



**TWENTY-THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
OF LOUISIANA**

PARISHES OF ASCENSION, ASSUMPTION, ST. JAMES

JESSIE M. LEBLANC
JUDGE - DIVISION D

February 27, 2020

Honorable R. Kyle Ardoin, Secretary of State
Commissions Division
8585 Archives Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

Mr. Ardoin,

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation as District Judge for the 23rd Judicial District Court Division D, effective immediately, February 27, 2020.

Sincerely,


Jessie M. LeBlanc

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of February, 2020.



Erin L. Ganel Gros, La. Bar Roll Number 29224

CC:

Chief Justice Bernette J. Johnson
Ms. Sandra A. Vujnovich, Judicial Administrator, Louisiana Supreme Court
Honorable Jefferson D. Hughes, III
Honorable John L. Weimer



**TWENTY-THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
OF LOUISIANA**

PARISHES OF ASCENSION, ASSUMPTION, ST. JAMES

JESSIE M. LEBLANC
JUDGE - DIVISION D

110 A FRANKLIN STREET
P.O. BOX 268
NAPOLEONVILLE, LA 70390
(985) 369-8001
(985) 369-8005 FAX

February 27, 2020

Dear Chief Justice Johnson,

It is with a heavy heart and profound regret that I formally tender my resignation as Judge, 23rd Judicial District Court. While I am not excusing my behavior in using a racially inappropriate word, I have and will continue to apologize for it.

The last few months have been extraordinarily difficult for my family and my cherished 23rd JDC community. My husband and children found out about my infidelity from the media and I will spend the rest of my life trying to make it right to them. I am a lifelong, proud resident of this community and spent my entire life trying to make the lives of those in this community better, regardless of gender, race, religion, national origin, disability, age.

Yes, I engaged in an extramarital affair which ended in 2016 with Mr. Prejean. I never signed any warrants from him and he never appeared in front of me as a Sheriff's Deputy or in any capacity during our relationship.

However, I would be remiss if I did not ensure the Court was aware that three (3) members of my Bench knew about my prior relationship with Mr. Prejean and that I had direct meetings with two (2) of them in 2017 about it. Also in 2017, Judge Turner confirmed to me that Mr. Prejean was in a relationship with his Law Clerk. It is my understanding that relationship continued. I further understand that warrants were likewise submitted in that Court, but no one is seeking recusal, reopening of cases, or public outcry of any kind. Likewise, I understand it is fairly well-known Mr. Prejean has engaged in a relationship with a high ranking official with the Governor's staff, yet, no one seems to have bothered to ferret that out. Let me be clear, I would not wish this on anyone, but I do believe that if we are to inflict punishment on one, it must be fairly apportioned across the entirety.

In 2017 and through 2018, I was targeted by anonymous phone contacts, a vile, threatening note placed on my office door, and the "delivery" of a wrapped "Christmas" present containing Mr. Prejean's phone records highlighting his extensive, on-going contacts with the Law Clerk. My use of the word was out of fear and anger and, although inexcusable, is certainly not reflective of my character, my performance on the Bench, or, frankly, who I am.

As a female Judge, I am keenly aware I am held to a much higher standard than my colleagues. I will not minimize my inexcusable use of the word as “locker room talk” or “loose banter.” Instead, I only hope, going forward, that all public officials will be treated equally and if this is the standard set, then it must be one meted out for all. Similarly, if engaging in an extramarital affair with someone who had no dealings in my Court is disqualifying, then it should be for all, male and female alike.

I am proud of the work I did as a Judge and challenge anyone to look at my record, any and all cases I handled. I diligently worked to administer justice fairly, blindly, and without regard to any bias. I respectfully submit that my work ethic in that regard sparked and stoked the ire of the District Attorney and the Sheriff. Particularly, when I found an African American LSU football player not guilty of sexual battery of a white female because the evidence did not support guilt, I was placed in a highly uncomfortable position by the District Attorney who could not contain his anger toward me. As time wore on, I correctly determined the District Attorney had engaged in prosecutorial misconduct – a decision of mine upheld on appeal. Again, he was incapable of containing his contempt. Most recently, I refused to sign two (2) warrants, one because I did not believe the law supported probable cause and the other because Mr. Prejean’s son was identified as an undercover agent. That, too, was met with anger as was my issuance of a Bench Warrant to a Sheriff’s Deputy who did not show up to Court when subpoenaed. In short, I did my job. I think that is exactly what a Judge should do – apply the law fairly, equitably and not because a particular political faction desires a different outcome.

My decision is one borne out of prayer and fully cognizant of what this ordeal has done to my family. I thank God for them every day. I believe, however, as much as I wish to fight the irresponsible and vicious attacks, it is in my family’s best interests and that of my 23rd JDC community, to stop the madness. We do not need another Judge being endlessly attacked and vilified at the expense of the integrity of our system of justice.

I am now a private citizen and intend to spend my days making this right. I thank the Court for its consideration.

Sincerely,



Jessie M. LeBlanc

CC:

Judge Jason Verdigets

Judge Thomas Kliebert, Jr.

Judge Katherine Tess Stromberg

Judge Alvin Turner, Jr.

Mrs. Patricia Douglas, Judicial Administrator, 23rd JDC

Ms. Sandra A. Vujnovich, Judicial Administrator, Louisiana Supreme Court

Honorable Jefferson D. Hughes, III

Honorable John L. Weimer