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the MTC, Virac, Catanduanes, and for the preparation of the necessary communication with the incumbent Clerk of Court/ Officer-in-Charge thereat.

B] The Office of the Administrative Services, OCA, to PROVIDE the Financial Management Office with the following documents (pertaining to Zuñiga) for the said Office to comply with item No. 1 above:

2.1 Official Service Record;
2.2 Certification of Leave Credits; and
2.3 Notice of Salary Adjustment (*NOSA*), if any.

C] The Legal Office, OCA, to file the appropriate criminal charges against respondent Aurora T. Zuñiga.

SO ORDERED.

Sereno, C.J., Carpio, Velasco, Jr., Leonardo-de Castro, Brion, del Castillo, Villarama, Jr., Perez, Mendoza, Reyes, Perlas-Bernabe, Leonen, and *Jardeleza, JJ.,* concur.

Peralta and *Bersamin, JJ.,* on leave.

EN BANC

[A.M. No. P-11-2979. November 18, 2014]
(Formerly OCA IPI No. 10-3352-P)

ELLA M. BARTOLOME, *complainant, vs.* **ROSALIE B. MARANAN, COURT STENOGRAPHER III, REGIONAL TRIAL COURT, BRANCH 20, IMUS, CAVITE,** *respondent.*

SYLLABUS

1. REMEDIAL LAW; EVIDENCE; DENIAL; RESPONDENT'S BARE DENIAL CANNOT OVERCOME THE EVIDENCE

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SUPPORTING THE COMPLAINANT'S ACCUSATION.— The respondent's bare denial cannot overcome the evidence supporting the complainant's accusation that she demanded money on the promise that she would facilitate the annulment of her (complainant's) marriage. The respondent's actions from the time the complainant started communicating with her on October 21, 2009 and thereafter through a series of messages they exchanged *via* SMS, until the entrapment operation on November 11, 2009, showed that the complaint is indeed meritorious. The respondent's text messages sent to the complainant corroborate that she promised to expedite – in exchange for a monetary consideration of ₱160,000.00 and that she would provide the lawyer who would file the annulment case – the complainant's annulment case once it is filed: x x x The concern that Atty. Bihasa and Judge Felicen showed to the respondent while under detention at Imus PNP Station gives rise to the suspicion that they have knowledge and tolerate the respondent's anomalous activities. The respondent's text messages to the complainant support this suspicion: x x x.

2. **ID.; ID.; RULES ON ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE; EPHEMERAL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS ARE NOW ADMISSIBLE, SUBJECT TO CERTAIN CONDITIONS.—** Ephemeral electronic communications are now admissible evidence, subject to certain conditions. "Ephemeral electronic communication" refers to telephone conversations, text messages, chatroom sessions, streaming audio, streaming video, and other electronic forms of communication the evidence of which is not recorded or retained. It may be proven by the testimony of a person who was a party to the communications or has personal knowledge thereof.

3. **ID.; ID.; ID.; ID.; AUDIO, PHOTOGRAPHIC AND VIDEO EVIDENCE OF EVENTS, ACTS OR TRANSACTIONS CONSIDERED ADMISSIBLE IN CASE AT BAR.—** In the present case, we have no doubt regarding the probative value of the text messages as evidence in considering the present case. The complainant, who was the recipient of the text messages and who therefore has personal knowledge of these text messages, identified the respondent as the sender through cellphone number 09175775982. The respondent herself admitted that her conversations with the complainant had been thru SMS messaging and that the cellphone number reflected

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in the complainant's cellphone from which the text messages originated was hers. She confirmed that it was her cellphone number during the entrapment operation the Imus Cavite Police conducted. x x x Under Section 1, Rule 11 of A.M. No. 01-7-01-SC, audio, photographic and video evidence of events, acts or transactions shall be admissible provided it shall be shown, presented or displayed to the court and shall be identified, explained or authenticated by the person who made the recording or by some other person competent to testify on the accuracy thereof. We viewed the VCD and the video showed the actual entrapment operation. The complainant herself certified that the video and text messages are evidence of her complaint against the respondent.

4. ID.; ID.; TECHNICAL RULES OF PROCEDURE AND EVIDENCE ARE NOT STRICTLY APPLIED IN ADMINISTRATIVE CASES.— It is also well to remember that in administrative cases, technical rules of procedure and evidence are not strictly applied. A.M. No. 01-7-01-SC specifically provides that these rules shall be liberally construed to assist the parties in obtaining a just, expeditious and inexpensive determination of cases.

5. POLITICAL LAW; ADMINISTRATIVE LAW; COURT EMPLOYEES; RESPONDENT IS GUILTY OF GRAVE MISCONDUCT AND CONDUCT PREJUDICIAL TO THE BEST INTEREST OF THE SERVICE.— The Court totally agrees with the OCA's finding that the respondent is guilty of grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service. x x x As a public servant, nothing less than the highest sense of honesty and integrity is expected of the respondent at all times. She should be the personification of the principle that public office is a public trust. The respondent unfortunately fell extremely short of the standards that should have governed her life as a public servant. By soliciting money from the complainant, **she committed a crime** and an **act of serious impropriety** that tarnished the honor and dignity of the judiciary and deeply affected the people's confidence in it. She committed an ultimate betrayal of the duty to uphold the dignity and authority of the judiciary by peddling influence to litigants, thereby creating the impression that decision can be bought and sold.

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6. ID.; CONSTITUTIONAL LAW; JUDICIARY; RESOLUTE IN ITS DRIVE TO DISCIPLINE ERRANT MAGISTRATES, EMPLOYEES AND EVEN JUSTICES OF HIGHER COLLEGIATE APPELLATE COURTS FOR ANY INFRACTION THAT GIVES IT A BAD NAME.— The complainant described the respondent as an influence peddler in the courts of Imus, Cavite who acts as a conduit to judges, prosecutors and private law practitioners. x x x The Court has never wavered in its vigilance in eradicating the so-called "bad-eggs" in the judiciary. We have been resolute in our drive to discipline and, if warranted, to remove from the service errant magistrates, employees and even Justices of higher collegiate appellate courts for any infraction that gives the Judiciary a bad name. To stress our earnestness in this pursuit, we have, in fact, been unflinching in imposing discipline on errant personnel or in purging the ranks of those undeserving to remain in the service.

D E C I S I O N

PER CURIAM:

This administrative matter started through the sworn affidavit-complaint[1] in the vernacular, dated December 16, 2009, that Ella M. Bartolome (*complainant*) filed against Rosalie B. Maranan [*respondent*, Court Stenographer III, Regional Trial Court (*RTC*), Branch 20, Imus, Cavite], charging her with extortion, graft and corruption, gross misconduct and conduct unbecoming of a court employee.

The complainant alleged that the respondent asked money from her in the amount of ₱200,000.00, which was later reduced to ₱160,000.00, to facilitate the filing of her case for annulment of marriage. She further alleged that the respondent undertook to have the case decided in her favor without the need of court appearances during the proceedings of the case.

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[1] *Rollo,* pp. 7-11.

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For a clear and complete picture of the accusations against the respondent, we quote verbatim the pertinent portions of the complainant's narration of the incidents that gave rise to the filing of the present administrative complaint –

x x x x x x x x x

2. *Na noong October 21, 2009 nakilala ko si* ***ROSALIE MARANAN*** *na isang stenographer sa Regional Trial Court ng Imus, Cavite. Nasabihan ko siya ng aking kagustuhan na magsampa ng annulment of marriage case. Agad niya akong inalok at pinangakuan na kaya niyang ipasok ang aking annulment case sa RTC, Br. 20, Imus, Cavite kung saan siya nagtratrabaho. Noong una ang hinihingi niya sa akin ay halagang TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PESOS (₱200,000.00) pero humingi ako sa kanya ng discount at pumayag siya sa ONE HUNDRED SIXTY THOUSAND PESOS (₱160,000.00). Ako po ay naengganyo na magtiwala sa kanya dahil nangako siya na siya na ang bahala sa lahat. May kausap na daw siyang abogado na pipirma sa petisyon ko at di ko na daw kailangan pang umappear sa korte. Sinabi niya na malakas daw siya sa judge at sa fiscal at siya lang daw ang pinapayagan na magpasok ng mga aaregluhin na kaso sa kanilang korte. Sinabi niya din na kasama na sa ₱160,000.00 ang para sa judge at sa fiscal kaya siguradong maaaprubahan ang aking annulment case sa mabilis na panahon. Kasama po ng Affidavit-Complaint na ito ang* ***transcript*** ***at ang SIM Card*** *ay aking ipadadala kapag ako ay makasigurado na ang Korte Suprema ay poprotektahan ang mga ebidensya laban kay MARANAN sapagkat rito lahat nakatagon (sic) ang mga text messages at nakarecord lahat ng calls nitong si ROSALIE MARANAN sa akin na nagpapatunay ng panghihingi niya sa akin ng pera at pangako na aaregluhin niya ang aking annulment of marriage case. Ang cellphone number po na nag-aappear dito sa SIM ay kay ROSALINA MARANAN, ang numero niya ay 09175775982. Maaaring nagpalit na ng numero ang inirereklamo ko kung kaya't maganda rin na ipag-utos ang pag-alam ng detalye mula sa Globe Telecoms kung saan post-paid subscriber ang may-ari ng numero na iyan. [Emphasis supplied]*

To put an end to the respondent's extortion activities, the complainant decided to report the matter to the police authorities. During the entrapment operation conducted by police officers of Imus Police Station, the respondent was apprehended inside

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the premises of the RTC, Branch 20, Imus, Cavite, in the act of receiving the money from the complainant.

In support of her allegations, the complainant attached to her affidavit-complaint the transcribed electronic communications (text messages) between her and the respondent;[2] a copy of an Electronic Psychiatric History form given to her by the respondent for her to accomplish in filing the petition for annulment of marriage;[3] a copy of the Imus Police Station Blotter showing that the respondent was apprehended during the entrapment operation conducted by police officers of Imus Police Station on November 11, 2009 at 2:40 p.m.;[4] and a versatile compact disc (*VCD*) containing the video taken during the entrapment operation conducted against the respondent.[5]

The Court, in a 1st Indorsement[6] dated March 19, 2010, required the respondent to comment on the complaint against her.

In her Comment dated May 27, 2010,[7] the respondent denied the accusations against her. She alleged her belief that Bartolome is a fictitious name as the affidavit-complaint does not indicate the complainant's exact address. She asserted that her detention at Imus Police Station does not prove her culpability since no actual criminal charges were filed against her. She claimed that the lapse of six (6) months from the time of the alleged incident indicates that the complaint is pure and simple harassment orchestrated by a lawyer or litigant who has a grudge against her and who wants to publicly besmirch her reputation. In support of her defense, the respondent mentioned that even Judge Fernando L. Felicen (*Judge Felicen*), Presiding Judge of RTC, Branch 20, Imus, Cavite interceded for her release from detention.

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[2] *Id*. at 13-19.

[3] *Id*. at 20.

[4] *Id*. at 71-73.

[5] *Id*. at 21-22.

[6] *Id*. at 23.

[7] *Id*. at 26-30.

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On July 29, 2010, the complainant sent a letter to the Office of the Court Administrator (*OCA*),[8] without indicating her address, alleging that she has to constantly change residence because unidentified persons had been seen in their neighborhood asking questions about her. She has also been receiving text messages from the respondent telling her that her complaint would only be dismissed because she knows people in the Supreme Court. The respondent also threatened retaliation against her after the case is terminated. The complainant further claimed that the pieces of evidence she submitted are sufficient to prove the respondent's anomalous activities, and prayed for the immediate resolution of her complaint.

Based on the complainant's pleadings and evidence, the OCA, (through then Deputy Court Administrator Nimfa C. Vilches and OCA Chief of Legal Office Wilhelmina D. Geronga) submitted its Report to the Court dated May 9, 2011,[9] finding enough evidence to prove the respondent's involvement in anomalous activities and recommending that –

1) OCA IPI No. 10-3352-P be RE-DOCKETED as a regular administrative matter;

2) respondent Rosalie B. Maranan, Court Stenographer III, Regional Trial Court, Branch 20, Imus, Cavite, be found GUILTY of Grave Misconduct and Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service; and

3) respondent Maranan be immediately DISMISSED from the service with forfeiture of retirement benefits except her accrued leave credits, and with perpetual disqualification from employment in any government agencies or instrumentalities, including government owned and controlled corporations.

In a Resolution dated September 5, 2011,[10] the Court required the parties to manifest whether they were willing to submit their

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[8] *Id*. at 36.

[9] *Id*. at 41-49.

[10] *Id*. at 75.

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case for resolution on the basis of the pleadings filed. The respondent filed her Manifestation dated November 17, 2011[11] submitting the case for resolution by the Court. She reiterated her complete innocence and "vigorous" and "vehement" denial of the allegations against her. She insisted that the present complaint against her is plain and simple harassment and a vexatious suit by the complainant who either has a grudge against her or must have been used by another person with a grudge against her. All she did was to secure the services of a lawyer at the complainant's request; this act, she claimed, does not constitute graft and corruption, gross misconduct, conduct unbecoming of a court employee and extortion.

The complainant did not respond to our September 5, 2011 Resolution as it was returned unserved on her. We nevertheless considered the case submitted for resolution considering her letter of July 16, 2010 praying for the immediate resolution of her complaint.

In our Internal Resolution dated December 7, 2011,[12] we resolved to refer the complaint to the OCA for evaluation, report and recommendation.

The OCA responded through its Memorandum of July 16, 2012,[13] finding that the pieces of evidence on record establish the guilt of the respondent on the charges of Gross Misconduct and Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service filed against her. It recommended that the respondent be found guilty of the offenses charged and be dismissed from the service, with forfeiture of retirement benefits except her accrued leave credits and with perpetual disqualification from employment in any government agency.

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[11] *Id*. at 78-80.

[12] *Id*. at 86.

[13] *Id*. at 89-97.

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The Court fully agrees with the OCA's recommendation.

The respondent's bare denial cannot overcome the evidence supporting the complainant's accusation that she demanded money on the promise that she would facilitate the annulment of her (complainant's) marriage. The respondent's actions from the time the complainant started communicating with her on October 21, 2009 and thereafter through a series of messages they exchanged *via* SMS,[14] until the entrapment operation on November 11, 2009, showed that the complaint is indeed meritorious. The respondent's text messages sent to the complainant corroborate that she promised to expedite – in exchange for a monetary consideration of ₱160,000.00 and that she would provide the lawyer who would file the annulment case – the complainant's annulment case once it is filed:[15]

21/19/09 8:40pm

Sino po to

21/10/09 8:53pm

Sino nagrefer sayo sakin ano pangalan?

21/10/09 8:54pm

San mo nakuha # ko

21/10/09 9:05pm

Ako rin magbibigay lawyer sayo

21/10/09 9:13pm

D kaba tlaga makakatawag ngayon

21/10/09 9:18pm

Ako n lang tatawag sayo kc mahirap ang txt lang

21/10/09 9:24pm

Tawag n lng ako ha

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[14] Short Messages Service.

[15] *Rollo*, p. 13.

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21/10/09 9:49pm

Natitiwala ako sayo ha dahil hindi lahat pinagbibigyan namin. Sally n lang tawag mo sakin nagtataka lng kc ako kanina kc buong buong buo yung txt ng name ko e.

21/10/09 9:51pm

Ay sorry mali pala sabi ko sayo 160k pala singil namin

22/10/09 10:05am

Gud am. Ano pwede k bukas

22/10/09 10:25am

Pls txt bak naghihintay po kme

22/10/09 10:51am

Bukas lng available si atty

22/10/09 10:56am

Sana kung makakagawa ka daw paraan bukas kahit 40k n lng muna down tapos 3pm bukas

22/10/09 11:04am

Ok pero d kita pilipilit ha nasayo pa din and decision yan ang sakin lng kc nagmamadali k at tsaka yun ang free time ng lawyer ha

22/10/09 11:11am

Ella pakihusto mo n daw pala 50k at ibabayad daw mua sa psychiatrist at osg kahit sa susunod n lng daw yung sa kanya

22/10/09 1:09pm

The complainant described the respondent as an influence peddler in the courts of Imus, Cavite who acts as a conduit to judges, prosecutors and private law practitioners.

In her comment to the complaint, the respondent admitted that "she suggested to the complainant the name of a lawyer friend, Atty. Renante C. Bihasa (*Atty. Bihasa*), and forwarded to her the cell phone number of this lawyer so that they could discuss the case." While she was in detention at Imus Police

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Station, she called Atty. Bihasa, who told her that he was on his way and assured her that he had already asked his lawyer friends to assist her. Atty. Bihasa arrived at about five o'clock in the afternoon. As it was already beyond office hours, she was told by Atty. Bihasa of the possibility that she would be detained pending investigation. Atty. Bihasa returned the following day and was joined by Judge Felicen and her officemates. Judge Felicen interceded in her behalf that she be given permission by the police officers to leave her detention in order to take a bath and change clothes. She was granted permission, with the full guaranty of Judge Felicen that she would return.[16]

In an affidavit[17] dated May 28, 2010, Atty. Bihasa corroborated the respondent's allegations. In his affidavit, he narrated that upon receiving a call from the respondent that she was being detained, he immediately called up two (2) of his lawyer friends based at Imus, Atty. Wilfredo P. Saquilayan and Atty. Jose Emmanuel Montoya, to assist the respondent. As he arrived at Imus Police Station at around past four o'clock in the afternoon, he told the respondent of the probability of her detention until formal charges were filed against her. According to him, "[he] took it upon [himself] to assist [the respondent] on that date and accompanied her while the police officers of Imus PNP were doing their routine work on suspects."

Atty. Bihasa further narrated that on the next day at about five o'clock in the afternoon, he went back to Imus Police Station to wait for the complainant. After a few hours, the respondent's co-workers, including Judge Felicen arrived. They waited for the complainant until seven o'clock in the evening but she failed to come. Only the complainant's lawyer arrived who informed the police investigator that the complainant cannot come out of fear because of the death threats she received.[18]

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[16] *Id*. at 29.

[17] *Id*. at 31-33.

[18] *Id*. at 33.

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The concern that Atty. Bihasa and Judge Felicen showed to the respondent while under detention at Imus PNP Station gives rise to the suspicion that they have knowledge and tolerate the respondent's anomalous activities. The respondent's text messages to the complainant support this suspicion:[19]

At tsaka alam mo naman nakailang appointment n tayo sa abogado hiyang hiya nga ako kahapon e

7/11/09 3:13pm

Tawagan ko muna si judge kung pwede pa kami tumanggap hanggang wed

7/11/09 3:15pm

Try ko lng

7/11/09 3:25pm

Hanggang Tuesday na lg tayo after nun nxt year na. Yan ang sabi

7/11/09 3:28pm

Sayang kc ang haba n ng time mo dp natuloy sabi ko naman sayo e kapag inabot ng naghigpit dn pwede none appearance. Yun nagan nagpatulong sakin kahapon lng tumawag yun d sana nagka sabay n kayo

7/11/09 3:59pm

Ok po mit po tayo bukas 10 am sinabi ko napo kay atty. Tnx po. See you po

Ephemeral electronic communications are now admissible evidence, subject to certain conditions. "Ephemeral electronic communication" refers to telephone conversations, text messages, chatroom sessions, streaming audio, streaming video, and other electronic forms of communication the evidence of which is not recorded or retained.[20] It may be proven by the testimony

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[19] *Id*. at 18.

[20] Sec. 1(k), Rule 2, A.M. No. 01-7-01-SC Re: Rules on Electronic Evidence, dated July 17, 2001.

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of a person who was a party to the communications or has personal knowledge thereof.[21] In the present case, we have no doubt regarding the probative value of the text messages as evidence in considering the present case. The complainant, who was the recipient of the text messages and who therefore has personal knowledge of these text messages, identified the respondent as the sender through cellphone number 09175775982. The respondent herself admitted that her conversations with the complainant had been thru SMS messaging and that the cellphone number reflected in the complainant's cellphone from which the text messages originated was hers. She confirmed that it was her cellphone number during the entrapment operation the Imus Cavite Police conducted[22] —

Sally:

> *Halika dito sa office, sa clerk of court. Pupunta ka ngayon? O sige, sige, pupunta ka ngaun? Ah sige OK, salamat! Ang number ko …*

Lalaki:

> *Ibigay ko sa kanya?*

Sally:

> *Oo, ang number ko ay 09175775982, ok thank you.*

The complainant submitted two (2) copies of the VCD[23] containing pictures taken during the entrapment conducted by the Imus Cavite Police on November 11, 2009.[24]

Under Section 1, Rule 11 of A.M. No. 01-7-01-SC, audio, photographic and video evidence of events, acts or transactions shall be admissible provided it shall be shown, presented or displayed to the court and shall be identified, explained or

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[21] *Id.*, Section 2, Rule 11.

[22] *Rollo*, p. 51.

[23] *Id.* at 21-22.

[24] *Id.* at 2-3 and 69-70.

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authenticated by the person who made the recording or by some other person competent to testify on the accuracy thereof.

We viewed the VCD and the video showed the actual entrapment operation. The complainant herself certified that the video and text messages are evidence of her complaint against the respondent, "*Sapat at malinaw ang lahat ng ebidensya na kasama ng aking reklamo na nagpapatunay na totoo lahat ang nakasaad sa aking reklamo. Kitang kita sa video at sa mga text messages niya ang kanyang modus operandi at paggamit niya ng pwesto sa gobyerno upang makapanghingi ng malaking pera sa mga inosenteng tao*." It is also well to remember that in administrative cases, technical rules of procedure and evidence are not strictly applied.[25] A.M. No. 01-7-01-SC specifically provides that these rules shall be liberally construed to assist the parties in obtaining a just, expeditious and inexpensive determination of cases.

The Court totally agrees with the OCA's finding that the respondent is guilty of grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service. The respondent's assertion that Bartolome is a fictitious name because the complainant has not stated in her complaint her exact address is preposterous in light of the evidence of direct personal and text message contacts between them. In the absence of supporting evidence, the claim that the complaint against her is pure and simple harassment orchestrated by persons with grudge against her, is mere conjectural allegation.

As a public servant, nothing less than the highest sense of honesty and integrity is expected of the respondent at all times.[26] She should be the personification of the principle that public office is a public trust.[27] The respondent unfortunately fell

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[25] *Nuez v. Cruz-Apao*, A.M. No. CA-05-18-P, April 12, 2005, 455 SCRA 288, 300.

[26] *Narag v. Manio*, A.M. No. P-08-2579, June 22, 2009, 590 SCRA 206, 211.

[27] *Id*.

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extremely short of the standards that should have governed her life as a public servant. By soliciting money from the complainant, **she committed a crime** and an **act of serious impropriety** that tarnished the honor and dignity of the judiciary and deeply affected the people's confidence in it. She committed an ultimate betrayal of the duty to uphold the dignity and authority of the judiciary by peddling influence to litigants, thereby creating the impression that decision can be bought and sold.[28]

The Court has never wavered in its vigilance in eradicating the so-called "bad-eggs" in the judiciary.[29] We have been resolute in our drive to discipline and, if warranted, to remove from the service errant magistrates, employees and even Justices of higher collegiate appellate courts for any infraction that gives the Judiciary a bad name. To stress our earnestness in this pursuit, we have, in fact, been unflinching in imposing discipline on errant personnel or in purging the ranks of those undeserving to remain in the service.[30]

WHEREFORE, the Court finds respondent Rosalie B. Maranan, Court Stenographer III, Regional Trial Court, Branch 20, Imus, Cavite, **GUILTY** of Grave Misconduct and Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service and is accordingly **DISMISSED** from the service, with prejudice to re-employment in any government agency including government-owned or controlled corporations. Her retirement benefits, except accrued leave credits are ordered forfeited. **This decision shall be immediately executory**.

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[28] *Canlas-Bartolome v. Manio*, A.M. No. P-07-2397, December 4, 2007, 539 SCRA 333, 339-340; *Narag v. Manio, id.* at 211-212; *Mendoza v. Tiongson*, A.M. No. P-90-454, December 17, 1996, 265 SCRA 653, 655; and *Fabian v. Galo,*A.M. No. P-96-1214, June 10, 2003, 403 SCRA 375, 379.

[29] *Mendoza v. Tiongson*, *supra* note 28 and *Fabian v. Galo, supra* note 28.

[30] *Fabian v. Galo, supra* note 28; *Mallonga v. Manio,* A.M. No. P-07-2298, April 24, 2009, 586 SCRA 335, 341.

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The Court further Resolves to **REQUIRE Judge Fernando L. Felicen**, Regional Trial Court, Branch 20, Imus, Cavite and **Atty. Renante C. Bihasa**, to file their Comments on their alleged participation in the anomalous activities of the respondent, within fifteen (15) days from notice. This directive is without prejudice to the investigation of all or selected employees and officials of the Branch, who may have participated in anomalous transactions relating to annulment of marriage.

The Office of the Court Administrator is hereby directed to submit to this Court, within thirty (30) days, a list of the annulment of marriage decisions of Judge Fernando L. Felicen for the past ten (10) years, indicating therein the judgments made and the names of participating lawyers and prosecutors.

The Office of the Chief Attorney shall analyze the submitted data, including the records of and the proceedings in the listed cases, and recommend to the Court the actions it should take in the event a pattern of corruption involving annulment of marriage cases emerges. The Office of the Chief Attorney is given ninety (90) days from receipt of the Office of the Court Administrator's list, within which to submit its recommendations to the Court.

The Office of the Court Administrator shall likewise refer this administrative case and its records to the Ombudsman for whatever action it may take within its jurisdiction.

SO ORDERED.

Sereno, C.J., Carpio, Velasco, Jr., Leonardo-de Castro, Brion, del Castillo, Villarama, Jr., Perez, Mendoza, Reyes, Perlas-Bernabe, Leonen, and *Jardeleza, JJ.,* concur.

Peralta and *Bersamin, JJ.,* on leave.