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Ex-judge should be allowed to practice law, justices told

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BY JAMES NASH
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As a Franklin County family-law judge, Carole Squire exasperated some lawyers with her unorthodox approach to justice, which reportedly included scolding lawyers in court, conducting her own "investigations" from the bench and putting off decisions that were supposed to be made in a day.

Even if true, none of that should disqualify Squire -- who was voted off the bench last year -- from working as a lawyer, her attorney told the Ohio Supreme Court yesterday.

Squire petitioned the court to overturn a disciplinary panel's recommendation that her law license be suspended for two years, with one year stayed.

Her attorney, former federal appeals Judge Nathaniel R. Jones, said specialized courts such as Squire's domestic-relations branch need more flexibility than criminal courts. Jones also said that since Squire's alleged misdeeds occurred while she was a judge, she shouldn't be barred from working as a lawyer.

"Why and how is the public protected by having that judge suspended as a lawyer?" he asked.

Squire, who did not address the court, said after the hearing that she is doing miscellaneous legal work while helping to train Nigerian family-law judges. She said she is fighting the suspension less for economic reasons than for redemption and integrity.

"I trust God in all areas of my life," she said. "I don't concern myself with that (loss of income) at this juncture. I'm more concerned with the truth rising through this process. I'm more concerned with God's will for my life."

The Supreme Court's disciplinary counsel, which brought the case against Squire, argued that the gravity of her misconduct -- including a disciplinary panel's finding of "dishonesty and misrepresentation" in at least two cases -- warrants her suspension from practice.

"These were not decisions she made," said Lori J. Brown, first assistant disciplinary counsel. "She was intemperate toward people who appeared in her courtroom, and that intemperance was not limited to the lawyers."

Among the incidents cited by the disciplinary counsel:

- In a 2003 child-protection case, Squire put off a hearing on a protective order until she could discuss the case with Franklin County Children's Services, even though the law requires a hearing on the same day a



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Former Domestic Relations Judge Carole Squire greets the Rev. Odell Waller of the Tabernacle Baptist Church before oral arguments on her law license at the Ohio Supreme Court.

petition is filed.

- In a 2005 custody hearing, Squire refused a home investigation by the court's family-assessment unit in favor of her own "mini" investigation into whether to classify two children as protected parties.

- In a 2004 divorce case, Squire demanded an off-the-record conversation with one lawyer and when the other lawyer objected, Squire allegedly retaliated by later disparaging her in court.

Squire, a Democrat elected to the bench in 2000, lost her re-election bid last year by about 13,000 votes. She is challenging the outcome, saying the vote was marred by irregularities.

Several justices appeared unsympathetic toward Squire's case. Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer said a reasonable observer of her conduct as a judge would be "appalled."

Justice Paul E. Pfeifer suggested that Squire had already faced the "death penalty" in last November's election.

Brown, however, said losing an election was insufficient punishment for someone who has steadfastly maintained that she did nothing wrong.

Squire said during the interview her only mistake was to take on too many urgent cases at once.

jnash@dispatch.com

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