate through Mr. Richards. At times, a conference would appear on Judge Blanchard’s calendar that conflicted with an already-scheduled hearing or docket, and no one would reach out to the clerks to ask them to reschedule any hearings. An employee began discreetly printing and providing Judge Blanchard’s calendar to those responsible for scheduling hearings to help reduce cancellations.

presence.” Judge Blanchard claimed that Ms. Reid “yell[ed] at Andrew in my presence” and went on to state: “These outbursts can cause a hostile environment which can trigger physical altercations too in some instances.” Judge Blanchard also said, “Raising your voice and yelling at staff members is not conducive in the department when speaking with staff.” None of this was true. Ms. Reid did not yell at Mr. Richards.

293. On May 12, 2025, Ms. Reid sent an email to Judge Blanchard, copying Mr. Richards and the deputy county manager, to address the “false allegations that I ‘yelled’ at Andrew and am creating a ‘hostile environment which can trigger physical altercations too in some instances.’” She stated: “As you well know, I never raised my voice, and as every judge I have worked for would attest to, I conduct myself professionally and respectfully in a manner that would never constitute a ‘hostile environment’ that could ‘trigger physical altercations.’”

294. On May 13, 2025, Judge Blanchard responded by email, in which she stated: “I am super perplexed as to why [the deputy county manager] is copied to your email to me? [The deputy county manager] is not the department head for Probate Court and I am perplexed because I do not report to [the deputy county manager]. I report to the citizens of

Jefferson County.”

295. The same day, May 13, 2025, but prior to sending the email regarding the deputy county manager (in fact, at 2:52 a.m.), Judge Blanchard sent an email titled “Role Modifications to Support Operations in Bessemer Division.” In that email, Judge Blanchard ordered Ms. Reid to “report to Bessemer Probate Court” from “Monday through Thursday normally [sic] business hours.” Judge Blanchard also assigned a different clerk to “assume additional responsibilities” at the Birmingham Division, including “managing day to day operations and managing staff directly.” In other words, 18 hours after Ms. Reid sent an email disputing Judge Blanchard’s “false allegations,” Judge Blanchard moved her to Bessemer and functionally removed her from the role of Chief Clerk of the Birmingham Division, leaving her with the title only. She was stripped of her responsibility to supervise staff in the Birmingham Division, which is specifically listed in the job description for Chief Clerk. And when the deputy probate judge was appointed by Judge Blanchard in June 2025, Ms. Reid was stripped of her responsibility to supervise staff in Bessemer as well. She was introduced to a new employee as “the clerk who works on our documents and files” rather than the Chief Clerk, she was directed

to work the front counter, she was excluded from training and supervisory functions, and she was told that she was not the supervisor of anyone in Bessemer.

296. In the same email, May 13, 2025, Judge Blanchard assigned Ms. Reid to take over payroll and accounting duties from an employee who was retiring. This was part of a pattern by Judge Blanchard of assigning Ms. Reid an impossible workload (which includes the consent settlement and docket issues discussed above at ¶¶ 272–87, supra).

297. Shortly before this, on May 8, 2025, Judge Blanchard had ordered the immediate discontinuation of premium pay for several employees. She was upset that the pay had been approved by the prior judge. She stated in an email: “Please discontinue all premium pay that was authorized by [the previous presiding probate judge] or anyone else outside of me -as of today May 8, 2025, for all employees in which he or anyone else authorized.” This pay had been authorized to compensate staff for taking on additional docket-preparation duties beyond their normal responsibilities. The staff who were no longer being compensated for those additional duties stopped performing them. So on May 20, 2025, Judge Blanchard wrote an email to Ms. Reid only ordering her to take on

the additional docket-preparation work.²⁵

298. After the deputy probate judge's appointment in Bessemer in June 2025, the bullying and retaliatory treatment of Ms. Reid continued and intensified. On August 21, 2025, the deputy probate judge sent an email, which read in its entirety: "Good morning. I am writing to formally request you to relocate your workspace to the area across from [the] Principal Court Clerk." Ms. Reid responded 11 minutes later, copying Judge Blanchard, stating: "I do not feel that it is appropriate for the Chief Clerk of Probate Court to be asked to move to a cubicle on the floor when every other salaried employee has an office and I have multiple meetings and calls each day that cannot be conducted on the floor and perform work that does not often interface with the public. I feel that this request is clearly inappropriate and retaliatory and discriminatory in nature and perhaps could be best resolved through HR or the Personnel Board." Less than an hour later, Judge Blanchard's former judicial assistant Mr.

²⁵ The issue of Judge Blanchard assigning additional work to staff that was outside of or beyond the prescribed job duties is not restricted to Ms. Reid. For example, one employee in Bessemer took over the duties of the Principal Accountant position in Bessemer, which has been vacant since June 2025. That employee was told that the assigned duties would be temporary, but they are still performing those duties nearly a year later. In essence, they are performing two jobs for no extra compensation.

Richards sent the following email: “Per Judge Blanchard, please provide [the deputy probate judge] with whatever she needs and follow her instructions on whatever she wants to change or move around at the Bessemer Probate Court. [The deputy probate judge] is in charge of the Bessemer Probate court in Judge Blanchard’s absence.” Two days later, August 23, 2025, Judge Blanchard responded to Mr. Richards’ email with “Received.” She then responded to Ms. Reid’s email with “Received and (disagreed)/ discussed over the phone with a resolution.”

299. On August 25, 2025, at 9:25 p.m., Judge Blanchard sent an email to Ms. Reid and the deputy probate judge to provide a “recap to our conversation held on this past Saturday, August 23, 2025.” It stated that the deputy probate judge was Ms. Reid’s “Direct Report” and stressed that the deputy probate judge “has the authority [sic] issue verbal and written warnings for acts of potential insubordination to all staff members in the Bessemer Probate Court.”

300. On September 29, 2025, the deputy probate judge sent an email to Ms. Reid, copying Judge Blanchard, serving “as an official communication to clarify the expectations and responsibilities in your current role.” In the email, the deputy probate judge instructed Ms. Reid

to provide operational support, fill in for a clerk at the front counter, obtain approval for functions outside the office during work hours, and was no longer approved to attend events as a supervisor.

301. On the morning of September 30, 2025, the deputy probate judge sent an email to Ms. Reid asking if her docket and courtroom were prepared. Ms. Reid responded 20 minutes later, copying Judge Blanchard, listing out her many responsibilities: “Good morning. It was my understanding that [three other employees] assist with your dockets. I am in Birmingham for my weekly meeting with Judge Blanchard. If you wish for me to work on your dockets, it will require an adjustment to my current duties that include preparing all of Judge Blanchard’s and [the Place 2 Judge]’s Bessemer dockets, preparing Judge Blanchard’s Monday Birmingham dockets, payroll for Bessemer, assisting at the front counter for Bessemer, consent settlements for Bessemer, the Birmingham vertical file project, the courtroom audio and technology project, and assisting Judge Blanchard with administrative duties.” The following afternoon, Judge Blanchard responded by email, apologizing that she was “just checking this” because she had “been busy.” She directed that Ms. Reid would continue preparing the deputy probate judge’s cases and

orders but would not accompany her into the courtroom.

302. On December 30, 2025, the Jefferson County Commission's HR Division Manager emailed Ms. Reid, copying Judge Blanchard, asking "who will be the supervisor over the Principal Accountant and Senior Court Clerk vacancies?" Judge Blanchard responded just over an hour later stating: "At this time until these positions are filled [the] Deputy Chief Clerk [] and I are supervising all staff in the Birmingham Division." The Deputy Chief Clerk and her new responsibilities were mentioned multiple times in this email. Ms. Reid was not referenced at all, either by name or position. As Judge Blanchard confirmed with this email, Ms. Reid no longer supervised any staff in Birmingham, despite it being specifically listed in the job description for Chief Clerk, and she supervised no staff in Bessemer.

D. FAILURE TO MAINTAIN COMPETENCE IN ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

303. Judge Blanchard's actions have caused many administrative problems. On numerous occasions, clerks were unable to locate case files to prepare for hearings and dockets. Sometimes, they were in a location to which the clerk did not have access. Sometimes, Judge Blanchard's judicial assistant had them. Sometimes, they were at Judge Blanchard's

house. Judge Blanchard failed to maintain an effective system that allowed files to be located easily.

304. Judge Blanchard also repeatedly and willfully defied the Jefferson County Commission and Jefferson County Personnel Board rules and regulations issued pursuant to state law creating the Jefferson County Civil Service System by issuing directives that were contrary to those rules and regulations. Some of those issues regarding transferring staff to Bessemer and regarding ignoring instructions from the county attorney about disciplinary procedures are discussed above at ¶¶ 203–55, supra.

305. Judge Blanchard also ignored the Jefferson County Commission’s Administrative Order regarding its Inclement Weather Policy for all Jefferson County employees. On January 26, 2026, Judge Blanchard issued an administrative order closing the Probate Court due to “inclement weather and hazardous road conditions.” Employees were unsure what to do. As Merit System employees who were employed by the Jefferson County Commission, they were bound by the Inclement Weather Policy issued by the Jefferson County Commission, not by an administrative order issued by Judge Blanchard that ran contrary to that

policy. And staying home from work when the probate office should have been open could have affected their pay or required them to use a vacation day.

306. Later that day, Judge Blanchard sent an email in which she declared: "That order was lawful, intentional, and issued by the only individual with authority to do so, the Presiding Judge of this court." She went on to state: "Only the Presiding Judge has the authority to issue administrative orders governing office operations, closures, attendance, and compensation during such closures. No other employee, officer, or administrator has the power to override, reinterpret, or contradict a judicial administrative order. Any staff member who chooses to follow instructions from anyone other than my direct written or verbal notice does so entirely at their own risk. In such circumstances, compensation decisions will not be honored by this office, and the responsibility will rest solely with the employee who disregarded a lawful judicial order. Going forward, all employees are directed to rely only on official communications issued directly by my office regarding closures, attendance, and compensation. Conflicting guidance from any other source should be immediately disregarded and reported. This matter is

taken very seriously.”

307. On February 9, 2026, the chief administrative analyst for the county manager sent an email on his behalf regarding Judge Blanchard’s January 26, 2026, email noting that “Jefferson County Administrative Order 17-1 is the Inclement Weather Policy for all Jefferson County employees.” It went on to state: “As you are all aware, a couple of weeks ago, many areas of the state experienced inclement weather that warranted closures due to hazardous road conditions. Fortunately, Jefferson County was not affected. While state court closures and operations are directed by the Presiding Circuit Judge, only the County Commission can close the courthouse and set policy for County employees. The Probate Judge, while authorized to manage the Probate Court[']s day to day operations and functions, cannot usurp the Authority of the County Commission to set policy for Commission employees relative to their attendance and compensation during inclement weather events.”

III. CHARGES

CHARGE 1

PATTERN AND PRACTICE OF FAILING TO DILIGENTLY DISCHARGE JUDICIAL DUTIES

308. By failing to timely hold probable cause hearings in involuntary commitment cases, limiting the number of cases to be heard on dockets, failing to promptly and efficiently handle other probate cases, making frequent and inappropriate requests for appointments of special probate judges, as alleged in Paragraphs 15 through 77, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2A: A judge should respect and comply with the law and should conduct himself [or herself] at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

Canon 2B: A judge should avoid conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 3: A judge should perform the duties of his [or her] office impartially and diligently.

Canon 3A(5): A judge should dispose promptly of the business of the court, being ever mindful of

matters taken under submission.

Canon 3B: It is desirable that a probate judge should diligently discharge his [or her] administrative responsibilities.

CHARGE 2
PATTERN AND PRACTICE OF FAILING TO FOLLOW THE LAW

309. By improperly, and in bad-faith, removing attorneys as conservators in violation of black-letter statutory requirements, abusing her power of contempt, and ordering clerks to issue letters of conservatorship to a certain attorney without any indication of a bond amount, as alleged in Paragraphs 78 through 122, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2A: A judge should respect and comply with the law and should conduct himself [or herself] at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

Canon 2B: A judge should at all times maintain the decorum and temperance befitting his [or her] office and should avoid conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 3A(1): A judge should be faithful to the law and maintain professional competence in it.

Canon 3A(4): A judge should accord to every person who is legally interested in a proceeding, or his [or her] lawyer, full right to be heard according to law.

Canon 3B: It is desirable that a probate judge should diligently discharge his [or her] administrative responsibilities.

A probate judge should consider himself [or herself] the conservator of all estates under his [or her] jurisdiction.

CHARGE 3

PATTERN AND PRACTICE OF EXHIBITING BIAS AGAINST ATTORNEYS APPEARING IN JUDGE BLANCHARD'S COURT

310. By improperly removing attorneys as conservators in violation of black-letter, statutory requirements, abusing her power of contempt by holding an attorney in contempt, filing unfounded State Bar complaints against attorneys appearing in her court, filing a baseless police report against attorneys appearing in her court, and ordering an unwarranted forensic accounting of estates under the supervision of

certain attorneys, as alleged in Paragraphs 78 through 200, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2A: A judge . . . should conduct himself [or herself] at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

Canon 2B: A judge should at all times maintain the decorum and temperance befitting his [or her] office and should avoid conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 2C: A judge should not allow his [or her] family, social, political, or other relationships to influence his [or her] judicial conduct or judgment.

Canon 3A(3): A judge should be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom he [or she] deals in his [or her] official capacity, and should require similar conduct of lawyers, and of his [or her] staff, court officials, and others subject to his [or her] direction and control.

Canon 3C(1): A judge should disqualify himself [or herself] in a proceeding in which his [or her] disqualification is required by law or his [or her] impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to instances where:

(a) He [or she] has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party.

CHARGE 4
FAILURE TO DISQUALIFY FROM A CASE IN WHICH JUDGE
BLANCHARD SERVED AS AN ATTORNEY

91. By failing to disqualify from a case in which Judge Blanchard previously served as an attorney in the matter in controversy, as alleged in Paragraph 110, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2A: A judge . . . should conduct himself at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

Canon 2B: A judge . . . should avoid conduct prejudicial to

the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 3: A judge should perform the duties of his [or her] office impartially and diligently.

Canon 3B: It is desirable that a probate judge should diligently discharge his [or her] administrative responsibilities.

Canon 3C(1): A judge should disqualify himself [or herself] in a proceeding in which his [or her] disqualification is required by law or his [or her] impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to instances where:

....

(b) He [or she] served as a lawyer in the matter in controversy.

CHARGE 5
HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, AND RETALIATION AGAINST
PROBATE COURT STAFF

By exhibiting a pattern of bullying and retaliating against probate court staff, as alleged in Paragraphs 201 through 302, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or

herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2B: A judge should avoid conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 3A(3): A judge should be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom he [or she] deals in his [or her] official capacity, and should require similar conduct of lawyers, and of his [or her] staff, court officials, and others subject to his [or her] direction and control.

Canon 3B: It is desirable that a probate judge should . . . facilitate the performance of the administrative responsibilities of other judges and court officials.

CHARGE 6
ALLOWING OTHER COURT OFFICIALS SUBJECT TO JUDGE
BLANCHARD'S DIRECTION AND CONTROL TO ENGAGE IN
HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION OF PROBATE COURT
STAFF

By allowing the deputy probate judge to engage in harassment and intimidation of probate court staff, as alleged in Paragraphs 233, 241 through 242, 266, 277 through 287, and 298 through 301, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and

independence of the judiciary.

A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2B: A judge should avoid conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 3A(3): A judge should be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom he [or she] deals in his [or her] official capacity, and should require similar conduct of lawyers, and of his [or her] staff, court officials, and others subject to his [or her] direction and control.

Canon 3B: It is desirable that a probate judge should . . . require his [or her] staff and court officials subject to his [or her] direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to him [or her].

CHARGE 7
FAILURE TO MAINTAIN PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN
JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

By failing to maintain probate court files in an efficient and organized manner and by defying Jefferson County Personnel Board rules and regulations, as alleged in Paragraphs 303 through 307, jointly and severally, Judge Blanchard violated the following provisions of the

Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics:

Canon 1: A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

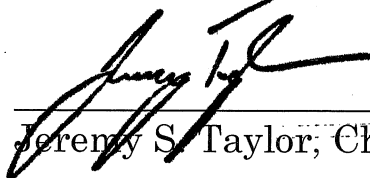
A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining . . . and should himself [or herself] observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved.

Canon 2B: A judge should avoid conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

Canon 3B: It is desirable that a probate judge should . . . require his [or her] staff and court officials subject to his [or her] direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to him [or her].

Done this 21st day of May, 2026.

THE JUDICIAL INQUIRY COMMISSION

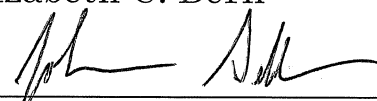


Jeremy S. Taylor, Chair

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION



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