

Chief Judge Amanda Williams Pleads Ignorance of the Law and is Ordered to Make Refunds

On February 3rd, 2010, the Director of Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution reprimanded Judge Williams for illegally collecting ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) fees of \$7.50 on each lawsuit filed.

According to an article in the Georgia times Union Monday, February 22, 2010, Judge Williams told Gordon Jackson she contacted the State to notify it of her error. This is a lie. The State ADR notified Judge Williams of her illegal collection of the \$7.50 fee on February 2, 2010 and ADR reported she was “utterly surprised”.

Judge Williams ordered collection of the \$7.50 filing fee on Superior Court Cases from March 2009. There was no provision in Georgia law that allowed Judge Williams to order the collection of this \$7.50 filing fee in March of 2009. Judge Williams began collecting this \$7.50 fee to provide Senior Judge James Tuten supplemental income after he discontinues serving a judge in July.

In June of 2009 a state law became effective that authorized the collection of the \$7.50 additional filing fee, if a Judicial Circuit or County obtained the approval for a dispute resolution program from the Georgia ADR Commission before collecting the \$7.50 additional filing fee.

Judge Williams did not obtain approval of the Georgia ADR Commission as required before collection the \$7.50 additional filing fee until July 8, 2009. On June 1, 2009 Judge Williams ordered the Superior Court to continue collecting the \$7.50 additional filing fee and added the State Court, the Probate Court, the Juvenile Court and the Magistrate Courts to the courts that she ordered to collect the \$7.50 additional filing fee.

An open records request was filed that required Judge William to disclose the amount to money that she illegally ordered collected. The Glynn County Attorney provided evidence of the illegal collection of the \$7.50 additional filing fee collected on each case. The evidence was turned over to the Georgia ADR Commission. It was after the Open Records Request discovered the illegal conduct of Judge Williams that she began admitting to her undisputable illegal conduct.

The ADR Commission ordered Judge Williams to refund all moneys illegally collected in violation of Georgia ADR Act O.C.G.A. § 15-23-10. The total illegally collected is approximately \$60,000.

A new Open Records Act request is being made to the Clerk of Court to determine the truthfulness of the statement made to the Florida Times Union by Judge Williams that “everyone who paid early was given a refund.”

The money was due to be refunded to the clients who were required to pay this additional costs and not to the lawyers.

Judge Williams statement to the Florida Times Union that “ She also contacted the state to notify it of the error,” is false. She was contacted by the ADR Commission, according to its Director, after she was caught.

After approval of the ADR Program for the Brunswick Circuit on July 9th, 2009, Judge Williams made no move to implement the ADR Program despite the commission’s request that Judge Williams “get her ADR program operational as soon as you can”. Williams will now delay until July, 2010 implementation of ADR’s plan to get relief in the courts civil dockets. This will probably please local attorneys. Judge Williams has asked local attorneys (who practice before her) to send work to Nathan Williams, her son.

Judge Williams is guilty of illegal arbitrary orders, negligence, false statements, and ethics violation.