

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE THIRD CIRCUIT

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J.C. No. 03-16-90069

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IN RE: COMPLAINT OF JUDICIAL MISCONDUCT  
OR DISABILITY

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

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MEMORANDUM OPINION

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(Filed: February 17, 2017)

PRESENT: SMITH, *Chief Judge*.

This is a complaint filed under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 351-64, against a United States Bankruptcy Judge (the “Subject Judge”).<sup>1</sup> 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).

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<sup>1</sup> The complaint also refers to a retired Bankruptcy Judge. A retired judge is not subject to the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act. Accordingly, allegations concerning that judge will not be considered. *See* 28 U.S.C. §§ 351, 352(b)(1)(A)(i); Rule 4, *Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings*.

Complainant, a long-ago employee of a bankrupt company, raised claims in the bankruptcy proceeding that the company wrongfully terminated him and denied him employment benefits. The bankruptcy court disallowed the claims more than ten years ago and Complainant was barred from making further filings in that matter. The Subject Judge concluded the bankruptcy proceeding two years ago.

This is Complainant's second complaint naming this Subject Judge. *See* J.C. No. 03-15-90070. Although the allegations of the current Complainant are far from clear, it appears Complainant is alleging that the Subject Judge was part of a conspiracy to deny him employment benefits. To the extent these allegations dispute the decision to disallow Complainant's benefit claims in the bankruptcy proceeding, they are merits-related. "An allegation that calls into question the correctness of a judge's ruling, . . . without more, is merits-related." Rule 3(h)(3)(A), *Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings*. Merits-related allegations do not constitute cognizable misconduct under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act and will therefore be dismissed. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 352(b)(1)(A)(ii); Rules 3(h)(3)(A), 11(c)(1)(B), *Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings*.

The remainder of Complainant's allegations are indecipherable. Complainant refers to concealment and fraud but does not elaborate upon these words. Complainant also makes vague reference to a desire to file suit or to bring criminal charges against various individuals, and he demands an investigation. The record in the long-closed bankruptcy proceeding reveals nothing to substantiate a claim of judicial misconduct and

provides no basis to initiate an investigation. Accordingly, all of Complainant's remaining allegations are subject to dismissal as frivolous and unsupported by 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*.

Based on the foregoing, the complaint will be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 352(b)(1)(A)(i), (ii), and (iii). Because this is Complainant's second complaint of judicial misconduct against this Subject Judge, Complainant's attention is directed to Rule 10(a), *Rules for Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings*.<sup>2</sup> Future abuse of the judicial misconduct complaint procedure could result in the imposition of restrictions under this provision.

s/ D. Brooks Smith  
Chief Judge

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<sup>2</sup> Rule 10(a) of the *Rules of Judicial-Conduct and Judicial-Disability Proceedings* provides:

Abusive Complaints. A complainant who has filed repetitive, harassing, or frivolous complaints, or has otherwise abused the complaint procedure, may be restricted from filing further complaints. After giving the complainant an opportunity to show cause in writing why his or her right to file further complaints should not be limited, the judicial council may prohibit, restrict, or impose conditions on the complainant's use of the complaint procedure. Upon written request of the complainant, the judicial council may revise or withdraw any prohibition, restriction, or condition previously imposed.

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ORDER

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(Filed: February 17, 2017)

PRESENT: SMITH, *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 within **42 days** after the date of the chief judge's order.

18(b) Form. The petition should be in letter form, addressed to the Circuit Executive, 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 and on the Court of

Appeals’ internet site, [www.ca3.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca3.uscourts.gov).

s/ D. Brooks Smith

Chief Judge

Dated: February 17, 2017