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Judge is accused of indecent act

Undercover cop says Halloran was in airport bathroom

By David Shepardson / *The Detroit News*

ROMULUS -- A Wayne County Circuit judge began a 30-day paid leave of absence Monday in the wake of his arrest on an indecent-behavior charge at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

Judge Richard B. Halloran, 53, was arrested Thursday night by an undercover officer after he was apparently seen performing a sex act on himself. He's at least the third person arrested at an airport bathroom in the last two weeks.

Airport police would not release a copy of the police report, and airport spokeswoman Barbara Hogan said they wouldn't discuss any aspect of the case.

"We're not going to violate someone's privacy," Hogan said.

It's unclear whether Halloran attempted to solicit the undercover officer.

He could be charged with indecent exposure for the sex act.

Indecent exposure is a high misdemeanor punishable by a year in the county jail, and conviction would include placement on the sex offender registry.

However, a conviction for a first-time offender typically results in probation, counseling and a fine.

In any event, the arrest will be referred to the Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission.

Wayne Circuit Court Chief Judge Michael Sapala said Halloran had taken a leave of absence, but didn't know when the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office would make a decision. "I'm sure the powers that be will handle this as it should be handled," Sapala said.

Halloran's attorney, John Allen, issued a statement saying only that he is entitled to a presumption of innocence.

"The judge has provided many years of faithful service to the citizens of Wayne County. He has the support of his family and friends and thanks all who have come forward with their encouragement," Allen said.

Halloran lives in Detroit with his wife and has two children. He is assigned to the court's family division and hears domestic violence cases and requests for personal protection orders, along with alleged violations of orders.

Prosecutors were to meet Monday afternoon to decide what, if any, charges should be filed against Halloran, and whether they should ask another office -- including the attorney general or Oakland County Prosecutor's Office -- to handle any prosecution. A decision might not come until early next month.

Visiting Judge David Kerwin will handle Halloran's docket during his absence.

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