

# NJ Judge Used Status in Bid to Cut Child Support, Ethics Complaint Charges

---

 [law.com/algo.html](http://law.com/algo.html)

By Katheryn Tucker

The Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct has filed a complaint against Ocean County Superior Court Judge James Palmer Jr. alleging that he tried to use his influence as a judge to reduce his own child support payments.

Palmer “created the risk that his judicial office would be an influential factor” in the handling of his family matter, Disciplinary Counsel Maureen Bauman’s complaint said. In so doing, he “impugned the integrity of the judiciary.”

The complaint, dated Jan. 16 and made public Monday, charges Palmer with violating three cannons of the Code of Judicial Conduct, including rules requiring judges to “observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved,” as well as to “promote public confidence in the independence, integrity and impartiality of the judiciary,” and to “avoid lending the prestige of their office to advance a personal interest.”

Palmer’s assistant, reached in chambers, said Palmer will not be commenting on the complaint, as did judiciary spokesman Peter McAleer.

The ACJC announced Monday that the complaint had been filed. The document details an incident on March 21, 2017, when Palmer appeared at the Somerset County Courthouse, Probation Division, to discuss his child support obligations under a 2011 divorce and request to emancipate his daughter. According to the complaint, he used his judicial identification and introduced himself as “Judge Palmer” to a series of employees, who each passed him up to a supervisor when they were unable to find the emancipation consent he said his ex-wife had filed. The ACJC charged that each employee said Palmer complained about having a cost-of-living increase in his child support payments when he had not been given a raise in his judicial salary, and that he told them his daughter “should have been emancipated a long time ago.”

Palmer was admitted in New Jersey in 1985. He has a law degree from Indiana University and master’s degrees from Columbia University in New York and Roosevelt University in Chicago, according to his LinkedIn profile. He spent 27 years in private practice, including as a solo in Jackson and as an in-house counsel to several corporations, before his December 2008 confirmation.

Palmer was first assigned to the Family Part in Burlington County, then moved to the Criminal Part in 2010. In 2014, he was assigned to his current position in the Ocean Vicinage’s Civil Part. He was granted tenure in late 2015.

# Katheryn Tucker

---

Katheryn Hayes Tucker is an Atlanta-based reporter covering legal news for the Daily Report and other ALM publications.