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Letter to the Editor
Village Voice
36 Cooper Square
New York, New York 10003

ATT: Richard Goldstein, Executive Editor

RE: Correction to "In the Interest of Justice" by James Ridgeway
Mondo Washington, January 19, 1999 issue

James Ridgeway's Mondo Washington column (1/19/99) accurately stated that Chief Justice Rehnquist could be the "big surprise" in President's Senate impeachment trial. But it did not identify that surprise, even while misrepresenting that Rehnquist has been "attacked on the left as an unscrupulous judge" because he "ignored evidence" of impeachable conduct by lower federal judges under his supervision.

To our knowledge, no one "on the left" has made such attack, which is not an attack at all. Rather, it is a formal impeachment complaint filed with the House Judiciary Committee, two months ago, by the completely non-partisan Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc., a citizens' organization which documents judicial corruption. The complaint alleges that the Chief Justice could not ignore clear evidence of impeachable conduct by lower federal judges, without himself engaging in impeachable conduct. This, because he has mandatory supervisory and ethical duties, both as head of the Supreme Court and head of the administration of the federal judiciary. The Chief Justice jettisoned those duties to protect the lower federal judges with whom he has long-standing personal and professional relationships. Under federal law, the Chief Justice was required to disclose the pertinent facts as to those relationships or recuse himself. The Chief Justice responded to this legal requirement not by denying it, but by ignoring a formal application, made under that law, for disclosure or his recusal.

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In a seeming non-sequitur, Mr. Ridgeway cites Joe Conason's column in the Observer about a 1972 case in which Rehnquist failed to recuse himself, but "clearly should have". The connection is that Rehnquist's failure to recuse himself from that case was one of the factors which led Congress to pass the federal law of judicial disclosure/recusal, which it did in 1974. The Chief Justice, partly responsible for that law, has now subverted it to protect his "buddies" in the lower federal judiciary, whose misconduct totally annihilated "the rule of law". This then is the surprise about the Chief Justice -- an impeachment complaint against him, more serious, by far, than the impeachment articles against the President.

Yours for a quality judiciary,



ELENA RUTH SASSOWER, Coordinator
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