

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE THIRD CIRCUIT

J.C. No. 03-14-90072

IN RE: COMPLAINT OF JUDICIAL MISCONDUCT
OR DISABILITY

ORIGINAL PROCEEDINGS UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 351

MEMORANDUM OPINION

(Filed: September 29, 2014)

PRESENT: McKEE, Chief Judge.

This is a complaint filed under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 351-64, against a United States District Judge (hereinafter “Subject Judge”). For the reasons discussed below, the complaint will be dismissed.

The Judicial Conduct and Disability Act provides a remedy if a federal judge “has engaged in conduct prejudicial to the effective and expeditious administration of the business of the courts.” 28 U.S.C. § 351(a). A chief judge may dismiss a complaint if, after review, he or she finds it is not cognizable under the statute, is directly related to the merits of a decision or procedural ruling, or is frivolous or lacks sufficient evidence to raise an inference of misconduct. 28 U.S.C. §§ 352(b)(1)(A)(i)-(iii). The “misconduct procedure [under the Act] is not designed as a substitute for, or supplement to, appeals or

motions for reconsideration. Nor is it designed to provide an avenue for collateral attacks or other challenges to judges' rulings." In re Memorandum of Decision of Judicial Conference Committee on Judicial Conduct and Disability, 517 F.3d 558, 561 (U.S. Jud. Conf. 2008).

As a preliminary matter, Complainant makes allegations concerning individuals and entities who are not subject to the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act; e.g., prison officials, opposing counsel, and a district court clerk of court. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 351, 352(b)(1)(A)(i); Rule 4, Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings. Accordingly, these allegations will not be addressed in this opinion.

Complainant further alleges that the Subject Judge engaged in judicial misconduct by denying his motions for summary judgment and appointment of counsel, and granting defendant's motion to dismiss and for summary judgment. These allegations are plainly merits-related and are not cognizable under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act. See 28 U.S.C. § 352(b)(1)(A)(ii) (chief judge may dismiss a complaint if he or she finds that it is directly related to the merits of a decision or procedural ruling); Rule 3(h)(3)(A), Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings (“[a]n allegation that calls into question the correctness of a judge's ruling . . . without more, is merits-related”); Rule 11(c)(1)(B), Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings (a complaint must be dismissed in whole or in part to the extent that the chief judge concludes that the complaint is directly related to the merits of a decision or procedural ruling). To the extent Complainant alleges that the Subject Judge's rulings were due to any sort of

improper motivation, his complaint is dismissed as frivolous and unsupported by any evidence that would raise an inference that misconduct has occurred. 28 U.S.C.

§ 352(b)(1)(A)(iii); Rule 11(c)(1)(C), (D), Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings.

Complainant also complains about putative delay for a period of three years.

Allegations of delay are subject to dismissal as merits-related. 28 U.S.C.

§ 352(b)(1)(A)(ii). See also Rules 3(h)(3)(A), 3(h)(3)(B) (cognizable misconduct does not include “an allegation about delay in rendering a decision or ruling, unless the allegation concerns an improper motive in delaying a particular decision or habitual delay in a significant number of unrelated cases”), 11(c)(1)(B), Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings. In any event, the record has been reviewed and it does not support an allegation of improper delay. After filing a motion for summary judgment, over the course of two years, Complainant filed several other motions and multiple notices of appeal. Approximately six months after Complainant filed a reply brief concerning his motion for default judgment, the Subject Judge issued an order denying the motion for default judgment and granting defendant’s motion to dismiss and for summary judgment.¹ To the extent Complainant suggests that the Subject Judge had an improper motive for his putative delay, his allegations are dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 352(b)(1)(A)(iii) as unsupported by any evidence that would raise an inference that misconduct occurred.

¹ Complainant filed a notice of appeal and his appeal is still pending at this time.

Complainant also complains about a delay in ruling on a motion for appointment of counsel which he filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. This does not have any relevance with respect to any alleged action or inaction on the part of the Subject Judge. Furthermore, as explained above, allegations of delay are subject to dismissal as merits-related. See also Rules 3(h)(3)(A), 3(h)(3)(B), 11(c)(1)(B), Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings.

For the foregoing reasons, the complaint is dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 352(b)(1)(A)(i), (ii), and (iii).

s/ Theodore A. McKee
Chief Judge

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ORDER

(Filed: September 29, 2014)

PRESENT: McKEE, Chief Judge.

On the basis of the foregoing opinion entered on this date, it is ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the written complaint brought pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 351 is hereby dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 352(b)(1)(A)(i), (ii), and (iii).

This order constitutes a final order under 28 U.S.C. § 352(c). Complainant is notified in accordance with Rules 11(g)(3) and 18, Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings, of the right to appeal this decision by the following procedure:

Rule 18(a) Petition. A complainant or subject judge may petition the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit for review.

Rule 18(b) Time. A petition for review must be filed in the office of the Circuit Executive of the Court of Appeals within **35 days** of the date on the letter informing the parties of the Chief Judge's order.

18(b) Form. The petition should be in letter form, addressed to the Circuit Executive of the Court of Appeals, and in an envelope marked “Misconduct Petition” or “Disability Petition.” The name of the subject judge must not be shown on the envelope. The letter should be typewritten or otherwise legible. It should begin with “I hereby petition the judicial council for review of . . .” and state the reasons why the petition should be granted. It must be signed. There is no need to enclose a copy of the original complaint.

The full text of the Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings is available from the Office of the Circuit Executive of the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and on the Court of Appeals’ internet site, www.ca3.uscourts.gov.

s/ Theodore A. McKee
Chief Judge

Dated: September 29, 2014