

JUDGE SALVADOR R. SANTOS, JR., PRESIDING JUDGE, MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURT, ANGAT, BULACAN, COMPLAINANT, VS. EDITHA R. MANGAHAS, COURT STENOGRAPHER OF THE SAME COURT, RESPONDENT.

A.M. No. P-09-2720 [Formerly OCA I.P.I. No. 09-3259-P]. April 07, 2012

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/afdf990acda8/>

PER CURIAM:

Before this Court is an administrative complaint filed by Judge Salvador R. Santos, Jr. (Judge Santos), Presiding Judge, Municipal Trial Court (MTC), Angat, Bulacan, against respondent Editha R. Mangahas (Mangahas), of the same court for Conduct Unbecoming an Officer of the Court and Influence Peddling Activities.

The antecedent facts of the case, as culled from the records, are as follows:

On May 30, 2007, Judge Santos received a letter from respondent Mangahas, requesting that she be detailed back to Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 77, Malolos City, Bulacan, since she was allegedly suffering from high blood pressure and was advised by her physician to have an easy access to a hospital in case an attack occurs.[1] Respondent alleged that being detailed in Malolos City will allow her to immediately seek medical assistance at the Bulacan Provincial Hospital which is only a few minutes away from the court.

Considering that it was already respondent's second time to request for detail to another court, complainant sought advise from the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA). Complainant alleged that respondent's request was based purely on personal reasons. He also pointed out that the first time respondent was approved to be detailed was also based on personal reasons, that is, she needed to give moral support to her daughter.

Complainant alleged that the true reason for respondent's request for detail to the RTC, Malolos City, was her disappointment that she is no longer the "favored" employee of the MTC, Angat, Bulacan; a status which she previously enjoyed before the appointment of complainant as Presiding Judge of the same court.

Complainant further mentioned several incidents which could have triggered respondent's resentment, to wit:

1. Complainant required several court personnel, including respondent, to explain the missing records of certain docketed criminal cases. However, when complainant inquired from respondent about it since she was said to be the one "in-charge," the latter rudely replied that complainant should ask the former judge instead;
2. Complainant likewise inquired about the solicitation which respondent made for her trip to Boracay for the stenographers' convention, to which respondent turned almost hysterical;
3. Without prior permission from complainant or the clerk of court, respondent hosted a party for her return to the MTC, Angat, Bulacan and utilized the court as her party venue;
4. Again, without complainant's permission, after respondent's return to the MTC, Angat, Bulacan, she hauled her new table, personal computer and installed and tapped her personal telephone unit with the official landline phone of the court. She even positioned her table at the entrance of the court area, outside of the staff area and accessible

to all litigants. Respondent was, thereafter, requested to remove and transfer her table as it was complainant's policy to course all follow-up of cases through the clerk of court;

5. During one staff meeting, complainant alleged that respondent blatantly refused to talk to him because according to her "masama ang loob niya baka may masabi pa siyang masama." Later, complainant learned that respondent confessed to her co-staff that she was jealous in not getting his attention. Respondent even went to the Office of the Mayor and complained complainant judge and told the Mayor to have him removed from Angat or transfer him elsewhere.

Complainant asserted that respondent's actuations were meant to show him that she is influential in Angat, Bulacan. Complainant attempted to settle their differences, but to no avail. Respondent even filed several sick leaves and vacation leaves without any supporting documents until her eventual resignation.

Moreover, complainant narrated that, coincidentally, after respondent's return, his family received a letter containing death threats with two live bullets of M-16 baby armalite. It was followed by telephone calls to his family's respective cellphones, followed by a text message that reads, "alam namin na natanggap ninyo ang ipinadala naming mensahe paglalamayan na ninyo si Judge Santos." [2]

Thus, the instant complaint.

On August 2, 2007, the OCA directed respondent Mangahas to submit her comment on the charges against her. [3]

On September 11, 2007, in her Comment, [4] respondent rebutted the accusations against her.

With regard to the allegation of soliciting financial assistance for the stenographers' association's convention in Boracay, respondent claimed that the P1,000.00 which Mayor Domingo gave her was charged against the local funds. She reasoned, "It was even charged against the local funds. And what is P1,000 to cover the expenses?" [5] Respondent claimed that she was already decided not to attend the anniversary, but after Mayor De Leon, a relative of her husband, learned about her hesitance, he ordered the preparation of the voucher in the amount of P6,000.00, which was again charged against the local funds. She also claimed that the airplane tickets were paid by Judge Rolando Bulan. The rest of the expenses, respondent averred she paid with her own money. [6]

As to the allegation that she committed acts unbecoming of an officer of the court, respondent denied doing anything to be guilty of such. She averred that if it was related to the welcome party thrown for her by fellow officemates upon her return from her detail in Malolos, respondent pointed out that complainant likewise participated in the welcome party. Respondent averred that there were photos of them together during the party and complainant even bought a gallon of ice cream for the occasion.

Respondent submitted certifications from different barangay captains in the Municipality of Angat to prove that her character is beyond reproach.

Finally, respondent claimed that the instant complaint was intended to harass her as complainant was jealous of Judge Bulan.

In his Reply [7] dated September 19, 2007, complainant pointed out that respondent appeared to have no qualms in soliciting money from anybody, even from counsels of litigants for official seminars. In fact, respondent, after being reprimanded for her solicitation of money, even went to the police station to have him blotted after their altercation.

Complainant further added other incidents of respondent's misconduct, which included: (1) brokering bail applications; [8] (2) accepting money from litigants and counsels; [9] and (3) making unauthorized security arrangements for complainant and virtually mocking every actuation of complainant. [10]

Due to the conflicting versions of the parties, the OCA, in a Memorandum dated September 25, 2009, recommended that the instant matter be referred to the Executive Judge of the RTC, Malolos City, Bulacan for investigation, report and recommendation.

On November 23, 2009, the Court resolved to re-docket the instant administrative complaint as a regular administrative matter, and referred the same to the Executive Judge of the RTC, Malolos City, Bulacan, for investigation, report and recommendation.[11]

On April 14, 2010, in her Report, Executive Judge Herminia V. Pasamba, Malolos City, found respondent to be guilty of assisting litigants in posting of bail bond for a fee.[12] It was also revealed that respondent indeed solicited funds for her trip to Boracay to attend the stenographer's convention.

Another subject of investigation of the Executive Judge is the death threat received by complainant judge and his family. There was no proof that respondent instigated the death threat. However, it was established that there was indeed a death threat against complainant and it coincidentally happened right after respondent reported back from her detail, and her and complainant judge's unsettled differences.

Likewise, during the investigation, Melody M. Tolentino, Clerk of Court III, MTC, Angat, Bulacan, corroborated the allegations against respondent, to wit: (a) that upon the return of respondent to her official station in MTC, Angat, Bulacan, a welcome party was held in the court, which took them by surprise; and, (b) the heated discussion during the staff meeting dated May 9, 2007, regarding the solicitation being made for the stenographer's convention where respondent raised her voice against complainant judge. The witness attempted to pacify respondent but, the latter even told her to stop and not to meddle; (c) the argument between complainant judge and respondent, which was reported by the latter to the police authorities was untrue and, in fact, during the staff meeting, respondent was the one who was rude and arrogant; (d) the witness also confirmed that respondent was working for the approval of the bail bonds of some litigants in the court; and (e) witness was also aware of the death threats on complainant judge.

Furthermore, as per investigation, it was found that respondent had indeed displayed arrogance in interacting with complainant judge as respondent even raised her voice towards the latter and acted as if she was the judge.

It was also noted that respondent exhausted all her leave credits and resigned from the government service effective October 1, 2007.

In a Memorandum dated September 22, 2010, the OCA recommended that respondent be meted with penalties of (1) cancellation of eligibility; (2) forfeiture of retirement benefits; and (3) the perpetual disqualification for re-employment in the government service.

We adopt the recommendation of the OCA.

Time and time again, we have stressed that the behavior of all employees and officials involved in the administration of justice, from judges to the most junior clerks, is circumscribed with a heavy responsibility. Their conduct must be guided by strict propriety and decorum at all times in order to merit and maintain the public's respect for and trust in the judiciary. Needless to say, all court personnel must conduct themselves in a manner exemplifying integrity, honesty and uprightness.

In the instant case, records reveal that the conduct of respondent fell short of this standard. The acts described in the complaint, the testimony of complainant and the witness, and the Executive Judge's report clearly established that respondent is guilty of (a) discourtesy and disrespect to superiors; (b) solicitation of gifts; and (c) influence peddling in the litigants' applications for bail bond. Respondent's acts constitute misconduct, which the Court will

not tolerate.

Clearly, respondent's shouting at complainant within the court premises, reporting complainant to the police after she was reprimanded for her solicitation, and refusing to talk with complainant judge are not only acts of discourtesy and disrespect but likewise an unethical conduct sanctioned by Republic Act No. 6713, otherwise known as The Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

High-strung and belligerent behavior has no place in government service where the personnel are enjoined to act with self-restraint and civility at all times even when confronted with rudeness and insolence. Such conduct is exacted from them so that they will earn and keep the public's respect for and confidence in the judicial service. This standard is applied with respect to a court employee's dealings not only with the public but also with his or her co-workers in the service. Conduct violative of this standard quickly and surely erodes respect for the courts.[13]

We are appalled that respondent apparently sees nothing wrong with asking or soliciting money from politicians. We have constantly reminded court employees that such act is highly improper conduct as all forms of solicitations and receipt of contributions, directly or indirectly, are prohibited. That is why, the Court provides the rule against any form of solicitations of gift or other pecuniary or material benefits or receipts of contributions for himself/herself from any person, whether or not a litigant or lawyer, to avoid any suspicion that the major purpose of the donor is to influence the court personnel in performing official duties.[14]

Soliciting is prohibited under The Code of Conduct for Court Personnel. Section 2, Canon I thereof provides that "[c]ourt personnel shall not solicit or accept any gift, favor or benefit based on any explicit or implicit understanding that such gift, favor or benefit shall influence their official actions," while Section 2 (e), Canon III states that "Court personnel shall not x x x solicit or accept any gift, loan, gratuity, discount, favor, hospitality or service under circumstances from which it could reasonably be inferred that a major purpose of the donor is to influence the court personnel in performing official duties." [15]

Misconduct is a transgression of some established and definite rule of action, more particularly unlawful behavior or gross negligence by a public officer; and the misconduct is grave if it involves any of the additional elements of corruption, such as willful intent to violate the law or to disregard established rules. Thus, considering respondent's transgressions, i.e., disrespectful conduct, solicitation, and influence peddling of bail bonds, there is no question that respondent is guilty of grave misconduct.

As noted by the Court Administrator, this Court could no longer impose the penalty of dismissal from the service, because respondent has already resigned. We likewise agree that her resignation does not render the complaint against her moot. Resignation is not, and should not, be a convenient way or strategy to evade administrative liability when a court employee is facing administrative sanction.[16]

Under Section 52 (A) (2) of Rule IV of the Uniform Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service, grave misconduct is classified as a grave offense meriting the penalty of dismissal from service. Thus, in the instant case, despite respondent's resignation, the Court deemed it proper to impose the corresponding disciplinary measures and sanctions, to wit: forfeiture of all retirement benefits, except accrued leave credits, if there are still any, with prejudice to reemployment in any branch or instrumentality of government, including government-owned and controlled corporations.

WHEREFORE, the Court finds respondent EDITHA R. MANGAHAS, GUILTY of GRAVE MISCONDUCT. Accordingly, her retirement benefits, except accrued leave credits, are FORFEITED. She is PERPETUALLY DISQUALIFIED for reemployment in any branch of the government or any of its agencies or instrumentalities,

including government-owned and controlled corporations. This decision is immediately executory.

SO ORDERED.

Corona, C.J., Carpio, Leonardo-De Castro, Brion, Peralta, Bersamin, Del Castillo, Abad, Villarama, Jr., Mendoza, Sereno, Reyes, and Perlas-Bernabe, JJ., concur.

Velasco, Jr., J., no part due to relationship to a party.

Perez, J., no part, acted on the matter as Court. Adm.

[1] Rollo, p. 12.

[2] Id. at 21.

[3] Id. at 17.

[4] Id. at 15-16.

[5] Id. at 15.

[6] Id.

[7] Id. at 60-63.

[8] Id. at 60-61.

[9] Id. at 62.

[10] Id.

[11] Id. at 64.

[12] Id. at 95.

[13] *Fernandez v. Rubillos*, A.M. No. P-08-2451, October 17, 2008, 569 SCRA 283, 292.

[14] *In Re: Improper Solicitation of Court Employees – Rolando H. Hernandez*, Executive Assistant I, Legal Office, OCA, A.M. Nos. 2008-12-SC and P-08-2510, April 24, 2009, 586 SCRA 325, 330.

[15] Id. at 332-333.

[16] *Re: Administrative Case for Falsification of Official Documents and Dishonesty against Randy S. Villanueva*, A.M. No. 2005-24-SC, August 10, 2007, 529 SCRA 679, 685.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.