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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION

RAYMOND E. BUTLER, II,) Case No. 25 CV 4443
)
Plaintiff,)
)
v.)
)
ELI JACKFINN EDDI, et al.,)
) Chicago, Illinois
Defendants.) April 9, 2026
) 10:00 a.m.

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
BEFORE THE HONORABLE APRIL M. PERRY

APPEARANCES:

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* * * * *

25 PROCEEDINGS REPORTED BY STENOTYPE
TRANSCRIPT PRODUCED USING COMPUTER-AIDED TRANSCRIPTION

1 (Proceedings heard in open court:)

2 THE CLERK: Calling case 25 CV 4443, Butler versus
3 Eddi.

4 THE COURT: All right. Just line up and share the
5 microphones as best you can.

6 MS. LONDON: Good morning, Your Honor. Katherine
7 London on behalf of the plaintiff, Raymond Butler.

8 THE COURT: Good morning.

9 MS. ROSEN: Sue Ann Rosen from Ashman Stein on behalf
10 of Eric Rothner.

11 MS. MAHER: Good morning. Robin Maher on behalf of
12 Ilana Eddi.

13 MR. MANDEL: Alan Mandel on behalf of Nachshon
14 Draiman.

15 MS. PEARCE: Jackie Pearce on behalf of Irving
16 Birnbaum.

17 MR. WEINTRAUB: Gary Weintraub on behalf of Stanton,
18 Aron.

19 MS. ZUBA: Samantha Zuba on behalf of Menachem Shabat,
20 Chaim Rajchenbach and Shmuel Fuerst.

21 MS. WELLER: Jennifer Weller on behalf of Jeffrey
22 Gutman.

23 MR. OBERTS: Your Honor, good morning. Bill Oberts,
24 O-B-E-R-T-S, on behalf of Colman Ginsparg.

25 MS. GREEN: Meredith Green on behalf of William

1 Kanter.

2 MS. CURRY: Mary Kathryn Curry on behalf of David
3 Raanan.

4 MR. HALL: Good morning, Your Honor. I'm Thomas Hall.
5 I represent Manuel and Dorine Magence.

6 MR. FRENCH: Good morning, Your Honor. Thomas French
7 on behalf of Mr. Harold Katz.

8 MR. BORCIA: Jim Borcia for Garry Chankin.

9 THE COURT: Is that everyone? All right. Good. I
10 appreciate you all being here in person. It is not my policy
11 to drag people in for nonsubstantive motions. Hopefully we can
12 accomplish most of what needs to be done on papers. But to the
13 extent we are going to be talking about substantive motions, it
14 is my policy to have everyone appear in person. I know some of
15 you are from out of town. So you can have, on the defense
16 side, to the extent there are no conflicts, you can obviously
17 step up on each other's behalf. And again, hopefully we won't
18 need to do this too often because I know it is a lot of time
19 and money that people spend. But I find that things go
20 smoother when we all have to look each other in the eye and you
21 all have to look me in the eye, so that is why we are here
22 today.

23 We are up today on plaintiff's motion to disqualify,
24 which is docket entry Number 245. It names five, perhaps six,
25 depending on how you read it, bases for my recusal. We will

1 discuss each one of those in turn.

2 But first, Ms. London, I should tell you, I don't know
3 who all of the people in the courtroom are. But I understand
4 that the Seventh Circuit has opened an ARDC referral regarding
5 similar types of motions to disqualify. I don't know if anyone
6 from the ARDC is here today. It is their practice, if they
7 have an open investigation, frequently to either come or to get
8 transcripts, so you should proceed with the understanding that
9 they may be reading this. In addition, of course, to the
10 understanding that you are an officer of the court always when
11 you appear.

12 So let's talk about each one of these different bases
13 for recusal that you have notated in your motion.

14 The first is my prior professional relationship with
15 Judge Alexakis, who recused herself from the case a short time
16 ago. I should note that not only did we work together before,
17 we work together now and we are friends as I am with many of my
18 colleagues on the bench.

19 This particular case involves trust assets from which
20 the plaintiff claims he's been unfairly denied and which have
21 been dissipated. The claims involve fraud and breach of
22 fiduciary duty by individuals who had involvement with various
23 family trusts in which the plaintiff allegedly had an interest.

24 Put simply, this case has nothing to do with me. It
25 has nothing to do with Judge Alexakis. She is not a victim.

1 She is not a witness. She is not a party. She is not a lawyer
2 in the case. She recused herself because of a different
3 lawsuit, which is noted in her minute order, which named her as
4 well as four other judges as well as the entirety of the Cook
5 County clerk's office as defendants filed by the same
6 plaintiff. That lawsuit takes issue with various rulings that
7 Judge Alexakis and later Judge Maldonado from the Seventh
8 Circuit made.

9 Judge Alexakis noted in her minute order that she did
10 not have to recuse herself from the case because the other
11 lawsuit is frivolous. As should go without saying, if a party
12 could disqualify a judge in their case just by suing them, we
13 would have a whole lot more disqualifications. It would
14 incentivize perversely parties to sue judges indiscriminately
15 to receive more favorable treatment or more favorable judges.
16 And that's the reason the rule exists that a judge doesn't have
17 to recuse themselves on the basis of a frivolous lawsuit.

18 But Judge Alexakis chose to recuse herself on a
19 voluntary basis under the belief that her impartiality might
20 reasonably be questioned. Plaintiff's argument is now because
21 I'm friends with Judge Alexakis, my impartiality might
22 reasonably be questioned because her impartiality might
23 reasonably be questioned.

24 Unfortunately, I do not accept the premise that the
25 conflict rules work like the transitive properties in a math

1 problem. Just because Judge Alexakis has a conflict and I'm
2 friends with Judge Alexakis, does not then mean I have a
3 conflict. And I have not seen any authority in the rules or
4 case law to indicate otherwise.

5 The closest judicial advisory opinion that I'm aware
6 of on this topic is Number 11, which discusses judicial
7 disqualifications when a judge's longtime friend is actually a
8 counsel in the case. Interestingly, even then -- and in that
9 case I think the attorney is not only a friend but the
10 Godfather of the judge's child, even in that case, the judicial
11 advisory opinion did not require disqualification.

12 Here, of course, we are much farther afield because
13 Judge Alexakis is neither a lawyer in the case nor does she
14 have any continued involvement with it at all. In short, her
15 decision to recuse herself has nothing to do with me, and I
16 will not disqualify myself on the basis that I am friends with
17 her.

18 That turns us to the second issue in which the
19 plaintiff and plaintiff's counsel have questioned the validity
20 of my judicial nomination and confirmation. Specifically
21 alleging that an autopen may have been used to sign my
22 commission.

23 So let me ask you first, Ms. London. Do you know what
24 an autopen is and how it works?

25 MS. LONDON: Yes, Your Honor.

1 THE COURT: Okay. What is your understanding of how
2 an autopen works?

3 MS. LONDON: My understanding is that an autopen is
4 used when the president is not able to participate in or be at
5 the signing of something that he would need to sign and an
6 autopen is used in his absence with his knowledge of what is
7 being signed in his absence.

8 THE COURT: All right. My question is actually much
9 more basic. How does an autopen work?

10 MS. LONDON: I believe it's like an electric stamp,
11 but I don't know for sure.

12 THE COURT: All right. So you would agree with me
13 that signatures generated by an autopen are identical?

14 MS. LONDON: Yes, but I would disagree that it is the
15 intent of the person who intends to sign something that is
16 different. Anybody could stamp something with an identical
17 signature, but it's not the same thing as the person who has --
18 owns that signature knowing what is being signed.

19 THE COURT: I just asked you whether autopen
20 signatures are identical.

21 MS. LONDON: I believe they are supposed to be.

22 THE COURT: Right. Because that's how an autopen
23 works, right? They generate identical signatures over and over
24 and over again, correct?

25 MS. LONDON: Sure.

1 THE COURT: Have you seen my judicial commission?

2 MS. LONDON: No.

3 THE COURT: Have you seen any judicial commission
4 signed by President Biden?

5 MS. LONDON: No.

6 THE COURT: So what is your good-faith basis for
7 alleging that an autopen was used with respect to my
8 commission?

9 MS. LONDON: Well, we gave you specific references to
10 whistleblower testimony and the June 4th, 2025, White House
11 memorandum and the ongoing investigations regarding the autopen
12 to substantiate our claim.

13 THE COURT: To be used in some documents that were
14 supposed to be signed by the President?

15 MS. LONDON: Yes.

16 THE COURT: Let me tell you, I have no reason to
17 believe an autopen was used with respect to the signing of my
18 commission. First, I have seen several commissions signed by
19 President Biden. We all have them up in our offices. The
20 signatures are remarkably consistent but they are not
21 identical. Indicating to me no autopen was used.

22 Secondly, at the time I was confirmed, I was told that
23 I needed to state when I would be available for my commission
24 to be signed because the President often requires several times
25 to be able to -- several days to be present to be able to sign

1 the judicial commission. Therefore, we were all told that once
2 we said we were ready for our commission to be signed, we would
3 need to expect that it could take up to a week for our
4 commissions to be signed.

5 Based on the facts within my personal knowledge, there
6 is no infirmity within my appointment process. Speculation and
7 conjectures based upon the Internet or news don't count as
8 facts. If someone in the executive or the legislative branch
9 had a genuine basis to challenge the 200 plus judges who were
10 appointed by the last presidential administration, I can almost
11 guarantee they would have moved forward with official action on
12 that basis.

13 The most recent public reporting I have seen on this
14 is that the Washington D.C. U.S. Attorney's office closed its
15 investigation into the use of autopens based upon a total lack
16 of any factual information to support it. So until someone
17 with actual knowledge of relevant facts provides me with any
18 information to challenge the legitimacy of my appointment, I
19 plan to continue doing the job that the taxpayers have been
20 paying me to do.

21 That brings me to your third basis. Financial
22 disclosure report, which I have not made publicly available.
23 First let me ask you, which financial disclosure report are you
24 complaining about not being publicly available?

25 MS. LONDON: 2024, 2025.

1 THE COURT: Okay. Before you accused me of violating
2 my statutory duty to file that financial report, I'm assuming
3 you looked at the statute. Is that true?

4 MS. LONDON: Yes, I did.

5 THE COURT: What statute did you look at?

6 MS. LONDON: I don't know, Your Honor.

7 THE COURT: The financial disclosures are governed by
8 5 United States Code 13101 through 13111. The United States
9 Code 13103 requires annual reports to be filed by May 15th, the
10 calendar year after the judge is disclosing about. So to the
11 extent you're complaining about my 2025 report not being
12 publicly available to you, I was under no obligation to file it
13 before May 15th. It is April 9th. In case you are wondering,
14 I actually filed it very early in late March. It is currently
15 publicly available to you.

16 To the extent you are complaining about 2024, the
17 statute says that an annual report must be filed for any
18 calendar year in which a judge serves in excess of 60 days.

19 Did you happen to look to see when I started serving
20 on the bench before you accused me of having violated my
21 statutory duty?

22 MS. LONDON: I did, Your Honor. And to your previous
23 point, I did check to see if your financial disclosure was
24 publicly available within the last few days, and I have not
25 been able to find it.

1 THE COURT: Well, someone else has already found it
2 and requested it. So I would suggest that perhaps your
3 searches have been in error because people are downloading it.

4 How many days did I serve in 2024?

5 MS. LONDON: I don't know, Judge.

6 THE COURT: My commission was signed on November 20th.
7 I was sworn in on November 26th. That is fewer than 60 days in
8 the calendar year. I was under no obligation to file a
9 financial report by the statute. Your allegations not only
10 have no factual support, they are frivolous.

11 That moves us to the Vanguard investments. Luckily
12 you were able to access my financial disclosure when I was
13 nominated to the U.S. Attorney, and you were able to discern
14 that along with about 30 million other customers, I have
15 investments at Vanguard. You have argued that I should
16 disqualify myself because apparently the trust in this case is
17 also a Vanguard customer, which I didn't know because Vanguard
18 doesn't appear anywhere in the complaints.

19 The rules regarding disqualification because of
20 financial interest are quite clear. A judge must disqualify
21 herself when she has a financial interest in the subject matter
22 and controversy. Having a bank account at the same place as
23 one of the parties has a bank account, does not even remotely
24 meet the standard. Vanguard is at best maybe a witness in this
25 case to authenticate bank records. It is not a party to the

1 case, and there is no reason to think that any other person's
2 accounts at Vanguard would be in any way affected by the
3 outcome of this particular case. In sum there is no basis for
4 disqualification on that basis.

5 The next stated basis for recusal is my ruling in the
6 *State of Illinois vs. Trump* case, which you have alleged
7 indicates a broad disregard for core constitutional principles.
8 Are you aware of what happened to that ruling on appeal?

9 MS. LONDON: Yes, Your Honor.

10 THE COURT: Do tell.

11 MS. LONDON: I am aware of it.

12 THE COURT: All right. So you're aware that the
13 ruling was upheld by both the Seventh Circuit and the Supreme
14 Court?

15 MS. LONDON: Yes.

16 THE COURT: Given that, no objective observer could
17 reasonably question whether that case reflects a broad
18 disregard for core constitutional principles.

19 Let me ask you next, even if that were untrue, what
20 does this case have to do with core constitutional principles?

21 MS. LONDON: Well, the core constitutional principle
22 that we discussed earlier regarding the autopen ties into the
23 constitutional issues in the Trump case as well. If you're
24 throwing out the autopen, then I don't have anything else to
25 say about it.

1 THE COURT: Okay. Finally you take issue with my
2 local Rule 44 analysis under which I applied the local rule,
3 like I do all statutes, like the Supreme Court has commanded me
4 based upon its plain language. A judge's application of the
5 law or rule as written is hardly a reasonable basis to
6 disqualify the judge. In sum, no reasonable person, knowing
7 all the facts, would conclude my impartiality might reasonably
8 be questioned within the meaning of 28 United States Code
9 Section 455(a).

10 I also want to note that you also bring the motion as
11 under 28 U.S.C. Section 144, which applies when the judge has a
12 personal bias or prejudice against either the filing party or
13 in favor of the adverse party. Your proposed basis for
14 qualification, of course, has nothing to do with either you or
15 the opposing party. They're instead attacks on my judicial
16 nomination, my personal relationships, my financial disclosure,
17 reporting obligations, where I bank, and my prior rulings. So
18 Section 144 is just inapplicable to the case. Other than to
19 say when you had your client swear under oath that all of the
20 facts in the motion were true, you put your client at risk for
21 either prosecution for making a false statement or certainly
22 for further cross-examination regarding his factual bases for
23 any of these things. Enough said about that.

24 To be clear, your motion]fails under even the most
25 lenient view of your obligations under Rule 11. You didn't do

1 the most basic factual research about what my financial
2 disclosure reporting requirements are before accusing me of
3 having violated them. You have no legitimate basis to argue
4 under the law that I should disqualify myself because I use a
5 bank where the assets in the case are held or that an opinion
6 upheld by the Supreme Court represents a disregard for the
7 Constitution or that following the plain language of the local
8 rules is an entitlement to disqualification.

9 This is your one free pass. I do not like sanctioning
10 attorneys. I think it distracts us from the actual issues in
11 the case, and I think it is highly inefficient. But I will not
12 tolerate any additional frivolous motions. You will be
13 sanctioned, just as the Seventh Circuit has already sanctioned
14 you, if you persist in this type of behavior. You didn't get
15 any warning from the Seventh Circuit; you are getting one from
16 me. You are also doing your client no favors when you delay
17 litigation with motions like this.

18 So let's move on to the actual issues in this case
19 that matter. There are several pending motions at various
20 stages in briefing. Giving my statements about Rule 11, which
21 I want everybody to take note of, I want to give everyone the
22 chance to think very hard about the motions they filed and
23 whether or not they intend to persist with them. My skim of
24 the document, which is quite long, indicates there may be
25 similar issues lurking. So I want to give anybody a chance to

1 withdraw any motions that they think should be withdrawn.

2 I'm going to ask you all to meet and confer. I know
3 there's a lot of you, so I know that probably is quite
4 complicated. But I want you to meet and confer about the
5 pending motions, whether you intend to persist with them if you
6 have been the one who filed them, and whether you do intend to
7 persist with them, what a proposed briefing schedule would be
8 for each of them.

9 So I'm going to ask for a joint proposed status --
10 joint status report by April 24th. If you all can't agree,
11 because again, there are many, many of you, you can each submit
12 a status report of no more than three pages regarding the
13 pending motions. To the extent you are the one who filed the
14 motion, please just let me know if you are going to withdraw it
15 or persist in it and what a proposed briefing schedule would be
16 for those.

17 I'm aware from the docket that Judge Alexakis did not
18 move forward on these at her discretion to manage her docket.
19 I intend to move forward with any and all ancillary motions
20 either that have been filed or will be filed, as I am entitled
21 to do, while we wait for the Seventh Circuit's ruling on the
22 other issues just so we can get rid of those and keep this case
23 moving forward as best we can.

24 Do you have any questions, Ms. London?

25 MS. LONDON: No, Your Honor.

1 THE COURT: Any questions on this side of the
2 courtroom?

3 MS. ROSEN: Your Honor, my client was served and two
4 days after the service, there was a stay put on the case. We
5 will file a motion to dismiss. I have one prepared, but I
6 didn't file it because there has been a stay.

7 THE COURT: Right.

8 MS. ROSEN: Should I file it?

9 THE COURT: I will take a look at that. I mean, to
10 the extent that you all agree to lift the stay -- my
11 understanding of what is on appeal, and correct me if I'm
12 wrong, because I have not dug super deep into this docket, is
13 that it's a TRO that's under appeal?

14 MS. LONDON: An injunction.

15 THE COURT: Okay. So I don't think the stay is
16 mandatory in this case. I also seem to recall though that the
17 stay was put in place because of a pending Cook County action.
18 So it may still be in the interest of efficiency and such to
19 keep it in place. If you all agree it should be lifted, let me
20 know. If there are people who want to lift it and people who
21 don't, let me know that and we can discuss whether or not that
22 should be briefed.

23 MR. MANDEL: Very briefly, Your Honor, the order was
24 that none of the defendants should seek to respond to the
25 complaint until, amongst other things, there was a

1 determination in the state court as to whether or not
2 Mr. Butler was an appropriate heir or beneficiary to the trust.
3 While we were here, I looked at the docket in the Circuit
4 Court, that case is still pending. There was a motion to
5 disqualify the judge who was supposed to try the case in
6 November. There are proceedings, I believe, next week with
7 respect to that case. In the interest of judicial economy, I
8 think we should wait before we start filing our motions until
9 we find out if there's a basis for the case.

10 THE COURT: Understood. That's what the point of the
11 status report is. So I don't want to sit here and have all
12 20 or some odd of you tell me your position on the record, it
13 will get too confusing. The stay remains in place for now. No
14 one has to file anything. Tell me if you all agree to remove
15 it or to get rid of the stay, although it sounds like you do
16 not. It might be helpful, if anyone can guess, which you may
17 not be able to, how long the state case will take to resolve.
18 But that, of course, depends on how many other motions have
19 been filed in the meantime.

20 MS. MAHER: Your Honor, I am the attorney for the
21 defendants in the state case, and can speak to it if you're
22 interested or I can put it in a status report; but there have
23 been a number of motions that I would call frivolous including
24 to disqualify the current judge who has now been named as a
25 potential party or seeking leave to sue him in the cause of

1 action against the federal court judges. We have a hearing
2 scheduled with an assigned judge -- the way Cook County works,
3 a different judge decides recusal motions, disqualification
4 motions. We have a hearing on April 24th in that matter.

5 THE COURT: Maybe it makes sense to kick our date a
6 little bit longer then.

7 MS. MAHER: Yeah. At that point we will potentially
8 know at least who our judge is. But we are a ways off from
9 resolving that case given the number of frivolous motions that
10 have been filed in the meantime.

11 THE COURT: All right. So you at least think you'll
12 know whether you'll be sitting under the same judge or a
13 different judge by the 24thish?

14 MS. MAHER: I believe so. I hope so.

15 THE COURT: All right. Let me give you then until --
16 let's do May 5th for your status reports. Anything that's
17 agreed goes up front to the status report. To the extent you
18 all have supplemental submissions, no more than three pages
19 each please, and to the extent you agree in small combinations
20 of people, you can combine those. All right?

21 MS. MAHER: Very good.

22 THE COURT: Thank you all.

23 (Concluded at 10:26 a.m.)

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1 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript from the
2 record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

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/s/Noreen E. Resendez
Noreen E. Resendez, CSR, RPR, CRR
Official Court Reporter

April 13, 2026
Date

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