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OPINION AND COMMENTARY

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OPINION

The Murdaugh case isn't an indictment on the state's judicial system, SC Bar official says

BY BEVERLY A. CARROLL, CHAIR OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA BAR JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY COMMITTEE

JULY 19, 2022 6:00 AM



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A gavel. SETH PERLMAN AP



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The Murdaugh case is hardly an “indictment on our state’s judicial system” (as stated in a [July 14 column in The State, Island Packet and Beaufort Gazette](#)).

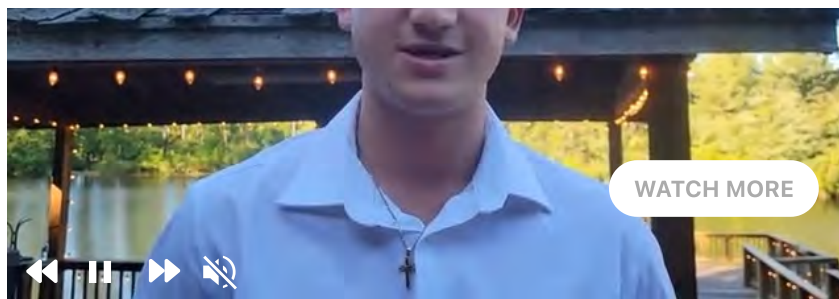
In fact, upon revelation of his misdeeds, Mr. Murdaugh was immediately suspended and now has been disbarred from the practice of law by the South Carolina Supreme Court. The Court’s Order regarding this matter is publicly available at www.sccourts.org. Mr. Murdaugh is currently in jail facing numerous criminal charges and civil lawsuits, demonstrating the justice process at work. It is clear that the case is not “closed” on Mr. Murdaugh and others who participated in these alleged heinous acts.

We commend many who have worked towards justice, including law enforcement, attorneys on behalf of the wronged parties, journalists, the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) and the South Carolina Supreme Court, all of which worked incredibly hard to investigate and identify all those involved. Claims that there are gaping holes in “public accountability” are not supported by the facts.

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The practice of law is a highly regulated profession; it provides an avenue for anyone to complain about any attorney or judge followed by a comprehensive, confidential investigation that is designed to ensure that those who are making accusations and those accused are provided due process. An in-depth investigation does take time, but without that level of scrutiny anyone could level a complaint that could unjustly ruin a career or perhaps even manipulate a case with removal of a judge that one deems as not the “right one.” Each year, ODC publishes a report of complaints and actions taken involving judges and lawyers.

Unfortunately, there have been unscrupulous professionals in all walks of life who seek to take advantage of those they are supposed to serve. The practice of law is not immune. However, it is unfair to impute the conduct of an unethical professional to his or her entire profession. It is simply not accurate to state that the acts of Mr. Murdaugh somehow benefit judges or lawyer-legislators or are covered up by other attorneys. His actions and those that violate the oath to which each attorney swears, make us more determined to identify and punish those who use their license to do harm, take advantage and violate the trust placed in them.

There are approximately 14,000 active attorneys practicing in our state, and the vast majority go above and beyond to serve their clients and communities on a daily basis with the utmost dedication and integrity. They are the general rule in South Carolina, not the exception as headlines of the past year would have us believe. We write on behalf of Bar members who are proud to be South Carolina lawyers.

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