
From: Kiefer, Timothy
Sent: Friday, May 20, 2011 11:47 AM
To: *DA DANE
Subject: goodbye and thank you

Dear colleagues,

I will be leaving the DA's Office to begin my own criminal defense practice. My last day in the office will be Friday, June 24. I have greatly enjoyed working with all of you. There won't be a farewell party, but I do plan to host an open house for my law office once that's up and running. That's all you really need to know, but if you're interested in reading more, the following are some parting thoughts.

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Seventeen years ago, in 1994, I wrote in my law school admissions application that "after law school, and possibly a judicial clerkship, my immediate goal is to return to Wisconsin and work for a district attorney." So working in the Dane County District Attorney's Office was the culmination of a dream that I had had for many years.

During my time in this office, I had the honor of representing the State of Wisconsin at every stage of the criminal court process, from charging decision to appellate argument. I took 25 cases to jury trial, including co-chairing two homicide trials. I won a case in the Wisconsin Supreme Court. I am so grateful for all of these experiences and I thank all of you for your help every step of the way.

In particular, I thank Rachelle Hocking, who worked with me from my very first day in the office, and who as my victim/witness specialist made my job so much easier in so many ways. Thanks for everything Rachelle.

I do respectfully ask that there not be a farewell party, potluck, happy hour, card, glass cube, envelope or gift. I realize that the people in this office, and especially the non-attorney staff, are very generous with their time and money in organizing celebrations and remembrances, but I would prefer that you did not do so in this particular instance. The reasons for this request are that I would like to keep the focus on Ken Farmer's retirement party, and moreover I plan to host an open house for my new law office later this year.

My law office will open on July 1. It will be located on the eighth floor of the 10 East Doty Street building (across the street from the downtown post office). In the near future you will be able to visit my law firm's website, www.kieferlawoffice.com, which will also contain my new contact information.

I wish I could simply leave it at that, but I must mention the events at the State Capitol in recent months, as they were the deciding factor in my decision to leave state employment.

The present time is one of great uncertainty and stress for Wisconsin prosecutors. We were all recently threatened with being reduced to 80 percent part-time prosecutors. Our take-home pay is being cut due to unpaid furloughs and increases in health insurance premiums and retirement contributions. Several of the new attorneys in our office do not even have health insurance coverage. Pay progression has once again been rejected. Our union may soon cease to exist for all practical purposes. As a result of these developments, I believe that many more prosecutors will be leaving district attorney offices in the coming months and years.

In fact, an exodus of experienced prosecutors has already begun in the Dane County DA's Office. With my departure and those of Ken Farmer and Kene Okocha, the three-attorney drug unit will have experienced 100 percent turnover in less than one year. Throughout the office, seasoned prosecutors are being replaced by newly minted lawyers coming straight from their law school graduation ceremonies. Of my 33 attorney colleagues in this office, just 19 were working here when I started four and one half years ago, in January 2007. Fourteen of the 33 joined this office on or after the day I did. While new attorneys bring enthusiasm and dedication to their work, there is no substitute for experience when prosecuting serious crimes or untangling complex legal dilemmas.

Finally, I want to thank again those colleagues who encouraged and supported me in a project I undertook outside of the office and outside of working hours, which was my candidacy for the Wisconsin legislature in 2008. During that campaign, I pledged to support pay progression for Wisconsin prosecutors. I lost on election day, but in the long run I think we prosecutors still won a victory. The winner of that election, Kelda Helen Roys, went on to become one of the legislature's strongest advocates for improving the pay and working conditions of Wisconsin prosecutors. So in the end, your support of my candidacy did have a real impact, and I hope that others will take up our cause in the years to come.

Cordially,

Tim Kiefer
