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An Open Letter from Mike regarding his service as a District Court Judge in Arapahoe County

I was appointed by Governor Roy Romer in 1991 to serve the People of Colorado as a District Court Judge in the 18th Judicial District (Arapahoe, Douglas, Lincoln and Elbert counties). This was one of the most challenging and rewarding assignments of my career. I served in the Criminal Division where I handled major criminal cases, many first degree murder, including the Chuck E. Cheese case (Nathan Dunlap), who is now on Death Row awaiting execution.

Many of these cases were high profile first degree murder cases or Class 1 felonies, where I imposed life sentences without parole. I often served as the trial judge; responsible for conducting complex jury trials according to the law; and responsible for the well being of the jurors serving on these emotional and difficult cases. Copies of some of the newspaper articles which reported on these cases are reproduced here for your information.

I also served a rotation in the Domestic Division, where I decided hundreds of Family Law cases like dissolution of marriage and children's issues. I issued many decisions in high profile and hotly contested cases. My first concern as a judge was always the best interests of the young children who were the victims of divorce. I also strived to make the divorce process as simple, efficient, and inexpensive as possible for the parties. I had great empathy for those going through the pain of divorce and did my best to listen to and be fair to all sides and to follow the law.

While sitting as judge, I created a pilot project to make the divorce forms with instructions easily available to those who did not want to hire a lawyer. This had never been done before. This project was so successful that the State Judicial Department adopted it and expanded it into the forms available today statewide through the state court system.

As you might expect, I was not popular with everyone, especially the domestic bar association. Because I helped people with the forms project, and because I insisted that the lawyers be prepared and efficient in their presentations, they were not able to charge their clients the outrageous fees they had been used to. Some of them organized a campaign against me when I came up for the election. As a judge, we are not permitted to be involved in politics and I made the decision not to mount a time consuming counter campaign which would have distracted from my duties as a judge. I lost that election by a razor thin margin; completed my term of service with honor and distinction and then retired back to the private sector.

I have a spotless record as a judge and a lawyer, I have never been disciplined by either the Commission on Judicial Discipline, or the Attorney Office of Regulation Counsel. This is easily verifiable. Any rumors or stories that you may hear to the contrary are untrue and are being spread for political purposes.

A reporter for a local newspaper did his own investigation of the campaign against me and wrote a piece which I reproduced with his consent, for your information.

Michael L. Bieda