



**Judicial Conduct Board**  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Richard W. Long, Chief Counsel  
717-234-7911

## Press Release

**December 30, 2019**

**FROM:** Richard W. Long  
Chief Counsel

**SUBJECT:** President Judge Dennis E. Reinaker  
**Lancaster County**  
Court of Common Pleas

**Harrisburg.** Following investigation of complaints that President Judge Dennis Reinaker, Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas, engaged in misconduct during an April 26, 2019 traffic stop, the Judicial Conduct Board voted to resolve the matter by issuing a **Letter of Counsel** to the judge. The dismissal was conditioned on the judge's consent to the Board's public release of the letter. The **Letter of Counsel** issued to President Judge Reinaker, his acceptance, and waiver of confidentiality, accompany this press release. Judge Reinaker accepted the Letter of Counsel earlier today.

The Board issues Letters of Counsel in cases where there is sufficient evidence of judicial misconduct to warrant the filing of charges in the Court of Judicial Discipline, but considering all facts and circumstances and mitigating factors, the Board determines a Letter of Counsel to be an appropriate disposition. A Letter of Counsel may be private or public and is subject to the judge's acceptance of the letter and its terms. The conduct at issue in a matter resolved by a Letter of Counsel can be used as evidence against the judge in **future complaints** before the Court of Judicial Discipline, if the judge is charged by the Board in the Court for **subsequent allegations of misconduct.**

*Please visit the Board's website at [www.jcbpa.org](http://www.jcbpa.org) (select the Resource Tab then select Press Releases in the drop down menu) to view the Board Complaint.*

**Counsel:**

**Board:** Melissa L. Norton, Deputy Counsel

**Judge:** Christopher A. Ferro, Esquire

**Contact:** Richard W. Long, Chief Counsel



**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
JUDICIAL CONDUCT BOARD**

PENNSYLVANIA JUDICIAL CENTER  
601 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, SUITE 3500  
P.O. Box 62525  
HARRISBURG, PA 17106-2525  
WWW.JCBPA.ORG

RICHARD W. LONG  
CHIEF COUNSEL

**December 13, 2019**

717-234-7911

The Honorable Dennis E. Reinaker  
President Judge  
c/o Christopher A. Ferro, Esquire  
160 East Market Street  
York, PA 17401

Re: Judicial Conduct Board Complaint Nos. 2019-359, 2019-382, and 2019-388

Dear **Judge Reinaker**:

At its most recent meeting, the Board reviewed and considered the above referenced complaints and voted on a final disposition. The Board has available to it a private procedure by which it may dismiss a complaint filed against a judicial officer with the issuance of what is termed a "Letter of Counsel." The Board offers a Letter of Counsel dismissal to a judicial officer when the Board decides that although a judge has breached the Code of Judicial Conduct or the Pennsylvania Constitution, the judge's actions, though serious, do not necessarily warrant the Board's filing of formal charges in the Court of Judicial Discipline.

In order to receive a Letter of Counsel, a judicial officer must consent in writing and stipulate that the Letter of Counsel may be used during future Board proceedings if future complaint(s) are lodged against that same judicial officer. As part of this consent, the judicial officer acknowledges that the Board may also utilize a Letter of Counsel in public proceedings before the Court of Judicial Discipline or the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania if the Board directs that action is to be taken on any future complaint(s) against the judicial officer before either Court.

As you were made aware by the Board's Notice of Full Investigation dated **August 13, 2019**, and its Supplemental Notice of Full Investigation dated **November 4, 2019**, which are incorporated by reference as part of this Letter of Counsel, the above referenced complaints and the Board's Investigation concerned **your conduct during a motor vehicle traffic stop on April 26, 2019**. The Board has authorized dismissal of the complaints through its Letter of Counsel procedure; however, the dismissal is conditioned on your agreement that this Letter of Counsel will be made public.

In resolving these matters, the Board considered all investigatory information, all of which is incorporated as part of the Letter of Counsel, including: (1) your June 14, 2019 self-report of your conduct; (2) your response dated September 9, 2019, to the Board's Notice of Full Investigation; (3) your response dated November 18, 2019, to the Board's Supplemental Notice of Full Investigation; and (4) the transcript of your October 2, 2019 deposition testimony.

The Board determined that on April 26, 2019, you were the subject of a motor vehicle traffic stop on Pitney Road in Lancaster County. Within a few seconds of bringing your vehicle to a stop, you stepped out of your car and asked the police officer, "What do you think you're doing pulling me over? For blowing my horn?" The officer instructed you to return to your car, which you did only after saying, "You better check the registration on this plate soon, mister." Shortly thereafter, the police officer approached the driver's side window of your car and released you from the stop saying, "Have a good day, Judge." During the course of the investigation, you consistently denied that you were attempting to abuse the prestige of your judicial office during the April 26, 2019 traffic stop. You explained that your conduct was the result of irritation at being stopped by the officer and your belief that you had done nothing wrong. However, you freely admitted that your behavior was inappropriate and that your "choice of words and obvious irritation" during the traffic stop could create a perceived appearance of impropriety.

The Board concluded that your April 26, 2019 conduct as described above, ran afoul of Canon 1, Rule 1.2 of the Code of Judicial Conduct which states:

Canon 1. A judge shall uphold and promote the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

Rule 1.2. Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary.

A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

While the Board found your conduct could support the filing of formal charges in the Court of Judicial Discipline, it decided to resolve the matter through the Letter of Counsel procedure in light of the following mitigating considerations: (1) on June 14, 2019, you self-reported your conduct to the Board; (2) you cooperated fully in the investigation; (3) the conduct in question was brief and singular in nature; (4) you apologized to the police officer involved in the motor vehicle traffic stop; and (5) you accepted responsibility for your conduct.

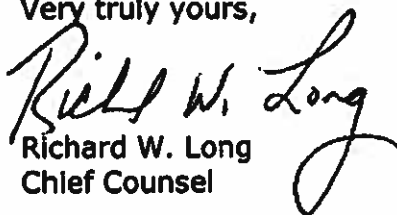
As you have already agreed to accept this Letter of Counsel to resolve Board Complaint Nos. 2019-359, 2019-382, and 2019-388, you are directed to appear before me at the Board's Office at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center, 601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 3500, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120, and personally sign an original Statement of

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The Honorable Dennis E. Reinaker  
December 13, 2019

Consent and Waiver of Confidentiality, such as you will find at the end of this letter. Upon your signature of the Statement of Consent and Waiver of Confidentiality, this Letter of Counsel, with all incorporated documents and the accompanying original Statement of Consent and Waiver of Confidentiality, will be retained by the Board in its file. Board Complaint Nos. 2019-359, 2019-382, and 2019-388 will then be dismissed and the files closed.

Therefore, please contact this Office **within ten (10) days of the date of this letter** to schedule a time for your meeting with Chief Counsel to officially sign and receive your Letter of Counsel.

Very truly yours,

  
Richard W. Long  
Chief Counsel

RWL/MLN/tis  
Attachment

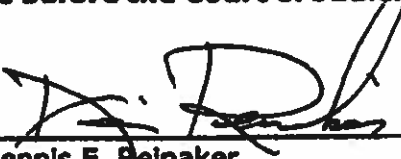
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**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I, Judge Dennis E. Reinaker, consent to the dismissal of Board Complaint Nos. 2019-359, 2019-382, and 2019-388 with the issuance of this Letter of Counsel.

I understand and agree that the contents of this Letter of Counsel and any supporting facts for this Letter of Counsel derived from the Board's investigation and documents incorporated by reference may, if warranted, be used during any future proceedings involving new complaint(s) against me before the Board, or in any future public proceedings against me before the Court of Judicial Discipline or the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

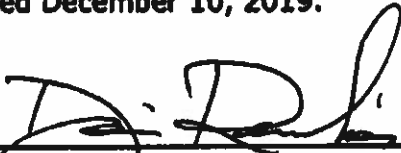
Date: 12/30/19

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis E. Reinaker  
President Judge  
Court of Common Pleas  
Lancaster County

**WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

I, Dennis E. Reinaker, President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Lancaster County, hereby waive the confidentiality provisions of the following authorities: (1) Article V, §18(a)(8) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; (2) Rule 17 of the Judicial Conduct Board Rules of Procedure; (3) any applicable Internal Operating Procedure of the Judicial Conduct Board; and (4) any case precedent regarding the confidentiality of judicial conduct complaints filed with the Judicial Conduct Board. I understand that this waiver of confidentiality applies only to the Board's investigation and disposition of Judicial Conduct Board Complaint Nos. 2019-359, 2019-382, and 2019-388. I understand that this waiver does not apply to the content of medical records or personal identifiers such as Social Security Numbers, home addresses, and names of minor children, which may have been received by the Board in the course of its investigation. I understand that this waiver allows the Board, in its sole discretion, to publicly disclose the Letter Of Counsel issued by the Board to Dennis E. Reinaker, dated December 10, 2019.

Date: 12/30/19

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis E. Reinaker  
President Judge  
Court of Common Pleas  
Lancaster County