

The New York TimesPRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

February 27, 2009

70 Youths Sue Former Judges in Detention Kickback Case

By [IAN URBINA](#)

More than 70 juveniles and their families filed a class-action lawsuit Thursday against two former judges who pleaded guilty this month in a scheme that involved their taking kickbacks to put young offenders in privately run detention centers.

The suit contends that before resigning last year, the judges “used kids as commodities that could be traded for cash,” placing an “indelible stain” on the juvenile justice system of Luzerne County in northeastern [Pennsylvania](#).

The suit, filed in the Federal District Court in Scranton by the Juvenile Law Center, seeks to have all profits that the detention centers earned from the scheme placed in a fund that would compensate the youths for their emotional distress.

In an earlier filing, the law center, based in Philadelphia, asked the State Supreme Court to clear the records of all juveniles who appeared before the judges, Mark A. Ciavarella Jr. and Michael T. Conahan.

The suit brought Thursday is the third filed on behalf of juvenile offenders. The two others, one of which also seeks class-action status, were filed by private lawyers.

Mr. Ciavarella and Mr. Conahan pleaded guilty on Feb. 12 to federal charges of wire and income-tax fraud for having taken more than \$2.6 million in kickbacks to send teenagers to the two privately operated centers, run by PA Child Care and a sister company, Western PA Child Care.

“Judge Ciavarella’s placement of so many children in juvenile facilities without regard for their underlying charges suggests a Procrustean scheme that violated one of the core principles of the juvenile justice system — the right to individualized treatment and

rehabilitation,” Lourdes M. Rosado, associate director of the Juvenile Law Center, said in a statement.

Lawyers for the two former judges declined to comment on the suit.

As for the criminal investigation of court personnel, two additional people have already been charged, and federal officials say they may soon charge others involved in the scheme.

[Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)
