

Fayette judge sues lawmakers, says impeachment hearings violate due process rights

BY TAYLOR SIX
tsix@herald-leader.com

A Fayette County circuit judge facing impeachment has filed a lawsuit against Kentucky legislators to stop the proceedings, which she claims are illegal.

Fayette Circuit Judge Julie Muth Goodman filed the lawsuit Wednesday in Franklin Circuit Court.

In January, former Republican lawmaker Killian Timoney filed the petition against Goodman claiming she abused her judicial authority and undermined public confidence in the courts in a way that constitutes “misdemeanors in office.” His petition mentions six cases handled by Goodman.

Goodman’s lawsuit lists Timoney as a defendant, and says his petition’s filing is deficient for the committee to consider. The judge’s lawsuit also claims the impeachment hearings — one of which has been conducted in executive session — are illegal.

The judge provided the legislative impeachment committee a response to Timoney’s petition in February, and she also sent a letter seeking to dismiss the proceedings in March, but the committee has not responded to the request, according to Goodman’s lawsuit.

Rep. Jason Nemes, R-Middletown, is also a de-



SILAS WALKER swalker@herald-leader.com

Rep. Jason Nemes is among those named in a lawsuit filed Wednesday but Fayette County Circuit Judge Julie Muth Goodman, which claims ongoing impeachment proceedings against her are illegal.

fendant in Goodman’s suit in his capacity as chair of the 2026 Regular Session Impeachment Committee. Speaker of the House David Osborne, R-Prospect, is also a defendant.

WHAT GOODMAN’S LAWSUIT SAYS

In the 69-page lawsuit filed March 11 and in response to the petition, Goodman says Timoney’s original filing was incomplete because it was not notarized and did not include an affidavit.

“A ‘Killian Timoney’ signed and dated the Pet-

ition, but failed to include a sworn or verified affidavit,” Goodman’s petition reads. “...They are, in effect, anonymous.”

The committee accepted the petition and discussed it at a Feb. 26 hearing in closed session. As a result of that hearing, Nemes said a public hearing would be conducted Monday, March 16.

However, Goodman claims the impeachment proceedings violate her due process rights. The lawsuit states future proceedings will also violate her rights by limiting the

amount of time she can speak and restricting her ability to question witnesses called against her.

Goodman’s lawsuit outlines how the committee plans to hold the hearing, which she called a “trial by ambush.”

In a letter addressed to Goodman’s attorney, the judge was notified she would not be allowed to call any witnesses or present records without approval from the committee. In addition, Goodman or her attorney will only be allowed to speak for 10 minutes, and she cannot

question witnesses called against her.

Thursday afternoon, Nemes said Goodman would be given an unlimited amount of time to testify, but the 10 minutes would be for her or her attorney to share concerns about the process.

According to the lawsuit, witnesses set to participate include Fayette Commonwealth’s attorney Kimberly Baird, whose office Goodman has consistently accused of misconduct. Baird has turned over a written statement and “hundreds” of supporting documents, according to Nemes.

COMMONWEALTH’S ATTORNEY ASKS FOR GOODMAN BE IMPEACHED

In her 11-page letter to the committee, Baird requested legislators impeach Goodman, who Baird said could not be impartial toward prosecutors.

“In review of Judge Goodman’s behavior on the bench, there is a true appearance of partiality, and no public confidence in the integrity of the judicial process, for this office or any victims that come before her,” Baird wrote. “That trust and confidence cannot be restored.”

Baird supplied nearly 400 pages of court transcripts, which she said would demonstrate the “rude” and “condescending” nature of Goodman’s comments to prosecutors in her court.

Additionally, Baird said her office treats victims and their families different when they appear in Goodman’s court by preparing victims for insensitive comments from Goodman herself.

“We extend plea offers differently in her division as well and participate in mediations to avoid jury trials and minimize the decisions she must make in a case as she unjustly impacts case outcomes,” Baird wrote. “When she imposes her own biased thoughts on a case, victims continue to be traumatized, the judicial system does not operate as it should, and the public trust suffers.”

The second witness, Doug Botkin, is the husband of a woman killed in a hit-and-run. The defendant in that case, Cornell Thomas, was charged with murder. Goodman, who presided, dismissed the murder indictment against Thomas, saying the prosecutors’ office lacked proof Thomas acted wantonly.

The court of appeals later overturned Goodman’s ruling. This was among the cases highlighted in Timoney’s impeachment petition.

While Goodman’s impeachment hearing is scheduled for March 16. A Franklin Circuit Court judge has not ruled on Goodman’s lawsuit request.

The Herald-Leader has attempted to reach Timoney about the latest proceedings.

“Judge Goodman acted appropriately in all of these cases,” said Goodman’s attorney, Robert McBride. “She acted on the law as it was presented to her... that is what we expect judges to do in Kentucky.”

Laura Leigh Goins, chief of staff for media relations with the House Majority Caucus, said neither Osborne or Nemes could comment about the impeachment proceedings.

Bill gutting KY environmental regs unlikely to move this year — but it’s not dead

BY AUSTIN R. RAMSEY
aramsey@herald-leader.com

Controversial new legislation that would prohibit Kentucky regulators from setting pollution standards that exceed federal minimums has stalled.

Senate Bill 178 has returned to the Natural Resources and Energy Committee after clearing the panel by a strict party-line vote late last month. The bill’s primary sponsor, Sen. Greg Elkins, R-Winchester, told the Herald-Leader his bill “requires some more discussion” and he is considering holding it until the next legislative session.

“It’s very important to me that we get this right, and we don’t do it incorrectly — we don’t create unintended consequences,” Elkins said. “I’m very happy to slow this bill down.”

The proposal, backed by chemical manufacturers, threatened to neuter Kentucky’s environmental administrative power at the same time federal agencies are mounting a deregulatory push under President Donald Trump.

Kentucky’s Energy and Environment Cabinet and Cabinet for Health and Family Services would be prohibited from issuing rules “more stringent or extensive” than federal policy under the proposal. When agencies could act, they would be held to ambiguous scientific and technologically feasible standards or be required to show direct causal links between pollutants and human harm which environmental experts said are virtually unattainable.

Elkins said he and his Republican allies want to offer the bill’s critics more narrow definitions for phrases like “best available science,” which agencies

would be required cite. That could serve to calm nerves his bill was an administrative power grab or gift to heavy industries, Elkins said.

“I do want to protect health and human safety, and I do want to protect the environment,” he said.

Yet, critics fear tighter state-level regulatory controls, nearly identical to new laws already on the books in Alabama and Tennessee, are tantamount to writing a blank check for the commonwealth’s top polluting industries.

“To tie yourself to federal standards is not a solution, because those federal standards are in flux right now,” said Lane Boldman, executive director of the Kentucky Conservation Committee. “We need solutions that work for Kentucky by protecting Kentuckians. I hope Sen. Elkins will rethink the entire premise of this bill.”

Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Goodman sent Elkins a letter late last month expressing concerns with the bill and saying the cabinet cannot support it. The prohibition on regulations more stringent than federal law is duplicative, she said, while phrases like “best available science” and “weight of scientific evidence” are subjective.

They open the door for disagreements over scientific evidence to halt the rulemaking process, she said.

“Passing laws that protect the environment and prevent harm to the citizens that live in it is a cornerstone of sound environmental policy,” Goodman wrote.

EFFORT LINKED TO STATE-LEVEL PFAS REGULATIONS

Since introducing the bill in February, Elkins has insisted he wants to protect chemical manufacturers from exaggerated claims about emerging per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) dubbed “forever chemicals.”

State-level regulations on PFAS chemicals in consumer products surged last year as more than a dozen states enacted sanctions on industries that produce the cancer-linked substances containing strong organic bonds that pose generational environmental risks.

Bills linking state regulation to federal standards in solidly GOP-controlled states have emerged ever since, propped up by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and disseminated widely by conservative nonprofits that draft model legislation targeted at right-leaning state lawmakers.

PFAS chemicals have extremely important industrial applications that can’t be ignored, Elkins told the Herald-Leader. It’s important regulators balance those interests with equally important environmental considerations and don’t get carried away by hype surrounding them, he added.

A 2024 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rule toughened reporting requirements for public drinking water systems, but federal regulators under the Trump administration have since signaled interest in rolling those back for specific substances and extending deadlines that would require water companies to implement controls.

If that happens, process industries in states that have enacted legislation like S.B. 178 would get a pass while other states could put more limits on PFAS.

At least 10 public water systems serving Kentucky customers detected PFAS chemicals exceeding legally enforceable maximums, according to January EPA data reviewed by the Herald-Leader from samples collected between 2023 and

2025. Those levels are highly variable but are almost always linked in some way to manmade chemicals that have been known to cause cancer, liver

damage and developmental effects in children and suppress immune systems.

“These chemicals are literally designed to not break down in the envi-

ronment, and that’s problematic regardless of the application,” Boldman said. “They must be managed, either by the federal or state governments.”

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