



NKY attorney Ben Dusing gets jail time in 4-year-old contempt charge

QUINLAN BENTLEY Cincinnati Enquirer

A [high-profile Northern Kentucky defense lawyer](#) has been ordered to serve a seven-day jail sentence nearly four years after he was found in contempt of court, records show.

Ben Dusing has until Sept. 15 to report to the Kenton County Detention Center, according to a Tuesday order by Family Court Judge Thomas Rauf.

The contempt charge stems from a 2019 custody dispute over the child Dusing shares with his ex-fiancée, Jill Bakker.

Dusing was found to be in contempt of court in October 2019 for violating orders regarding communication with Bakker and was sentenced in January 2020 by Judge Christopher Mehling to seven days in jail, court filings show.

That sentence was conditionally discharged, an alternative to jail time that is similar to probation, but happens when the judge decides a person should follow conditions set by the court but that probationary supervision is unnecessary.

In August 2020, the judge found Dusing continued to violate the court's orders by sending emails to his ex-fiancée unrelated to the wellbeing of his child, court records show.

After the 2020 sentencing, Dusing sent at least 50 written messages to Bakker in violation of the court's orders, according to court filings.

"He seems to be intent on having his way at all times," Mehling wrote of Dusing's emails. "They can be bullying and intimidating."

The Courier-Journal reported his custody dispute with his ex-fiancée has been rocky. She was given full custody of their only child after experiencing physical and emotional abuse from Dusing, according to a 2021 ruling by Mehling, who also presided over a custody dispute between Dusing and another woman.

Dusing also threatened to kill his ex-fiancée at least six times, the judge said.

His sentencing for violating the conditions of his conditional discharge was deferred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had started just five months earlier, according to court filings.

It wasn't until last week that the issue was heard by the court as part of a three-day trial, this time before a different judge as Mehling retired.

Dusing argued in part that he was not afforded due process; he was not in contempt and was never "fully heard" on the contempt charge, and Rauf couldn't sentence him since he was not the judge who found Dusing in contempt.

"We are disappointed with the court's order. It is patently illegal, and we will be appealing immediately," Kent Wicker, Dusing's attorney, said in an email.

As of Wednesday night, jail records did not list Dusing as an inmate at the Kenton County Detention Center.

The attorney has been temporarily suspended from practicing law in Kentucky since February 2022, as well as in Ohio since March of last year.

During the custody disputes, Dusing posted a Facebook message in 2021 aimed at two attorneys, including the lawyer who represented his ex-fiancée, and used profanity almost 50 times in a roughly nine-minute video.

He also asked his co-counsel to pay a psychologist \$5,000 to change a custodial evaluation, according to a 30-page report written by the Kentucky Bar Association.

In the profanity-laced video, he accused the lawyers of wrongdoing, threatened to invoke the wrath of God upon them and asked for a "reason to" blow them up.

Dusing has argued the comment is a figure of speech. While he should have chosen different words, he was spotlighting what he considered bad behavior by others and advocating for court reform, he said in defense of his actions during a five-day trial in December.

He also says he never tried to pay a doctor to change a custodial report, though Judge Mehling and trial commissioner Scott Bachert both agreed Dusing convinced or helped his attorney Jeffrey Otis try to pay off the doctor who conducted a custodial evaluation.

Dusing is a former federal prosecutor turned defense attorney who has represented Jeff Pastor, the former Cincinnati City Council member convicted of a federal corruption charge, and Doug Evans, the owner of Evans Landscaping convicted in a scheme to win contracts intended for minority-owned businesses.