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News Release

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Judge's Outrageous Order Cripples Wayne County Government

St. Clair County, MI – Judge Peter Deegan ruled yesterday that Wayne County must give its judges more than \$500 million to shore up their massive deficit *and* move to a new site that is “equal to [the judges’] noble purpose.” This amount is equal to the county’s entire general fund. Should the ruling stand, county operations will be completely crippled, and the county would become insolvent.

Wayne County Executive Robert A. Ficano called the ruling “outrageous,” noting that Judge Deegan and his fellow judges want to continue to spend without limits while everyone else pays for it.

“We’ve all taken 10 percent cuts, reduced our budgets, and looked for solutions,” he said. “We’ve asked the courts to do the same, but they’ve continually refused, ignoring reality. Courts are supposed to dispense justice to those who don’t have a voice...not rule over them like kings and queens. This culture of arrogance and entitlement has to end in the judicial branch.”

The ruling could mean the elimination of all county services, including the sheriff (public safety), prosecutor, clerk, register of deeds, and treasurer. Only the judicial branch could continue to operate. And, according to the opinion, it would operate in style.

“The Judge’s work place is truly unique. No other jobsite, save perhaps the operating room, involves such significant matters in the lives of individuals,” stated Judge Peter Deegan, quoting from the Judge’s Book, 2nd Edition. “It therefore should be a site equal to its noble purpose, a place where the physical appearance and psychological ambience form an appropriate environment for the administration of justice. In this place, a judge must carry out the systematic responsibilities of the judicial office while nurturing the delicate fruit of the court system: Justice.”

Despite Deegan’s generosity, the Third Circuit’s case load is down 30 percent, but continues to operate with 62 sitting judges (one judge per 30,698 residents), compared to 25 in Oakland County (one per 47,875) and 13 in Macomb (one per 63,691).

Ficano pointed out that Deegan even went beyond what the court expected.

“His opinion includes costs and improvements – such as a new courthouse – that the court itself didn’t have the audacity to ask for,” he explained. “The judge clearly overstepped his bounds.”

Deegan, who is set to retire next month and potentially become a visiting judge in Wayne County, delivered his 27-page written opinion less than 24 hours after the county made its closing argument.

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