

Chairman Tong:

“Moving on to roman numeral number two the state referee Honorable Gerald I Adelman of Meriden.”

Chairman Doyle:

“Good afternoon Your Honor. If you would please raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information, you’ll provide at this committee will be the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?”

Judge Adelman:

“I do”

Chairman Doyle:

“Thank you. Please be seated. If you have an opening statement please proceed.”

Judge Adelman:

“Thank you. Good afternoon chairman Doyle, chairman Kissel, chairman Tong, members of the Judiciary Committee. I’m honored to be given the opportunity to appear before you today and I’d certainly like to thank Governor Malloy for nominating me for a second term. My first judicial term has been a wonderful and humbling experience. I spent my first 18 months hearing criminal matters in Waterbury.”

“I was measured by such remarkable experienced criminal judges as Frank Iannotti and the late Richard Damiani that allowed me to develop the skills and knowledge, I needed to handle the domestic violence docket, the community court, the regular GA docket, and part A trials beginning with the 2010-2011 judicial term.”

“I was assigned to the Hartford judicial district to hear family cases. I then had the honor of being transferred to the regional family trial docket in Middletown for the next three terms and served as the presiding judge in my last term that I was there. As you may know highly contested custody cases from around the state are referred to regional family trial docket.”

“As a part of that assignment, I also heard complex financial cases from Stamford in an effort to seize a back to ease a backlog that had developed in that judicial district. For the next two years I served as the presiding judge for family matters in Waterbury and then became a judge trial referee. I am currently hearing family cases in Hartford.”

“This past term I had the privilege of representing the judicial branch in many speaking engagements to school age children, civic organizations, and others. I have also presented educational programs to- in a variety of family law topics at our annual judge’s institute.”

“I’ve heard many difficult matters in my first term including issues involving the most important and meaning problems our citizens have faced in dissolution of marriage and custody actions. I could not imagine a more rewarding legal career then to serve in my present capacity.”

“My commitment and my goal is to provide every citizen who comes to the court with a fair objective meaning hearing and then to issue a well-reasoned decision designed to resolve the issues at hand.”

“I’d like to thank my wife for her support and her good common sense. We’ve been a couple for almost 49 years and I simply could not do what I do without her support. It’s been my privilege to serve for the last 8 years and I would be most grateful for the opportunity to continue in my service to the people of this great state. Thank you for the opp- your attention- and I welcome any questions you may have.”

Chairman Tong:

“Thank you Your Honor and thank you for being here today and thank you for your patience in waiting for your opportunity. Um I want get right to it looking at your questionnaire um I’ve noted that there are several complaints that uh were made uh during your tenure on the bench.”

“Um and one that that caught my eye was a constituent Dori Hightower uh who filed a complaint uh in May 2016 and I just wanted to give you the opportunity to if you wanted to comment on that complaint or any of the other complaints. And why you think that those complaints are here and were made against you?”

Judge Adelman:

“Certainly. I’ve had a number of complaints. Many of them have been made by individuals who have never appeared before me on a case. Uh complaints from Ida Shaw, Susan Skipp, Michael Noaki, these people have never appeared in my court as litigants or for any other reason. Uh other decisions, I had three separate

complaints filed by the same person in quick order over a very short period of time.”

“Uh in attorney Hightower’s case um that dec- that complaint as were all the other complaints were dismissed for a lack of probable cause um so the judicial review committee reviewing the paperwork found no probable reason to go forward with any kind of investigation.”

“Attorney Hightower’s case occurred in in Bridgeport. I was the presiding judge. The case was exceptionally old and she was seeking what I considered to be unreasonable continuances. Uh she believed that I was uh bias against her because she had appeared before me in another case as the attorney and I ruled against her whatever the motion was. I honestly don’t remember what the motion was.”

“Um I sent the matter to uh my other judge. We only had two judges uh two regular judges sitting at that time uh for a hearing as to whether or not there was any determination of bias. That judge ruled there wasn’t. Um so I I believe that her complaint was unfounded and that was supported by the judicial review commission.”

Chairman Tong:

“Uh Your Honor why do you think that people who um have not appeared before you in your court or have a case pending before you at any time, why are they making complaints against you?”

Judge Adelman:

“Well-the-reviewing those complaints uh they are based primarily on internet blogs, uh pseudo journalist blogs that talk about uh corruption in the family court. Somehow people have the idea that judges are taking kickbacks to decide cases in a certain way. Uh that we’re referring cases uh to psychologists so they can make money.”

“Uh you know this is difficult work. It is very difficult work. And it’s and quite frankly most judges in our state do not want to hear family cases. That’s a fact. Judge Suarez does not want to hear family cases.”

“I volunteered to hear family cases because I’ve spent all of my adult career working with children or supporting children’s

rights. I was a teacher for 12 years. As an attorney I worked as a GAL. I uh mediated cases. I did collaborative law. And as a judge for the last 6.5 years, I have handled family cases. I've handled some of the most difficult cases that have come before our bench. And I do it gladly because they have to be decided."

"Custody cases that are prolonged are damaging to the children and they must be decided quickly and fairly. As a result, I've been the target of anti-Semitic and other complaints. My family has been threatened physically involving state police you know to protect them. And yet I still do the work because I believe it is my job and it is my passion to deliver fair, reasoned, compassionate decisions."

Chairman Tong:

"There's no doubt that the matters that you work on are highly charged emotionally."

Judge Adelman:

"They are."

Chairman Tong:

"And that people feel very passionately about their position um which is understandable given what's at stake in that matters that you hear in your courtroom."

Judge Adelman:

"Absolutely!"

Chairman Tong:

"That being said I want to give you an opportunity to um address some concerns that have been raised in the days leading up to today's hearing."

Judge Adelman:

"Certainly."

Chairman Tong:

"Uh I actually had never had the opportunity to meet you other than um your nomination hearing 8 years ago. I've never appeared before you um and so candidly don't know you uh or the matters that you've adjudicated. But I have heard from people uh in my area down in lower Fairfield County and elsewhere."

"Um where people um take issue with how you conduct yourself in your courtroom and um some people have uh accused you of being bias against them and in particular that they feel you have a bias against women litigants."

"So, I'd like to ask you about that um. . . The two questions, one is a simple question. Do you have a bias against

women litigants? I suspect I know the answer to that question and so I'll just ask the follow up now."

"Um why do you think that there are people out there who have called my office? I've received many calls who believe that you have a bias against women litigants and how do you manage that and answer those concerns?"

Judge Adelman:

"Okay. Thank you! No, I do not have a bias against women litigants. Uh my wife is a woman. I have a daughter. Um several of my most vocal critics are male litigants accusing me of doing the exact opposite of what these other people have accused me of. Uh some of the other people are people who have quite frankly not prevailed in my court. Uh there are people who have a limit in their access to their children because of their own actions."

"And in at least two cases and I obviously won't mention any names because they're still a pending matter. But at least two cases, I entered orders for access between the mother and the children against the expressed wishes of the child or children in one case. Because I didn't think it was appropriate to cut off all contact despite the very negative and harmful behavior of the mother."

"In both those cases the access plan did not go well because the children quite frankly did not want have anything to do with their parent. Despite my efforts I was not able to create a parental relationship at least in the short term."

"Uh one other case involved a parent whose child had uh disappeared for a considerable amount of time and um I think I was successful in getting that child back. So, there's no bias towards women. There are court rulings that make every effort to protect the best interest of the child as the law has been written by the state legislature."

"That is my task and you know I tell people when I do the short calendar now, we have a call in Hartford I very often preface my call of the calendar by telling people you know you're going to have to go to family relations and you're going to have to try to mediate your case. And when you go to the mediation, I would urge you to approach that process with an open mind as possible towards resolution."

“And when you work towards that resolution you should keep in mind what do you think is in the best interest of the children? Not what you want because quite frankly if you can’t resolve your case and you come back to the court and ask the court to resolve it, my primary focus is going to be the best interest of the children. I don’t I- what you want as a parent is secondary.”

“So, focus on the children and try to reach a resolution because quite frankly there’s no one and certainly no judge that can do a better job than the parent. We don’t know the children, we don’t know the situation, we don’t know the finances. It’s up to the parents to do what’s best for the children and if they can’t then that’s the job of the family court to make the orders for them.”

Chairman Tong:

“In very emotional cases um of which you see many um in situations where people present their arguments and positions very passionately. Um I imagine that it can be um, I can imagine that it’s easy to feel one or way or another about a litigant right if they seem emotional. If uh they’re agitated, if they raise their voice, I imagine like any human being you have an immediate reaction to that person particularly if they seem unreasonable to you. How do you take a step back um and manage your own emotions? And and I guess it’s a question about temperament?”

Judge Adelman:

“Mhmm”

Chairman Tong:

“How do you manage a courtroom when when people are so emotionally charged? And how do you avoid a bias when you see somebody that is very emotional about their position? And how do you dispense justice in that environment?”

Judge Adelman:

“Ok. I’ve been doing it along time uh. I said first as a teacher and then working in the courts as a lawyer, and a guardian, and an AMC. Um when I speak to uh school children I uh I frequently bring my robe and I ask the teacher to select an appropriate student to model the robe for the rest of the class.”

“And I always ask the kids, why do you think, why do you think judges wear robes? And there’s a whole bunch of answers but eventually it comes down to it’s a symbol of authority. I don’t take the litigants personally. When I wear the robe, I wear my judicial demeanor. And I’m quite proud of that.”

“I can’t tell you how many times I’ve gotten off the bench and the marshal, or the court reporter, or the clerk will say to me, Judge Adelman I don’t know how you maintained your cool. It’s just it’s part of the job. And I take the job very seriously. It’s a serious job. These are very difficult issues.”

“I remind people as you have done a few times today were not having a conversation at someone’s kitchen table. We’re in a court of law and this is a proceeding. And only one person can speak at a time. So, I have a record because if one of you want to take an appeal, I don’t want intelligible comments.”

“Um sometimes I have to raise my voice to get their attention. What my wife refers to as my teacher’s voice. And that usually takes care of it. Um what perhaps is uh significant in the long run is when a litigant demonstrates repeatedly to the court an inability to control themselves even in the courtroom proceeding. That causes great concern to me as to whether or not that person is going to be able to uh have the self-control to obey the court’s orders when they’re not in front of the judge.”

“So, you know someone loses their- gets emotional that happens. We take a recess and someone’s crying stop give them tissues. But, if repeatedly people speak out, interrupt, refuse to obey the decorum of the courtroom that’s an indication that they may not obey the court’s orders and that becomes a consideration in my mind.”

Chairman Tong:

“Thank you. Questions? Senator Winfield?”

Senator Winfield:

“Uh I I I I don’t know exactly how to frame my question but it gets to questions that always surround these hearings. Uh about what happens in a courtroom and how we are to assess those who come in front of us. So, often times we’ll see complaints. The complaints are dismissed for various reasons and then people will come and they’ll testify, and they’ll give us a lot of information that doesn’t concretely tell us that what there asserting actually happened.”

“It doesn’t- we don’t know that it didn’t happen. All we have is the word of the judge and the people that are in front of us. And the information may even sometimes get us close but it doesn’t put the nail in the coffin per so to say.”

“So, I wonder as someone who sits in the court, if you could talk to me about if you were sitting on this side because you have some expertise, if you were sitting on this side and you saw the kind of stuff you see around here. It would be strange to me that never are the people who come in front of us are correct. Just like I don’t think every legislature’s perfect. I don’t think everybody’s anybody’s perfect.”

“It would be strange if there was never a time when what these sheets tell us just wasn’t the case. And these sheets generally tell us look this got dismissed for whatever procedure. Generally, it’s a procedural kind of thing. So, if you were me how would you look at this? How would you, how would you assess the people who are sitting there? What would you be looking for?”

Judge Adelman:

“Ok. Fair question. Well, first of all I have a record that goes back 8 years. I’ve written close to 200 decisions. Uh most of those well virtually all of those decisions were written in the last 6.5 years because as a criminal judge you rarely write a decision. You do other kinds of things.”

“So, you know I write about 20 decisions a year uh or more. So, there’s a record. You could look at the appellate courts review of my work. I’ve been affirmed 90%. I’ve only been reversed completely once. And I’ve been reversed in part and affirmed in part 2 or 3 times.”

“Um the other thing that this of course takes more time of court. Is that you can look at the actual record of the case. Look at the court file. Uh see that see that the line of decisions over a period of time on motions and and the like and and develop a sense for the file in that sense.”

“Um I have a theory. And my theory is that the people who come before you, the dissatisfied litigants, many of them many of them have had an initial miscarriage of justice. Somewhere along the line early in the case something happened that lead to real a real harsh ruling by a judge. There’s very little that can’t be corrected over some time.”

“But what happens with some litigants is that they become enmeshed in their case. The the fight becomes more important than the outcome and as a judge I look at a case and I say judge so and

so 6 months ago that was really that was a bad ruling that was kind of unfair.”

“Uh but the litigant is now behaving in an erratic manner, is violating court orders, and the court the new court (whether it’s me or someone else) finds itself in an impossible position because we can’t enter corrective orders. Because the person is acting so inappropriately and then it kind of builds and it goes on and on.”

“So, until we can get in many cases if we could get the people into into therapy or some mediation where we can break the cycle the matter can be resolved.”

“I’ll give you a perfect example. One of the litigants who filed a complaint against me came before me when I was on the regional docket. Hadn’t seen his children in 7 years. An order that was entered long before I was a judge. I said and he wanted to reopen the case to see his children. By that time uh he had 4 children I believe and and the 3 older children were, I think one of them had already reached maturity. The other two were fairly significant ages 15, 16, and 17.”

“They didn’t want anything to do with him. But there was a girl who was an 8-year-old girl who had really no relationship no recollection with him and she was interested in seeing him. And so I said to the gentleman, I think that simply the fact that you haven’t seen the kids in 7 years is sufficient for me to open the case and I uh arranged, I entered orders for what we call reunification therapy.”

“An opportunity for him with therapeutic help to create a to recreate his parental relationship with his daughter. I got it for free. I appointed a guardian who was a former head of DCF. Uh someone who’s really experienced. This man was very grateful. Couldn’t thank me enough but he refused to obey the rules of the clinic.”

“He constantly fought with the clinicians, he constantly disobeyed the rules in small ways, and eventually kicked him out of the program. He seethed defeat out of the jaws of victory. He had everything going for him. There was no reason why he

couldn't have reestablished it. But the fight it was more important for him to fight the system to show that he was right and the court was wrong or he was right and the therapists were wrong. I see that happen over and over again. That's a long-winded answer."

"You need to look at the full record to get a taste for the case. Looking at one decision or one complaint, I would urge you to read any of my decisions. There thorough, I think. And I have a very high record for being affirmed by the appellate supreme court."

Senator Winfield:

"So um okay. (Laughs). So, there is a uh I think a difference between being in one of the situations where uh you're going into therapy and you can't uh abide by the therapy or your ordered to do some things and you can't do those things. And maybe someone who seems incapable of remaining calm in the court and so depending on the judge is you know looked at violating the decorum of the court."

"Um and I think because there's a difference uh at least the violation of decorum potentially could actually not really mean anything other than the person uh feels a kind of pressure where in that situation regardless of how you or I might act, it does become impossible and it doesn't necessarily not indicate that outside of that courtroom they will do things to violate whatever the conditions are."

"But you seem to indicate that that's one of the when you see that it indicates to you that that person will be incapable of following orders. And so maybe maybe what I'm trying to ask you is if you could speak a little more about that because that to be honest with you if that is your perspective that's concerning me."

"Because I can understand somebody who comes from a group of people who don't always get justice in the court why you might uh why you might in that situation have a hard time doing what is necessary but be perfectly able outside of the court to what your required to do."

Judge Adelman:

"Well, as I said it's it's one factor uh. It's not the only factor in uh if you look at the decisions that I've written, you'll see that very often that person has also violated court orders outside of the

court on a repeated basis. I don't expect people to be perfect. And I give every latitude that I can while still protecting the children."

"Uh but, one of the jobs that a judge has is to assess credibility of parties and I have to take in every possible factor that I can observe in making that decision. And in the the appellate courts have repeatedly deferred to the trial court because the trial court observes the demeanor of the parties in the courtroom and that is a significant factor but that's certainly not the only factor."

Senator Winfield: "Thank you. I appreciate your uh responses."

Judge Adelman: "Thank you for the questions."

Chairman Tong: "Representative Srinivasan"

Representative Srinivasan: "Thank you Mr. Chair. Good afternoon."

Judge Adelman: "Good afternoon"

Representative Srinivasan: "Thank you for being here this afternoon. I first want to congratulate you and complement you on your long and happy married life."

Judge Adelman: "Thank you."

Representative Srinivasan: "And I'm celebrating 40th this year so yours, I've got a little catching up to do with you but congratulations."

Judge Adelman: "Thank you."

Representative Srinivasan: "What I was not clear about in this conversation we've been having so far is when you were asked was there an excessive amount of women complaints against you and you replied back by saying you have an equal number of men complaining against you as well. So, maybe you can just enlarge on the complaints you've been getting by both men and women. Is it only women or is it men or is it across the board?"

Judge Adelman: "Okay uh I'm looking at the uh my list of uh judicial complaints and not counting those individuals who never appeared before me. Uh there's 4 by men and 3 by women. Uh I'm sorry 4. I didn't count attorney Hightower. So, 4 and 4. In terms of judicial complaints."

Representative Srinivasan:

“So, the premise or the question, not premise probably, the question that you were being unfair to women from your point of view, since you’ve equal number of complaints against men and women does not pan out.”

Judge Adelman:

“Well at least at least those people who took the trouble to file a judicial complaint.”

Representative Srinivasan:

“Thank you. And that brings up the other question we are really concerned about. Was if people had not appeared before you, what would be the rationale what would be the reason that they would take the trouble and to file a complaint against you so that kind of doesn’t. I don’t get that.”

Judge Adelman:

“Well, quite frankly neither do I, but uh the rules do not require a person to be a litigant so a member of the public can can you know- if a member of the public- feels that they witnessed or read about something they think is inappropriate. They they can file a complaint. Those complaints are dismissed. Have been dismissed uh as not having any probable cause but uh I can’t account for people’s motivation.”

Representative Srinivasan:

“So, these are people that have not even come before you?”

Judge Adelman:

“That’s correct.”

Representative Srinivasan:

“And have read about you or heard about you or happened to be in the courtroom when you were discussing some other case, and have taken the trouble or they feel compelled or whatever the feeling is to file a complaint.”

Judge Adelman:

“Apparently so. There’s extensive social media uh you know blogs and and and so on which you know people voice their complaints about judges and about the system fairly or unfairly. And some people feel compelled to join in the the discussion when they really have no uh no role in the case.”

Representative Srinivasan:

“Thank you. And my final question is we all have complaints against us you know filed against us. Nobody’s perfect. I get that. But you know there’s a norm. You you have a bell-shaped curve and most of us fall within the within the proper side of the bell shape and of course you got the outliers as well. Looking at the number of complaints against you would you

consider yourself with being in the framework of the bell shape or on the fringes?”

Judge Adelman:

“I’m on the high fringes. And that’s because I spending um spending 6.5 years hearing family cases. 3 of those years hearing high conflict cases. I deal with the most complex and high conflict custody matters that appear in in our courts. And and these are people who are litigating on and on.”

Representative Srinivasan:

“You know while while we hear complaints uh many of us are even fortunate enough, I mean not to get a complaint but to get complimentary letters about the way you’ve conducted yourself or the way an interaction went.

“I’m a physician so I see I see a lot of patients obviously and I do get, I’m thankful for the complimentary comments I get. Do you along with the complaints unfortunately get a list of for complimentary letters as well? Has that been an experience for you?”

Judge Adelman:

“Not letters but comments you know in court um... Judge Bozzuto talked this morning about the uh the parties that come in with agreements who settle their dissolution of marriage issues and custody issues either on their own or with a little bit of help from a mediator or an attorney.

And I um I’m always very quick to commend those people and point out to them that they have given their children a gift by avoiding custody litigation, and that they have provided an adequate role model to their children about how adults deal with very serious, complex, and emotional issues. Um and those people I usually get very very positive responses from. Um I have had some cases where I heard in the past that you know people had said you know things worked out really well uh but yes, I don’t get letters I get comments.”

Representative Srinivasan:

“Thank you”

Judge Adelman:

“Thank you”

Representative Srinivasan:

“Thank you Mr. Chair”

Judge Adelman:

“Thank you representative”

Chairman Tong:

“Further questions? Representative Gonzalez”

Representative Gonzalez: “Uh good afternoon Your Honor.”

Judge Adelman: “Good afternoon”

Representative Gonzales: “Um I think that I been a couple times in your court. And I know that sometimes maybe one or twice you realized that I was there. But there are sometimes that I been all the way in the back. People sitting in front of me. You haven’t realized that I was there.”

“And the reason why I decided to go to your court is because all of this complaints against you. And I always say that where there’s one complaint, two complaint, three complaint we would think well maybe the case didn’t went there way. But you when you have a lot of complaints you know something is wrong.”

“It’s not because the parent they don’t like you. It’s because it’s not because they read you know um online that you are a terrible judge. Because I don’t believe that a person that never been in front of you, I believe that. I don’t believe that person was going to complain against you because never been in front of you.”

“So, me personally because of respect, I don’t believe that people that you know read the e- uh online and know that that you know people are complaining about you. I don’t think they would complain about you just because somebody else is complaining. But saying that um, I got a couple of questions for you and uh let’s start with alimony.”

“Uh, how you go by by the alimony if it is based on how many years the couple been married? How do you decide?”

Judge Adelman: “Well, we have a statute 46B-82.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Mhmm”

Judge Adelman: “Which sets forth the criteria for alimony and there’s a number of factors. The length of the marriage is certainly one of them. The economic relative economic uh position of the two parties, uh educational achievements of the parties, uh their past employment, uh their ability to earn a living or not, uh their health is an issue.”

“And um recently uh the legislature saw fit to uh add um uh language regarding whether or not it was it would be significant uh

for the custodial parent uh to care for the children rather than be employed full-time. So, there's a number of factors that the court has to decide uh in making that determination. The statute also requires us to consider the property distribution under 46B-81 and we do that as well. And then of course if there is young children involved there's a child support obligation. And that is factored into the decision."

Representative Gonzalez: "So, a couple that's been married for 3 years and knowing that you explained the different reasons, but a couple that been married for 3 years, you believe that it is fair for lifetime alimony lifetime?"

Judge Adelman: "Well, I know the case you are referring to. Uh that case went to the appellate court. My decision was affirmed as being appropriate. Uh so I'll I'll stand by my record."

Representative Gonzalez: "Okay. Um we we passed a bill 2014 and (clears throat) it was very clear that the judges they have to provide a list of GAL and uh the number on the state statute is very clear. You said 50 names. And I heard a lot of people complaining about how you handled that. Um you're providing how many if you are providing the list how many names."

"And um I got a complaint about you providing 13 names in a case and when decide to check every person that list um one of the person has a grievance and he was reprimand. The other person was um live in Florida, they checked the website and the person live and work in Florida during the time that the list was that you provide them the list. And um another one um has a grievance um and uh the lady decide that uh after they check all those names and they saw that it is a lot of problems that list."

"People not even qualified. People that live out of the state the names are there. So, the mother decide that I think that she recognize there was some mental issues with her. And she asked you for one specific GAL because she knew that that person was a therapist. And the response- your response-was no."

"No because your daughter has not been diagnosed with mental illness. But the lady was asking for her. She was asking the GAL because she thought a therapist is going to be able to work with us and knowing that she had that problem she said well

maybe she will work with the kids and myself and. . . And you said no. Why?”

“If if if I I’m not mistaken um you provide a list. You give them to the person two weeks. They will come back and they will decide and they will say this is who I pick Your Honor. If they don’t pick a GAL then you pick for them. But she decide that she want somebody from that list and you’re going to have to say no.”

I believe that it was very it’s very clear the state statute. Why you decide that you are going to violate the state statute? When it’s very clear in the same statute. 50 names and give them two weeks to decide. If they decide you have to go with it. Why you say no?”

Judge Adelman:

“The situation you are referring to um the parties had qualified under a sliding scale and we did not have a mental health professional on the Bridgeport list that took sliding scale. Um I had I have very few GAL that are mental health professionals. So, I appointed a woman, an attorney who was very experienced as a guardian and accepted sliding scale. I I admit on that day I only had 13 names on the list and that that was wrong um. . .”

“My practice um well certainly this was in this was in Bridgeport. My practice is to uh look at the master list for the Fairfield Judicial District at that time and to put people’s name on the list whose work I was familiar with and with who I thought could serve appropriately as a guardian.”

“As was indicated by Judge Buzzuto earlier uh when the judicial branch put in the training program for GAL, that people simply if they took the 40-hour course they were qual- they were deemed qualified and put on the list. Unfortunately, uh there were many people on that list who um I didn’t think could serve in that capacity.”

“There were people on the list this was during the time of the real estate bubble bursting and quite frankly there were many attorneys who had never done any family law. Who took the program, who took the training to get on the list in the hopes of making some money. Um I wouldn’t appoint people like that. Um so the reason I didn’t appoint is that the woman could not afford to pay for a therapist. I didn’t have a therapist who would take sliding

scale and there was no diagnosis so I went with an experienced attorney who was a guardian.”

Representative Gonzalez: “But with all due respect eh um you never you never expressed yourself like that. You never told her we have a problem. This GAL won’t accept you know um sliding scale. You never say that.”

Judge Adelman: “Well if if you have a transcript, I’d be happy to review it. I don’t remember specifically what was said.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Well I I’m saying that um for you to decide not to and to uh not allow her to go with um with this um GAL didn’t you violate the state statute? That’s what you did. Um you never never say anything else. Just say no. Your daughter is not um is not diagnosed with any mental illness.”

Judge Adelman: “But I’ve done and what I’ve done now is I I now created 3 separate lists um so that if I have a person who is qualified for sliding scale, I give them a list of 15 of only people who are only willing to accepts sliding scale. So, I hope that corrects the problem”

Representative Gonzalez: “Yeah but but you know Your Honor it’s like you make mistakes and um or a problem you end up hurting people. You end up allowing them to go with a person that they don’t feel comfortable. And um after your hurt that person and you cause damages who is going to come back to the court and say, how you going to how you going to uh how you going to fix those damages? If the damage is done the damage is done. Um so I think what you did was wrong um uh giving her a list of all those names here of people that were in Florida uh . . .”

Judge Adelman: “All the people on the list were people who were on the qualified list.”

Representative Gonzalez: “We checked. We checked it. I checked it and there’s a person that lived in Florida and was working in Florida at that time.

Judge Adelman: “Well that’s that’s why the Judicial Branch narrowed down the list uh after uh because there were people no longer interested in doing that work.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Well . . .”

Judge Adelman: “So I stand corrected and your ri- your absolutely correct.

Representative Gonzalez: “Well you got . . . That that is a problem. I think that. I would like to know because they have a lot of people complaining about the list. So, judges are not going by the state statute. Um I think that in a way they don’t care about that list. So, they are violating the state statute. Uh now um do you believe that that um that a fee for a GAL is um is child support?”

Judge Adelman: “Yes”

Representative Gonzalez: “So as child support?”

Judge Adelman: “That’s what the appellate courts and the bankruptcy courts have ruled. Yes.”

Representative Gonzalez: “So that means that I’m paying \$200, \$300,000 to a GAL and that’s child support? So, if I’m going to pay, oh my God, if I’m going to pay a GAL in 5 months \$200,000, \$300,000 that’s child support? Your Honor that, in my opinion, I’m not a lawyer, I’m not a judge but that’s not child support.

“That’s filling their pockets the GAL. Uh that’s allowing GAL to treat these people to their last quarter. So, it’s impossible that you will say that a fee for the GAL that I got cases spent \$250,000, \$150,000 in 29 days. That’s child support?”

Judge Adelman: “I’ve never been involved in a case like that.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Um yeah but this is you see. . . I’m checking when you came here in 2009 and this was very clear that you said that uh yeah that a GAL fee is a form of child support.”

Judge Adelman: “That’s the law”

Representative Gonzalez: “So that’s not I have to I have to check on there because it’s it’s um I I it’s horrible to think that way that I’m going to pay \$300,000 in a case in a couple of months of whatever and that’s child support. That’s not child support. Uh now . . . do you believe that pro se clients thoroughly have the ability to be treated equally?”

Judge Adelman: “The ability to be- certainly.”

Representative Gonzalez:

“To be- okay. Um and what the reason I’m asking all these questions is because there are a lot of complaints about you. And I was there. And you got a temper. You got a temper. And I was there one day and I couldn’t believe the way that you was acting with the mother.”

“That the ex-husband I think that he was maybe his value was what like maybe 50- \$50 million and the mother didn’t have a penny. And I was there and I saw you the way that you treat her. She was crying and I felt sorry because I know that’s a very delicate issue when you are fighting for your kids. You so passionate.”

“And there’s sometimes that you cannot um you have to cry because you are fighting for your kids so your attitude towards her was so bad that I said I can’t believe this that a judge think that he has the right to mistreat a woman like that. And um it was to a point that she was she was crying but at the same time she was arguing her right to see the kid. You called a Marshall. And you asked the Marshall to stay behind her. That’s the way that you treat mothers in court.

Judge Adelman:

“I’d be happy to review the transcript for you.”

Representative Gonzalez:

“Uh uh- no transcript because I’m not going to stop our time (unintelligible?) I was there. I can say. I was there. And I think that a few people here they were also there. The bailiff came in front of her. You called them. She was in front of you. She was crying. And they both came you know behind her. So, the mother is saying that you mistreat them in court. That’s true.”

“The way that you treat them like um uh they are saying that you used the litigant’s children as weapons and tools and you threatened them. That’s one thing over and over was there. And I remember when you came here, we had some concerns in 2009. Um and um some of us asked you questions but did you denied a litigant the right to choose their own AMC or GAL?”

“Um, so do you think the mother just because it’s a woman don’t have the right or maybe she don’t know what she wants? That she don’t have the right to decide or choose or pick a GAL?”

Judge Adelman: "Well if the parties agree on a GAL, then I appoint that person. If there's a difference of opinion then the court appoints the guardian"

Representative Gonzalez: "But but not on not on this case and not without in a perfect world that will happen that's supposed to happen but um . . ."

Judge Adelman: "Again if you have a transcript, I'd be happy to review it."

Representative Gonzalez: "Did you deny a mother . . .? Well, you denied the mother to speak with the therapist of her child?"

Judge Adelman: "Yes"

Representative Gonzalez: "Can you explain why?"

Judge Adelman: "Because the therapist . . . When a child or anyone is in therapy there's a hopefully there's a therapeutic relationship that develops between the patient and the therapist. In this case the child and and the um and the therapist and uh in some cases the therapists will protect that right and will not speak to the parents about what is going on in therapy uh as part of their professional responsibility."

"And uh I I've told I think in more than one occasion that told a parent both father and mother that it's inappropriate for you to attempt to discuss the therapy with the therapist. Uh that if there's a guardian the guardian can do that uh . . ."

"But you're in a custody battle. You're in a custody dispute and the courts have ruled when you're in a custody dispute like that the courts have ruled that when you're in a custody dispute like that you don't have the objective ability to make appropriate decisions regarding the child's therapy."

"And so, we protect the therapeutic relationship of the child because we want the child to do better. We want the child not to be harmed and the therapy is an essential part of protecting the child."

Representative Gonzalez: "I disagree with you in some ways but . . ."

Judge Adelman: "I respect your difference of opinion."

Representative Gonzalez: "Have you ev- have you been overturned on appeals or had any orders vacated by the appeal court?"

Judge Adelman: "I've been overturned in um in one decision uh regarding a uh modification of um alimony and child support. Um one of my decisions uh I was affirmed uh by the appellate court and then the supreme court overturned the appellate court um. . . Those are the only times."

Representative Gonzalez: "Um. . ."

Judge Adelman: "And and I've had uh a couple of cases uh where I've been affirmed in part and reversed in part, I think on 3 occasions if I remember right. (Looks through papers). Yeah 3 3 times ther- I've I've there have been 21 appeals that have actually gone to decision and 3 of those I was affirmed in part and reversed in part. I've only been reversed completely once out of twenty-one."

Representative Gonzalez: "So, but that's a lot of complaints uh. . . Uh have you um if the appellate court completely overturn an order can an attorney come to court later with a motion for contempt for noncompliance with those same orders?"

Judge Adelman: "The order that's been overturned?"

Representative Gonzalez: "Uh huh"

Judge Adelman: "No"

Representative Gonzalez: "No"

Judge Adelman: "No"

Representative Gonzalez: "Okay"

Judge Adelman: "Cause there's no longer an order"

Representative Gonzalez: "Exactly. That's my point. A lawyer came back and uh she was hold in contempt of court. Have you ever been involved in cases where somewhere and you allowed that? Have you ever been in cases where someone needed accommodations due to a physical or mental disability?"

Judge Adelman: "Yes. Many times."

Representative Gonzalez: "And do you always try to comply with that?"

Judge Adelman: "Judges do not um deal with with um requests for accommodations under the American Disabilities Act. It's not a judicial decision. If someone and this has happened if someone in

the court proceeding uh says something to indicate that they're having a diff- a problem due to a disability, I will immediately and I have stopped the hearing. I refer that person to the ADA liaison in in whatever courthouse we happen to be in and then I would handle the accommodations that have been approved."

Representative Gonzalez: "Uh okay uh well a lot of complaints about that. That you're ignoring uh the people's ADA they are requesting accommodations. A lot of complaints about that. Um now uh um uh do you threaten litigants with taking away well especially mothers to take away her child?"

Judge Adelman: "I've told people that if they can't protect their children then the state of Connecticut will protect their children. Both mothers and fathers.

Representative Gonzalez: "But I'm saying during the case uh you're not happy you were irritated and um because I know because I've been there that you got a temper. So, you threaten the litigant's um by any chance you don't like the response but you threaten them to take the child away. Um and also do you threaten litigants with uh psychological evaluations?"

Judge Adelman: "Do I threaten them?"

Representative Gonzalez: "Mhmm"

Judge Adelman: "No, I don't threaten anyone with a psychological evaluation."

Representative Gonzalez: "Do you ever threat litigants with supervised visitation?"

Judge Adelman: "Do I threaten?"

Representative Gonzalez: "Yes"

Judge Adelman: "I don't threaten. I suggest that if they can't obey the court order I my only other result may be supervised visitation."

Representative Gonzalez: "Do you believe you have the obligation to bring family together for the best interests of the child?"

Judge Adelman: " I I believe I have a state mandated obligation to make rulings in the best interest of the children."

Representative Gonzalez: “You have that mandated and the following question is are you following that or are you ignoring that?”

Judge Adelman: “I follow that every day in every case in every decision to the best of my ability.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Do you believe that coparent do you believe in in uh a coparenting counseling?”

Judge Adelman: “Absolutely. I order it frequently.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Okay. Can you tell me can you tell me uh have you ever and this is your under oath, have you ever in the middle of a trial or hearing do you ever change the position of a guardian of a AMC or GAL? And I’m telling you you’re under oath.”

Judge Adelman: “Ma’am you don’t have to remind me that I’m under oath.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Okay so I’ll remind you.”

Judge Adelman: “That’s insulting.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Okay we’re not . . .”

Judge Adelman: “I I will tell you I have. Yes.”

Representative Gonzalez: “You have?”

Judge Adelman: “Yes”

Representative Gonzalez: “And and uh do you think that that’s fair that’s fair uh when a person is representing the child and then in the middle say one more power, I want to be the GAL? Not that you picked that person you decide to change that person a different position that guardian the AMC ask you I want to be the GAL after the person was the AMC. Do you think that is fair?”

Judge Adelman: “Well . . .”

Representative Gonzalez: “Or or or . . . I’m sorry. Sorry.”

Judge Adelman: “I can’t discuss the specifics of that case because it’s still a pending matter. But I I I I stand on I stand on my decision and it’s a matter of record.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Your Honor . . .”

Judge Adelman: “I think it was totally appropriate under the circumstances.”

Representative Gonzalez: “Your Honor I’m not I’m not uh asking you to discuss the matter. It was a question uh so you can change you can say a GAL in the middle of a trial or hearing, you would change the position because the GAL asked you because the AMC asked you. Not because it was your decision. She asked you. Can you tell me if that happened because she’s an elected official?”

Judge Adelman: “No, now you’re asking me to comment on a specific case

Representative Gonzalez: “Yes or no . . .

Judge Adelman: “And I can’t do that.”

Representative Gonzalez: “I I’m not asking for you to explain me the case. I’m not, it was a question that I asked you . . .”

Judge Adelman: “Ok”

Representative Gonzalez: “And respectfully I am asking the question and I would like to have an answer.”

Judge Adelman: “I will answer it this way. GALs, attorneys for minor children, make requests to the court all the time. I don’t do what the guardian requests unless I think it is appropriate. It’s my decision as the judge to make the order and sometimes I follow what the guardian requests sometimes I don’t sometimes I take part of it and not all of it uh that happens routinely.”

Representative Gonzales: “But in the middle of a trial, do you think it’s right for that when you have when you already have an AMC that is representing the child? And the A- the GAL will ask you I want I want now Your Honor I want to be the GAL and instead of instead of uh maybe I don’t know stopping you know stop the trial and and say well you’re the GAL maybe do something but in the middle of the of the trial in front of everybody okay I’m gonna appoint you as a GAL now . . .”

Chairman Doyle: “Representative Gonzalez just with all due respect I just want to make a comment that you are treading down the road of a pending case and and I know you appreciate that . . .”

Representative Gonzalez: “Yes.”

Chairman Doyle: “Just just keep and its its it’s a difficult area. Just keep in mind cause he he tried to answer the question to the best of ability

but he cannot answer it directly so . . . It's just kind of a gray area. Just keep in mind it's it's a difficult um position or area you're heading down."

Representative Gonzalez: "Okay."

Chairman Doyle: "Thank you."

Representative Gonzalez: "Yes. But but what I'm saying is yes or no in in knowing that it was in the middle of the trial uh um you might be involved in this with GALs and DNC. And if it un- you don't have to talk about the case but if it is unfair uh what you did and in my in my opinion is that you agree because the person was an elected official."

"That's not right. I think that everybody has the same right and I am if if another AMC asked you that question in the middle of a trial maybe if that person is not an elected official would not have gone with that. So, I think that it was wrong for you to do that. I think that um now you seen the same person who discussed whatever she knew about about the child and all that. I think that it was wrong and it didn't look good. Um, it was like it was like that person was controlling your court. Not you. Thank you."

Chairman Doyle: "Thank you representative. Any further comments from the committee? I'm seeing none. Thank you very much Your Honor."

Judge Adelman: "Thank you."
