STATE OF MINNESOTA

BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

1270 Northland Drive
Suite 160
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-296-3999

judicial.standards@state.mn.us
www.bjs.state.mn.us

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEMBERS AND STAFF*

Judge Members

Hon. Shereen M. Askalani *(Eff. 4/20)*
Fourth Judicial District
Bloomington, Minnesota

Hon. Louise Dovre Bjorkman
Minnesota Court of Appeals
St. Paul, Minnesota

Hon. Theresa M. Neo *(Eff. 4/20)*
Sixth Judicial District
Duluth, Minnesota

Hon. Ellen L. Maas
Tenth Judicial District
Stillwater, Minnesota

Hon. David L. Knutson *(Exp. 1/20)*
First Judicial District
Hastings, Minnesota

Attorney Members

Cindy K. Telstad, Chair
Winona, Minnesota

Timothy O'Brien
Edina, Minnesota

Public Members

Carol E. Cummins, M.B.A.
Golden Valley, Minnesota

Timothy Gephart *(Exp. 1/20)*
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Gerald T. Kaplan, M.A., L.P.
Wayzata, Minnesota

Debbie Toberman *(Eff. 4/20)*
Plymouth, Minnesota

Nhia Vang
Woodbury, Minnesota

Staff

Thomas M. Sipkins
Executive Secretary

John H. Fuller
Executive Assistant

Sara P. Boeshans
Staff Attorney

* Brief biographies are appended at the end of this report.

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the board members and staff of the Board on Judicial Standards, it is our pleasure to present this 2020 Annual Report of the Board on Judicial Standards to the citizens of Minnesota, Governor, Legislature, and the Minnesota Judiciary.

The board members take great pride in the hard work of the Board to provide education, ensure compliance with the Code of Judicial Conduct, review and investigate complaints, and recommend discipline of judges.

The Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards is charged with enforcing the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct and with interpreting the Code for the education of judges and others. The Minnesota Legislature created the Board in 1971 and provides its operational funds. The Governor appoints all Board members, including four judges, four public members, and two lawyers. The public members and the lawyers are subject to Senate confirmation. All board members serve in a volunteer capacity. The Minnesota Supreme Court adopts rules of the Code of Judicial Conduct and adopts procedural rules for the Board on Judicial Conduct.

The Judicial Code establishes a high standard for judicial conduct in the State of Minnesota. The Preamble to the Code states:

> The United States legal system is based upon the principle that an independent, impartial, and competent judiciary, composed of men and women of integrity, will interpret and apply the law that governs our society. Thus, the judiciary plays a central role in preserving the principles of justice and the rule of law. Inherent in all of the Rules contained in this Code are the precepts that judges, individually and collectively, must respect and honor the judicial office as a public trust and strive to maintain and enhance confidence in the legal system.
>
> Judges should maintain the dignity of judicial office at all times, and avoid both impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in their professional and personal lives. They should aspire at all times to conduct that ensures the greatest possible public confidence in their independence, impartiality, integrity, and competence.

The members of the Board take these principles to heart in carrying out their duties, and make every effort to fulfill the Board's mission.

The Board's primary function is to receive, investigate, and evaluate complaints of judicial misconduct. Complaints that do not allege conduct that violates the Code are dismissed. If the Board finds that a judge has violated the Code, the Board may issue private discipline or a public reprimand. In cases involving more serious misconduct, the Board may seek public discipline by filing a formal complaint against the judge with the Minnesota Supreme Court. After a public hearing, potential discipline imposed by the Supreme Court may include a reprimand, suspension, or removal from office. In addition

to cases involving misconduct, the Board has jurisdiction to consider allegations that a judge has a physical or mental disability.

Education is also an important Board function. The Board and its Executive Secretary respond to judges' requests for informal advisory opinions. The Board also issues formal opinions on subjects of importance. The Board's website provides a wealth of information, including links to the Code of Judicial Conduct, the Board's procedural rules, Board opinions, public discipline cases, annual reports, and other judicial conduct resources. In addition, the Executive Secretary gives presentations on current ethics topics to newly-appointed judges, at meetings of district court judges, and at state-wide judicial seminars. Finally, the Executive Secretary endeavors to maintain open and cordial relationships with the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Minnesota District Court Judges in an effort to maintain confidence in Board decisions and compliance with the Code.

In 2020, the Board received a total of 158 complaints, summarily dismissed 125, reviewed 33 complaints at board meetings, authorized investigations of 20 complaints, and issued discipline against two judges. The Board also issued seven letters of caution to judges regarding their conduct to point out areas in need of improvement. In addition, the Executive Secretary issued 150 informal advisory opinions to individual judges at their request.

The Board accomplished many important goals in 2020. These include:

- Board staff issued a high number of written informal advisory opinions to judges.
- Board members provided in-person and virtual guidance and advice to judges experiencing difficulties.
- The Board engaged in outreach and education for judges at bench meetings, seminars, and conferences. Executive Secretary Sipkins gave virtual presentations to many of the State's ten judicial districts, to provide education regarding judicial ethics. He has presented to each of the State's ten districts.
- Executive Secretary Sipkins and Staff Attorney Boeshans gave a virtual presentation to the Court of Appeals.
- Executive Secretary Sipkins and Board Member Judge David Knutson gave presentations at two training sessions for new judges.
- The Board updated "Minnesota Judicial Ethics Outline" on the Board's website. The Outline addresses a wide variety of subjects, such as the history of judicial discipline in Minnesota, case law interpreting the Code, and summaries of the Board's ethics opinions.
- The Board moved to a new office location in Mendota Heights.
- Judge members Shereen Askalani and Theresa Neo and public member Debbie Toberman joined the Board as new members at its May meeting.

We received notice of the re-appointment of the Court of Appeals judge member and the appointment of one new public member to the Board in 2021. It is a pleasure to

work with such dedicated and committed staff and board members to fulfill the Board's important mission.

Cindy K. Telstad
Chair of the Board on Judicial Standards
March 2021

INTRODUCTION

A society cannot function without an effective, fair, and impartial procedure to resolve disputes. In Minnesota, the Constitution and laws provide a system designed to fit these essential criteria. The preservation of the rule of law, as well as the continued acceptance of judicial rulings, depends on unshakeable public recognition that the judiciary and the court system are worthy of respect and trust.

Unlike the executive and legislative branches of government, the judiciary "has no influence over either the sword or the purse." The Federalist No. 78, at 465 (Alexander Hamilton). "The legal system depends on public confidence in judges, whose power rests in large measure on the ability to command respect for judicial decisions. Whether or not directly related to judicial duties, misconduct by a judge brings the office into disrepute and thereby prejudices the administration of justice." *In re Miera*, 426 N.W.2d 851, 858 (Minn. 1988).

It is the Board's mission to promote and preserve public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of our judicial system by enforcing the Judicial Code and by educating judges and others regarding proper judicial conduct.

AUTHORIZATION

The 1971 Legislature approved an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution authorizing the Legislature to "provide for the retirement, removal or other discipline of any judge who is disabled, incompetent or guilty of conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice." The 1971 Legislature also created the "Commission" (now "Board") on Judicial Standards and authorized the Supreme Court to make rules to implement the legislation. (Current version at Minn. Stat. §§ 490A.01-.03.) In 1972, Minnesota voters approved the constitutional amendment (Minn. Const. Art. VI, § 9), and the Minnesota Supreme Court adopted the Code.[*]

ORGANIZATION

The Board has ten members: one Court of Appeals judge, three district court judges, two lawyers, and four citizens who are not judges or lawyers. The Board members are

[*] Until 1972, Minnesota appellate and district court judges could be removed or suspended from office for misconduct only by the rarely used impeachment process, which involves impeachment by the Minnesota House of Representatives and conviction by the Minnesota Senate. Since 1996, judges have also been subject to recall by the voters, although this has never happened. Minn. Const. Art. VIII, § 6.

appointed by the Governor and, except for the judges, are subject to confirmation by the Senate. Members' terms are four years and may be extended for an additional four years.

The Board meets approximately eight times annually and more often if necessary. Non-judge members of the Board may claim standard State per diems as well as reimbursement for expenses such as mileage. Judge members are not paid per diems.

The Board is supported by a staff consisting of the Executive Secretary, an executive assistant, and a part-time staff attorney. At the direction of the Board, the staff is responsible for reviewing and investigating complaints, providing informal opinions to judges on the application of the Code, maintaining records concerning the operation of the office, preparing the budget, administering the Board funds, and making regular reports to the Board, the Supreme Court, the Legislature, and the public.

CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

The Minnesota Supreme Court has adopted the Code of Judicial Conduct to govern judicial ethics. Intrinsic to the Code are the precepts that judges, individually and collectively, must respect and honor the judicial office as a public trust and strive to enhance and maintain confidence in our legal system.

The Board considers only complaints involving the professional or personal conduct of judges. The Code is not construed so as to impinge on the essential independence of judges in making judicial decisions. Complaints about the merits of decisions by judges may be considered through the appellate process.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

The Rules of Board on Judicial Standards are issued by the Minnesota Supreme Court. Under its Rules, the Board has the authority to investigate complaints concerning a judge's conduct or physical or mental condition. If a complaint provides information that furnishes a reasonable basis to believe there might be a disciplinary violation, the Board may direct the Executive Secretary to conduct an investigation.

Under the Rules, the Board may take several types of actions regarding complaints. It may dismiss a complaint if there is not reasonable cause to believe that the Code was violated. A dismissal may be accompanied by a letter of caution to the judge. If the Board finds reasonable cause, it may issue a private admonition, a public reprimand, or a formal complaint. The Board may also defer a disposition or impose conditions on a judge's conduct, such as obtaining professional counseling or treatment.

The Board affords judges a full and fair opportunity to defend against allegations of improper conduct. If the Board issues a formal complaint or a judge appeals a public reprimand, a public hearing will be held. Hearings are conducted by a three-person panel appointed by the Supreme Court. After the hearing, the panel may dismiss the complaint, issue a public reprimand, or recommend that the Supreme Court impose more serious discipline, such as censure, suspension, or removal from office. If the panel recommends that the Court impose discipline or if the judge or the Board appeals the panel's action, the final decision is made by the Court.

If a judge appeals a private admonition, a private hearing will be held. Hearings are conducted by a three-person panel appointed by the Supreme Court. After the hearing, the panel may dismiss the complaint, affirm the admonition, or recommend that the Board issue a public reprimand or a formal complaint. If the judge appeals the panel's affirmance of an admonition, the Court makes the final decision.

All proceedings of the Board are confidential unless a public reprimand is issued or a formal complaint has been filed with the Supreme Court. The Board notifies complainants of its actions, including dismissals and private dispositions, and provides brief explanations.

An absolute privilege attaches to any information or testimony submitted to the Board, and no civil action against a complainant, witness, or his or her counsel may be based on such information.

AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION

The Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards has jurisdiction over complaints concerning the following judicial officials:

- State court judges, including judges of the District Courts, Court of Appeals and Supreme Court. There are 295 district court judge positions and 26 appellate judge positions.
- Approximately 103 retired judges in "senior" status, who at times serve as active judges.
- Judicial branch employees who perform judicial functions, including referees, magistrates, and other judicial officers.
- Judges of the Minnesota Tax Court (3) and the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals (5) and the Chief Judge of the Office of Administrative Hearings (1)[*]

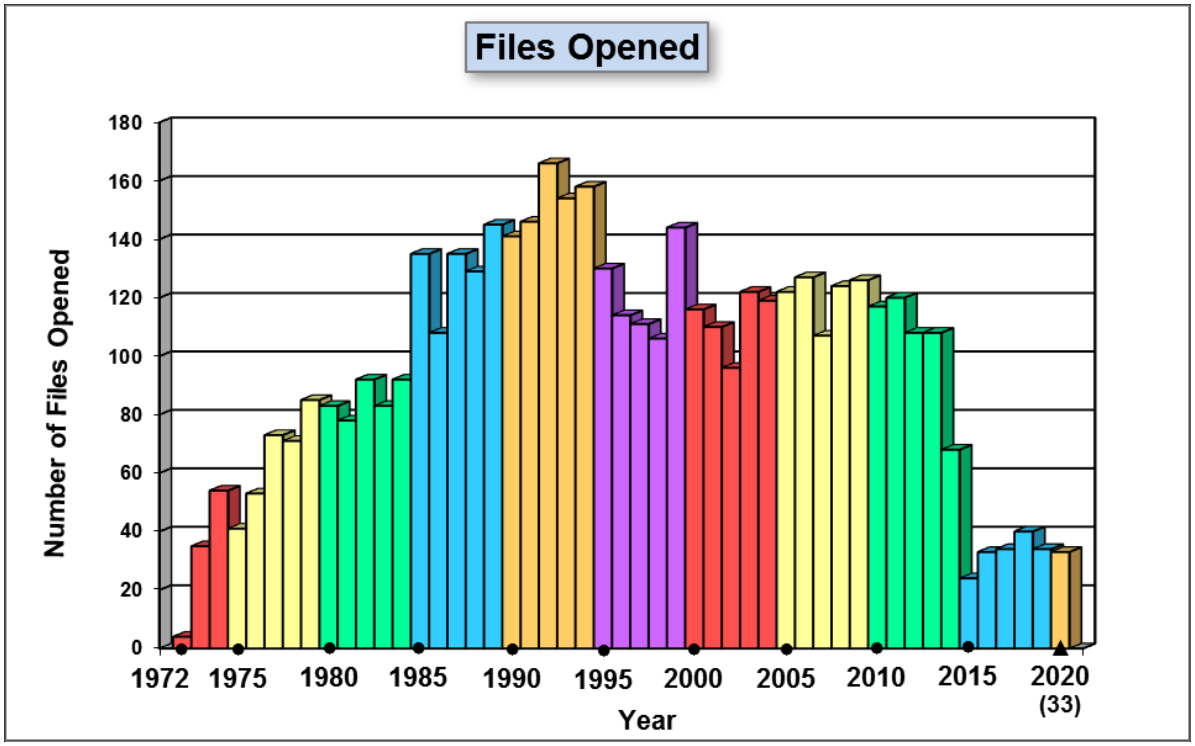
[*] *See* Rule 2, Rules of Board on Judicial Standards; Code of Judicial Conduct, "Application"; Minn. Stat. §§ 14.48, subds. 2 and 3(d), 175A.01, subd. 4, 271.01, subd. 1, 490A.03.

The Board does not have jurisdiction over complaints that concern the following persons:

- Court administrators or personnel, court reporters, law enforcement personnel, and other non-judicial persons.
- Federal judges. Complaints against federal judges may be filed with the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.
- Lawyers (except, in some circumstances, those who become judges or who were judges). Complaints against lawyers may be filed with the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility.

2020 COMPLAINT STATISTICS

In 2020, the Board opened 33 files based on written complaints alleging matters within the Board's jurisdiction. The number of files opened annually by the Board since 1972 is set forth below:



This chart shows a decline in the number of files opened beginning in 2014. The decline appears to be due to at least two factors.

First, in 2014, the Legislature transferred primary responsibility for enforcing the "90-day rule" from the Board to the chief judges of the judicial districts. The 90-day rule generally requires a judge to rule within 90 days after a case is submitted. Minn. Stat. § 546.27. Judicial Branch case-tracking reports of possible violations are now sent to the chief judges rather than to the Board.

Second, the chart reflects only matters that were reviewed by the full Board and does not reflect complaints that were summarily dismissed. If a complaint does not fall within the Board's jurisdiction, the complaint may be summarily dismissed by the Executive Secretary, subject to the approval of a single Board member. This procedure avoids the inefficiency of requiring the full Board to review complaints that are not within its jurisdiction.

For example, complaints that merely express dissatisfaction with a judge's decision are summarily dismissed under Board Rule 4(c). In recent years, larger numbers of nonjurisdictional complaints have been summarily dismissed, as shown in the next table:

SUMMARY DISMISSALS
(BY YEAR)

2011	56
2012	78
2013	60
2014	99
2015	102
2016	112
2017	117
2018	167
2019	147
2020	125

As reflected in the following two tables, most complaints were filed by litigants against district court judges:

SOURCES OF COMPLAINTS AND REPORTS – 2020

Litigant	10
Self-Report	5
Attorney	4
Citizen	3
Prosecutor	3
Judge	2
Anonymous	1
Board	1
Inmate or Prisoner	1
Other	3
TOTAL	33

JUDGES SUBJECT TO COMPLAINTS AND REPORTS – 2020

District Court Judges	28
Court of Appeals Judges	0
Supreme Court Justices	0
Referees/Magistrates/Judicial Officers	3
Senior judge	0
Other judicial officer	2
TOTAL	33

The types of allegations are set forth below. The total exceeds 33 because many complaints contained more than one allegation.

ALLEGATIONS REPORTED – 2020

General demeanor and decorum	16
Bias, discrimination, or partiality	12
Improper conduct on the bench	6
Failure to perform duties	5
Conflict of interest	4
Ex parte communication	4
Failure to follow law or procedure	4
Abuse of authority or prestige	3
Delay in handling court business	2
Health; physical or mental capacity	2
Administrative irregularity	1
Educational requirements	1
Loss of temper	1
Political activity	1
Practicing law; giving legal advice	1
Public comment on a pending case	1

Of the 33 files opened in 2020, 31 were considered by the Board in 2020. The remaining two were considered at the Board's January 2021 meeting. Of the 33 total files first considered in 2020, the Board determined that 20 of the matters warranted formal investigation. A formal investigation includes asking the judge to submit a written response

to the Board. In addition, a formal investigation typically includes review of court records and interviews with court participants, and may include reviewing audio recordings of the hearings. A judge or the Board may request the judge appear before the Board to discuss the allegations of judicial misconduct.

The majority of complaints and Board-initiated investigations (24) were dismissed in 2020. Many complaints are dismissed because they concern a judge's rulings or other discretionary decisions that are generally outside the Board's purview. The reasons for dismissal are set forth below. The count of dismissal reasons differs from the number of complaints opened in 2020 because some were dismissed in 2020 but had been opened in 2019, and because some complaints are dismissed for more than one reason.

DISMISSAL REASONS – 2020

No misconduct; no violation	20
Insufficient evidence	9
Frivolous or no grounds	8
Unsubstantiated after investigation	7
Within discretion of judge	6
Legal or appellate issues	2
No issue left to resolve	2
Retired pending board action	2
Corrective action by judge	1
Lack of jurisdiction	1

As shown in the table below, in 2020, two matters resulted in discipline and seven matters were resolved with a letter of caution to the judge.

DISPOSITIONS – BY YEAR ISSUED

Year	Letter of Caution	Admonition	Deferred Disposition Agreement	Public Reprimand	Supreme Court Discipline
2011	0	2	0	1	1
2012	2	5	0	1	0
2013	4	2	0	1	0
2014	2	5	0	2	1
2015	1	2	1	1	1
2016	3	1	3	1	0
2017	5	3	0	0	0
2018	9	4	0	1	0
2019	4	2	1	0	0
2020	7	0	1	1	0

PUBLIC DISPOSITIONS

Public dispositions are posted on the Board's website at *http://bjs.state.mn.us/board-and-panel-public-reprimands*. There was one public disposition in 2020.

Judge Mary Carroll Leahy

The Board reprimanded Third District Judge Mary Carroll Leahy for failing to adequately supervise her law clerk, failing to ensure that the law clerk's timesheets were accurate, and engaging in inappropriate electronic communications with her law clerk. The communications were disparaging to attorneys, litigants, and witnesses. The Board directed Judge Leahy to determine and address the causes of her conduct.

PRIVATE DISPOSITIONS

In 2020, the Board issued one public reprimand, no private admonitions, and one deferred disposition. The Board also issued seven letters of caution (based on nine complaints). A letter of caution is a non-disciplinary disposition. A sampling of the admonitions and a sampling of the letters of caution are summarized below.

Summaries of the 39 private admonitions the Board has issued since 2009 are available on the Board's website at *http://www.bjs.state.mn.us/file/private-discipline/private-discipline-summaries.pdf*. The purpose of providing summaries of the private dispositions is to educate the public and to help judges avoid improper conduct.

Private Admonitions Issued in 2020

- None

Deferred Disposition Issued in 2020

- A Board investigation showed that a judge yelled and swore at the judge's law clerk for minor errors on at least three separate occasions. The Board found violations of Rules 1.1 (Compliance with the Law), 1.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary), 2.3(B) (Bias or Harassment), and 2.8(B) (Demeanor). The Board and the judge entered into a deferred disposition agreement. The judge agreed to consult with a judicial mentor, continue therapy, and refrain from the use of profanity directed at persons in the courtroom and chambers. If the Board does not learn of any further violations within two years, the judge will receive a private admonition.

Letters of Caution Issued in 2020

- A complainant alleged that at a hearing to modify his order for protection, instead of hearing the motion, the judge dismissed the order for protection. As a result, the complainant did not have the opportunity to present his motion and be heard. The judge's assigned calendar was overcrowded and court administration subsequently made changes to the calendar. The Board cautioned the judge that a failure to allow a litigant the opportunity to be heard according to law could violate Rules 1.1 (Compliance with the Law), 1.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary), and 2.6(A) (Ensuring the Right to Be Heard) of the Code.

- A letter of recommendation a judge wrote in 2017, on behalf of a candidate for police chief, abused the prestige of judicial office in its tone and content. In response to the Board, the judge recognized that the format and nature of the letter of recommendation did not comply with Rule 1.3 (Avoiding Abuse of the Prestige of Judicial Office) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

- Two complainants alleged that during a sentencing hearing, the judge called out and criticized the defendant's supporters due to the content of their letters supporting the defendant. The complainants felt unfairly maligned. The judge acknowledged that the judge could have chosen better words to convey the judge's message. The Board cautioned the judge that discourtesy and disrespectful demeanor could violate Rules 1.1 (Compliance with the law), 1.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary), Rule 2.2. (Impartiality and Fairness), and 2.8(B) (Demeanor) of the Code.

- Even after learning that an Order was a month overdue for filing, it took a judge an additional month to file the Order. The judge and the attorneys had never dealt with the type of case, and were unfamiliar with the filing requirements. The judge had announced the Order orally at the hearing, and the failure to timely file the Order did not affect the administration of justice. The Board cautioned the judge that orders that are filed late could violate Rules 1.1 (Compliance with the Law), 1.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary), and 2.5(A) (Competence and Diligence) of the Code.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

The staff receives frequent inquiries about judges' conduct. The inquiries are often from parties involved in court proceedings. Callers are provided information about the Board and how to file a complaint.

Board staff often receives requests for information, complaints that concern persons over whom the Board has no jurisdiction, and complaints that do not allege judicial misconduct. Callers are given appropriate referrals when other resources are available.

ADVISORY OPINIONS

The Board is authorized to issue advisory opinions on proper judicial conduct with respect to the provisions of the Code. The Board encourages judges who have ethical questions to seek its guidance. The Board provides three types of advisory opinions:

- The Board issues *formal opinions* on issues that frequently arise. These opinions are of general applicability to judges.

- A *Board opinion letter* is given to an individual judge on an issue that requires consideration by the full Board.

- The Board's Executive Secretary issues *informal opinions* to judges as delegated by the Board pursuant to Board Rule 1(e)(11). Judges regularly contact the Executive Secretary for informal opinions on ethics questions. Depending on the nature of the request, the Executive Secretary may consult the Board Chair or another Board member.

The Board began issuing formal opinions in 2013. The Board's current practice is to ask for public comments on its proposed formal opinions before the opinions are made final. Formal opinions are sent to the chief judges of the Minnesota courts and are posted

on the Board's website at *http://www.bjs.state.mn.us/formal-opinions*. The Board did not issue a formal opinion in 2020.

The Executive Secretary gave 150 informal advisory opinions to judges in 2020. This continues the trend of a significant increase over prior years, reflecting the increased assistance the Board is providing to judges who are faced with ethics issues. The opinions cover a wide range of subjects, including disqualification standards and permissible extrajudicial activities. In many cases, the judge requests the opinion by telephone and the opinion is given orally. Since 2014, however, opinions are usually confirmed by e-mail and include analysis and citation to legal authority.

BUDGET

The Board's current base budget is $384,000 per year, which is used to pay staff salaries, rent, and other expenses. The staff consists of the Executive Secretary, a part-time staff attorney, and an executive assistant.

In addition, a special account funded at $125,000 per year is potentially available to the Board to pay the expenses of major cases, which often require the Board to retain private counsel, resulting in significant expenditures for attorney fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For additional information regarding the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, please feel free to contact the Executive Secretary at (651) 296-3999.

Dated: March 16, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Cindy K. Telstad
Cindy K. Telstad
Chair, Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards

/s/ Thomas M. Sipkins
Thomas M. Sipkins
Executive Secretary, Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards

BOARD AND STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

Honorable Shereen M. Askalani
Judge of District Court (Fourth District). Appointed to bench in 2016. Assistant Ramsey County Attorney from 2002 to 2016. Appointed to the Board on Judicial standards in 2020.

Honorable Louise Dovre Bjorkman
Judge of Minnesota Court of Appeals. Appointed to the Court of Appeals in 2008. Judge, Second Judicial District Court, 1998-2005. Private practice of law, 1985-1998 and 2005-2008. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2017.

Carol E. Cummins, M.B.A.
Public member. Ms. Cummins, now retired, has more than 30 years of experience in law firm management. She worked in-house in senior management roles and more recently as an independent consultant. Ms. Cummins served as a public member of the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board from 2009 to 2015. She is a graduate of Hamline University and holds an MBA from the University of Minnesota. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2015; reappointed in 2018.

Timothy Gephart
Public member. Vice President of Claims at Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company since 1985. Mr. Gephart is an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota Law School, where he teaches a course on legal malpractice. He previously served on the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board and the Board of Legal Certification. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2012; reappointed in 2016. Term expired in 2020.

Gerald T. Kaplan, M.A., L.P.
Executive Committee Member. Public Member. Licensed psychologist since 1977. Mr. Kaplan is the Executive Director of Alpha Human Services and Alpha Service Industries, which offer inpatient and outpatient programs for sex offenders. Until June 30, 2019, he was also a member of the Board of Medical Practice, and served a term as Board President. Previously he served on the Board of Psychology, including two years as Board Chair. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2013; reappointed in 2017.

Honorable David L. Knutson
Judge of District Court (First District). Appointed to the bench in 2004. Private practice of law from 1986 to 2004. Minnesota State Senator for twelve years serving Apple Valley, Burnsville, Lakeville, and Rosemount, MN. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2012; reappointed in 2016. Term expired in 2020.

Honorable Ellen L. Maas
Judge of District Court (Tenth District). Appointed to the bench in 1995. Law clerk for Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Glenn E. Kelley 1981-1982. Private practice of law from 1982 to 1995. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2013; reappointed in 2014; reappointed in 2018.

Honorable Theresa M. Neo
Judge of District Court (Sixth District). Appointed to the bench in 2014. Assistant Duluth City Attorney 2010-2014. Staff Attorney Indian Legal Assistance Program 2005-2010, Attorney Safe Haven Shelter 2002-2005. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2020.

Timothy O'Brien
Attorney member. Retired partner, Faegre Baker Daniels LLP. Served as a member of the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board from 1997-2003, as a member of the Minnesota Client Security Board from 2007-2013, and as a member of the Minnesota Commission on Judicial Selection from 2011-2018. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2019.

Cindy K. Telstad
Board Chair. Attorney member. Private practice of law in Winona since 1987, primarily in the areas of real estate law, employment law, probate and trust administration, estate planning, and business law. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2014; reappointed in 2018.

Debbie Toberman
Public Member. Claim Supervisor at Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company since 2006. Previously, Ms. Toberman was a Claim Representative at Minnesota Lawyers Mutual from 1986 to 2006, and she served as a public member on the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board from 2005 - 2011 and the Fourth District Ethics Committee from 1997 - 2009. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2020.

Nhia Vang
Public member. Ms. Vang works for the City of Saint Paul and has more than 20 years' experience in public service in the areas of administration, budget, and policy. Appointed to the Board on Judicial Standards in 2019.

Thomas M. Sipkins
Executive Secretary. Mr. Sipkins was a judge of the Hennepin County District Court from 2009 until September 2017. He was previously in the private practice of law at the Maslon, Edelman, Borman, and Brand law firm in Minneapolis, where he headed the firm's Labor and Employment Group and was a member of its Competitive Practices and Litigation groups.

Sara P. Boeshans
Staff Attorney. Admitted to practice in 2007. Ms. Boeshans clerked for Judge Marybeth Dorn, Second Judicial District, after which she was employed in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.