

BEFORE THE INVESTIGATIVE PANEL OF THE
FLORIDA JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION
STATE OF FLORIDA

INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE NO. 02-466
RE: JUDGE JOHN RENKE III

NOTICE OF FORMAL CHARGES

TO: Honorable John Renke III
Rm. 111, [7530 Little Road](#)
New Port Richey, FL 34654

You are hereby notified that the Investigative Panel of the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, by a vote of the majority of its members determined pursuant to Rule 6(f) of the Rules of the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, as revised, and Article V, § 12(b) of the Constitution of the State of Florida, that probable cause exists for formal proceedings to be, and the same are hereby instituted against you to inquire into charges based upon allegations that during your 2002 election campaign for the judgeship you now occupy (the campaign), you engaged in improper conduct in that to wit:

1. During the campaign, in violation of Canon 7A(3)(a) and Canon 7A(3)(d)(iii) you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented in a campaign brochure, attached hereto as Exhibit A, that you were an incumbent judge by describing yourself as “John Renke, a Judge With Our Values” when in fact, you were not at that time a sitting or incumbent judge.

2. During the campaign, in violation of Canon 7A(3)(a) and Canon 7A(3)(d)(iii), you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented in the same brochure (attached hereto as Exhibit A) your holding of an office in the Southwest Florida Water Management District by running a picture of you with a nameplate that says “John K. Renke, III Chair” beneath a Southwest Florida Water Management District banner, when you were not in fact the Chairman of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

3. During the campaign, in violation of Canon 7A(3)(a) and Canon 7A(3)(d)(iii), you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented in the same brochure (attached hereto as Exhibit A) your endorsement by the Clearwater firefighters by asserting that you were “supported by our areas bravest: John with Kevin Bowler and the Clearwater firefighters” when you did not then have an endorsement from any group of or any group representing the Clearwater firefighters.

4. During the campaign, in violation of Canon 7A(3)(a) and Canon 7A(3)(d)(iii), you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented in the same brochure (attached hereto as Exhibit A) your judicial experience when you described yourself as having “real judicial experience as a hearing officer in hearing appeals from administrative law judges,” when your actual participation was limited to sitting as a board member of an administrative agency in isolated instances.

5. During the campaign, in violation of Canon 7A(3)(a) and Canon 7A(3)(d)(iii), you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented your endorsement by Pinellas County public officials in a campaign flyer attached hereto as Exhibit B, when you listed a number of persons, including Paul Bedinghaus, Gail Hebert, John Milford, George Jirotko and Nancy Riley as such, when they in fact were not Pinellas County public

officials but instead officials of a private, partisan political organization to wit, the Pinellas County Republican Party.

6. During the campaign in violation of Canon 7A(3)(a) and Canon 7A(3)(d)(iii), you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented your experience as a practicing lawyer and thus your qualifications to be a circuit court judge. In the Candidate Reply you authored which was published by and in the St. Petersburg Times, which is attached hereto as Exhibit C, you represented that you had “almost eight years of experience handling complex civil trials in many areas.” This was knowingly false and misleading because in fact you had little or no actual trial or courtroom experience.

7. During the campaign in violation of Canon 7(A)(3)(a) and Canon 7(A)(3)(d)(iii), you knowingly and purposefully misrepresented your experience as a practicing lawyer and thus your qualifications to be a circuit court judge as well as your opponent’s experience by asserting in a piece of campaign literature, which is attached hereto as Exhibit D, that your opponent lacked “the kind of broad experience that best prepares someone to serve as a Circuit Court Judge” and represented to the voting public that the voters would be “better served by an attorney [like you] who has many years of broad civil trial experience.” This was knowingly false because in fact your opponent had far more experience as a lawyer and in the courtroom and in fact you had little or no actual trial or courtroom experience.

8. During the campaign in violation of § 105.071, Florida Statutes, and Canon 7(3)(a), you or close family members, including your spouse, participated in partisan political activities and effectively campaigned on your behalf as a member of a partisan political party, and publicly represented and advertised yourself as a member of a

partisan political party by causing the distribution to the voting public of a campaign flyer, which is attached hereto as Exhibit E, in which the Republican Party of Pasco County endorsed you for circuit court judge, effectively identifying you as a member of a partisan political party and the candidate of a partisan political party, all with your knowledge and consent.

These acts, if they occurred as alleged, would also impair the confidence of the citizens of this state in the integrity of the judicial system and in you as a judge, would constitute a violation of the cited Florida Statutes and Canons of the Code of Judicial Conduct, would constitute conduct unbecoming a member of the judiciary, would demonstrate your unfitness to hold the office of judge, and would warrant discipline, including but not limited to your removal from office and/or any other appropriate discipline recommended by the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission.

You are hereby notified of your right to file a written answer to the above charges made against you within twenty (20) days of service of this notice upon you.

Respectfully submitted,

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and

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY a true and correct copy of **Notice of Formal Charges** has been furnished by U.S. Mail to **John Renke, II, Esquire**, 7637 Little Road, New Port Richey, FL 34654-5525 this _____ day of October, 2003.

Attorney