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Federal judge announces end to controversial blog

By The Associated Press

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O MAHA — A federal judge whose public online writings have been a lightning rod for controversy says he's shutting down his blog.

Senior U.S. District Judge Richard Kopf announced Thursday on his blog "Hercules and the Umpire," that he would no longer blog. The reason, he said, has nothing to do with recent comments he wrote calling Republican presidential candidate and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz "unfit to become president," drawing protests from some Cruz supporters.

Instead, Kopf said he decided to stop blogging after learning that a majority of court employees at a recent retreat had indicated, by a show of hands, that the blog had become an embarrassment to the court.

"There is nothing more important to me than the United States District Court for the District of Nebraska," Kopf wrote in Thursday's blog post. "If I have lost the confidence of our employees through publishing the blog, then I have harmed the Court. I cannot tolerate that thought, and I have therefore decided to pull the plug."

It's the second time Kopf has declared the blog's demise. He first shut it down on Jan. 1, 2014, saying he'd written everything he wanted to say, only to revive it two months later.

This time, the judge said, he means it.

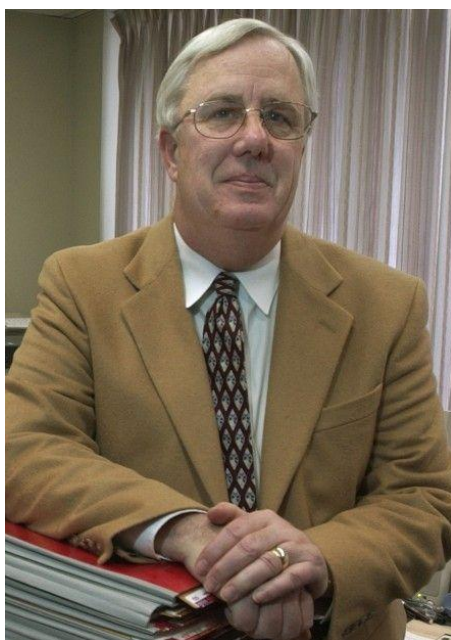
Kopf has posted everything from videos of his grandkids to writings about his battle with cancer to opinions on various court cases. In 2013, he told Congress to "go to hell" for allowing a brief federal government shutdown. His post in March 2014, in which he called himself "a dirty old man" and suggested that young women attorneys need to dress more conservatively in court, drew a firestorm of criticism.

In June 2014, the judge used an obscene reference to suggest that the U.S. Supreme Court should not have heard a case in which it found that some businesses can, because of their religious beliefs, choose not to comply with the federal health care law's requirement that contraception coverage be provided to workers at no extra charge.

None of those controversies pressured him to end the blog, he said. Neither did Chief U.S. District Judge Laurie Smith Camp nor any other official ask him to stop blogging, he said.

Kopf declined to comment when reached at his home Saturday.

Kopf said in his final post that he would close the blog to comments next week, but archive what's already been written so that it remains accessible online.



Richard Kopf
