



Ranking the unbeatens: When will they lose their first game?

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Judge fights for job, not for her innocence



Judge Kirsten Nielsen Hartig listens as her attorney Katharine Smith defends her in front of the Judicial Tenure Commission in Detroit on Oct. 5. MANDI WRIGHT/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Argues censure sufficient punishment for her acts

Darcie Moran
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

There’s debate on whether an Oakland County judge has cognitive difficulties and therefore shouldn’t be working. But what’s to be done if officials believe both that there is some basis for concern with Judge Kirsten Nielsen Hartig’s psychological state – and that she is not mentally disabled? That was central to one question asked Monday, Oct. 5, as the 52-4 District Court judge continued to fight for her job in front of the state oversight board for judges known as the Judicial Tenure Commission. After weeks of testimony earlier this year on accusations that she behaved badly in office, Hartig

appeared in front of the commission Monday in a final plea before it sends her case to the entity ultimately empowered to control her fate: the Michigan Supreme Court. Hartig, through lawyer Katharine Smith, said at the arguments Monday that she is no longer fighting a professional misconduct claim that she mistreated courthouse staff. She said her punishment should be no more than a public censure by the state Supreme Court. Smith argued against Hartig’s removal from office – as called for by the disciplinary lawyers for the commission – and against the other accusations against Hartig. She specifically argued against the accusation of mental disability tied to alleged cognitive decline. To that end, Wayne County Third Circuit Court Judge Qiana Lillard asked Smith what the proper outcome should be if she and her fellow commission members still had lingering concerns over Hartig’s cognitive status.

Smith said that the question in front of them is about true, functional impairment. Something she argued isn’t at play for Hartig. “The correct disposition may be some sort of monitoring ... but the question is, ‘what is her condition right now?’” If the answer isn’t “mental disability,” the commission should reject that part of the case, Smith said. Yet, lawyers for the commission argued that “mental disability” is, indeed, Hartig’s current state. That’s despite the conclusion of a judge who oversaw hearings in the matter at an earlier stage. Hartig has continued to sit on the bench and hear cases throughout the process, though her chief judge moved her off felony cases. The commission has not invoked its ability to request Hartig be temporarily removed from

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Waymo starts driverless rides in Detroit

Eric D. Lawrence
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Waymo is now operating fully autonomous vehicles in Detroit. Waymo ride-hailing is not yet open to the public, but the company’s vehicles will be giving rides to Waymo employees, according to a Waymo spokesperson in an email on Tuesday, Oct. 6. The focus for these rides will remain close to the heart of the city, but the area of operation is expected to expand. “We’ll continue driving in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods like Corktown, Midtown, Hamtramck and Indian Village, as we work to gradually expand across the broader metropolitan area over time,” according to the email from spokesman Chris Bonelli. “Rides will initially only be available to Waymo employees, as we work to open our doors to public riders in the future. We’ll follow our safety framework and serve riders in Detroit when we’ve properly validated our technology in the city and our local operations are ready.” The decision to begin autonomous driving in Detroit “follows months spent familiarizing the Waymo Driver with the city, coordinating closely with local officials, and engaging with community members to understand their transportation needs and how their technology can best serve them,” according to Bonelli. The shift to fully autonomous

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Recent rebuke for ticket fixing doesn’t derail MSP officer’s promotion

Paul Egan
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LANSING — Fix a traffic ticket; get promoted. That’s how it’s working out for one Michigan State Police lieutenant, records the Detroit Free Press obtained under the state’s Freedom of Information Act show. Lt. Tarzza (T.J.) Williams will be promoted to first lieutenant on Oct. 11, when

he takes over as commander of the Metro South Post in Taylor, MSP spokeswoman Lori Dougovito confirmed Oct. 5. That’s despite an internal affairs investigation finding that Williams abused his authority and falsified MSP records in July by improperly accessing an MSP database and voiding a valid traffic ticket on behalf of a friend, records obtained through FOIA show. The ticket fixing incident raises questions about how often Michigan-ers who have connections can make a

traffic citation “disappear.” The subsequent promotion of Williams, which conflicts with broad MSP policy, also fuels a longstanding controversy about personnel practices under the MSP director, Col. James Grady. “It’s simply another extension of his rogue DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) policy, ignoring civil service rules,” said Ann Arbor attorney James Fett, who has litigated several past and

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