



The  
**DISCIPLINARY BOARD**  
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

**January 2025**  
**Newsletter**



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## *From the Chair*

In 2022, the Disciplinary Board celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Through this milestone, we were [reminded](#) of the importance of a strong, centralized, and self-regulating legal profession in Pennsylvania. A Board web article noted the struggle through which this belief emanated:

*In the late 1960s, the state of attorney discipline throughout the country was chaotic. The American Bar Association (ABA) responded to the sorry state of lawyer ethics with multiple initiatives . . . The ABA also turned its attention to the procedures and process by which discipline was administered.*



Following the landmark [Clark Report](#), the result of the ABA's three-year study of the state of attorney discipline around the country, the Disciplinary Board was established under the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Though practices and procedures have evolved considerably—and rightfully—since the Board's inception, service to PA's communities and legal profession has remained the heart of its work.

To those attorneys seeking to further support the legal community across the Commonwealth, consider [applying](#) to serve on the Board's volunteer [Hearing Committee](#). Hearing Committee Members play an essential role in Pennsylvania's disciplinary system. I encourage all to learn more about the duties and expectations of Committee Members through the "Disciplinary Board News" feature below.

Our colleagues at the Law Society of British Columbia explain:

*Self-regulation is a part of upholding lawyer independence. A lawyer's role is to provide advice on behalf of a client, sometimes in disputes involving the government or government institutions. It would pose a conflict of interest if the organization that regulated lawyers was directly or indirectly controlled by the government. Members of the public who retain the services of a lawyer have a right to client-solicitor privilege.*

That independence remains vital to a healthy profession. As such, the Board is seeking experienced lawyers dedicated to ethical law practice and professional integrity to bolster its work and mission.

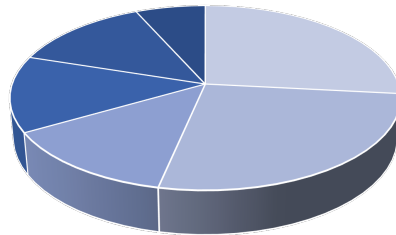
As the late former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor once articulated, "We don't accomplish anything in this world alone . . . and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something." To best protect the public, maintain the integrity of the legal profession, and safeguard the reputation of the courts, the Disciplinary Board needs the support of a community-minded, collaborative, and diverse assembly of volunteers to continue to raise up the Commonwealth's legal community.

I look forward to another year of mutual growth and professional partnership. On behalf of the Board, I wish you all health and happiness and a meaningful 2025.

John C. Rafferty, Jr.  
Board Chair

## *Discipline Imposed*

**December 2024**



- Informal Admonition - 4
- Private Reprimand - 4
- Public Reprimand - 2
- Public Censure - 0
- Disability Inactive - 0
- Temporary Suspension - 2
- Suspension - 2
- Disbarment - 1

### **Public Reprimand**

[Patrick C. Carey](#)  
[John Paul Senich, Jr.](#)

### **Suspension**

[Matthew Paul Gieg](#)  
[Mary Elizabeth Lenti](#)

### **Temporary Suspension**

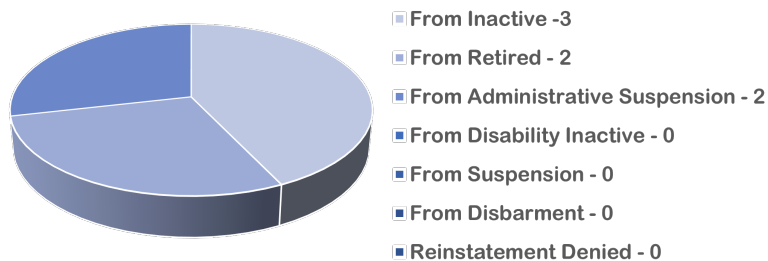
[Ronnie Louis Creazzo](#)  
[John Allen Roth](#)

### **Disbarment**

[Joshua Louis Thomas](#)

## *Reinstatements*

**December 2024**



#### From Inactive

[Benjamin Michael Kusiak](#)

[Dominic Joseph LaFauci](#)

[Joseph George Rinaldi](#)

#### From Retired

[Robert Patrick Carroll](#)

[Tamara Nicole Cohen](#)

#### From Administrative Suspension

[Orne Bey, Sr.](#)

[Geoffrey Neff Blue](#)

*Note: The above-listed granted reinstatement matters reflect only those granted by Supreme Court Order. An attorney listed as reinstatement granted, but whose current license status does not reflect reinstatement, has yet to submit the fees necessary to finalize reinstatement.*

## Disciplinary Board News

### Apply to Become a Disciplinary Board Hearing Committee Member

Annually, the Disciplinary Board is tasked with the appointment of [Hearing Committee Members](#). Duties of Hearing Committee Members include reviewing the recommended disposition of complaints as offered by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel; conducting disciplinary and reinstatement hearings, either as a three-member panel or single designated member; and preparing a written report and recommendation to the Board following disciplinary and reinstatement proceedings.

The Disciplinary Board is committed to appointing diverse Hearing Committee Members, recognizing that diversity of experience, practice area, background, race, gender, and geography is beneficial to the disciplinary process. For Hearing Committee Member positions, the Board considers applicants who have been licensed to practice law for at least *seven years*.

Applicants are required to:

- be a member in good standing of the Pennsylvania bar;
- be licensed to practice law for at least seven years;
- maintain an office for the practice of law within Pennsylvania; and
- have no prior history of discipline.

Applicants should be willing to:

- serve a minimum of at least one three-year term;

- participate at disciplinary and reinstatement proceedings; and
- attend Hearing Committee Training, if possible.

The next Hearing Committee Training will be held in-person in Hershey, PA on July 23, 2025.

**Completed [applications](#) are due by March 7, 2025.** Hearing Committee Members will be appointed by the Board in April 2025 and will begin serving their term on July 1, 2025. Preview the Hearing Committee Member [duties](#) for more information and [apply](#) today!



***HEARING COMMITTEE  
APPLICATION***

**Learn more today.  
Applications are due March 7, 2025.**

 **The  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD**  
*of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania*

## *Upcoming Public Proceedings*

We encourage you to observe our public disciplinary and reinstatement hearings, oral arguments, and public reprimands on the [Board's YouTube channel](#). You can also view "Upcoming Public Proceedings" at the bottom of the Board's [home page](#).

***Scheduled proceedings begin at 9:30 am unless otherwise noted.***

<i>January</i>		
January 17 at 1:30 pm	J. Michael Farrell	Oral Argument
January 17 at 2:15 pm	Kelton Merrill Burgess	Oral Argument
January 27	John A. Gallagher	Reinstatement Hearing
January 31	John M. Kerr	Disciplinary Hearing
<i>February</i>		
February 12 February 13 February 14	David Tevis Shulick	Reinstatement Hearing
February 27 February 28	Alexander Geoffrey Tuttle	Disciplinary Hearing
<i>March</i>		
March 4	Ryan D. Breen	Reinstatement Hearing
March 18	Albert R. Meyer	Reinstatement Hearing
March 19 March 27 March 28	Ryan A. Meryl	Disciplinary Hearing
<i>April</i>		
April 14 April 15	Daryl Alan Yount	Disciplinary Hearing
April 16	Mikel Peter Eggert	Reinstatement Hearing
April 21 April 22 April 23 April 24 April 25	Paul Jude Winterhalter	Disciplinary Hearing
April 29	John Harper Estey	Reinstatement Hearing
<i>May</i>		
May 15 May 16 May 19	Gary P. Lightman	Disciplinary Hearing
May 20 May 21	Meredith Rand Allie	Disciplinary Hearing

## *Articles of Interest*

### **Top Pennsylvania Disciplinary Cases of 2024**

Each January, we review the disciplinary decisions from the previous year and identify a list of the cases of greatest interest. We look for cases that involve unusual or remarkable fact situations, that involve interpretation of the Rules of Professional Conduct or the rules and procedures governing disciplinary proceedings, and cases examining issues arising from technology or

emerging patterns in the practice of law. The following cases caught our eye in 2024:

- [Michael Eric Adler](#), among other matters, pursued a case against a pet food company in which he repeatedly misstated the chemistry of the products at issue in social media posts, accusing the company of producing unsafe products and of stonewalling him, when he did not understand the chemistry explained to him by counsel for the company. [Read more here.](#)
- [Lesley Rae Childers-Potts](#) agreed to a suspension for two years based on her conduct while serving as a county District Attorney. She failed to diligently prosecute cases and to take other actions necessary to discharge her duties in four cases. Three of these resulted in court orders dismissing proceedings due to the failure of the District Attorney's office to diligently proceed with the cases or file required documents. At times, she was the only attorney in the District Attorney's office.
- [Robert Scott Clewell](#) admitted to an extensive pattern of misconduct including neglect, misrepresentation of the status of cases, and failure to earn or refund fees. He asserted that his misconduct was "contextualized" by a pattern of depression and anxiety that prevented him from taking necessary actions. The Board engaged in an extensive discussion of mental health issues and whether these factors are mitigating under the terms of prior cases involving mental disability defenses. [Read more here.](#)
- [J. Conor Corcoran](#) was retained by an imprisoned client to represent him in a police brutality case. When the client's son was killed by a police officer, Corcoran filed a lawsuit naming the client individually and as administrator of his son's estate as plaintiffs although he had not spoken to or been retained by the client regarding that issue and no estate had been opened. [Read more here.](#)
- [Emeka Igwe](#) was found to have charged a clearly excessive fee. He asserted a claim for both a flat fee of \$40,000 for services to obtain the proceeds of a child's special needs trust, which was awarded to the client without any efforts on his part, and a 40% contingent fee for a suit against the child's father should he assert a claim to the trust which the father did not. Igwe received a public reprimand.
- [Steven Ostroff](#) rented a property to a pizza business that fell behind on rent. He terminated the lease and took possession. The business owner reached an agreement to sell the assets of the business and retained Ostroff to draft the sales agreement. Ostroff prepared a document naming himself as the seller. He received and kept the proceeds of the sale. [Read more here.](#)
- [Nathaniel Edmond Strasser](#) appeared at a preliminary hearing on behalf of a client at which a police officer skilled in drug detection noticed signs of cocaine use in his appearance and behavior. After being confronted about this, he tested positive for cocaine. At his disciplinary hearing in which he represented himself, he denied being addicted, and in his cross-examination of the trooper who recognized his symptoms, he suggested cocaine use "increases your awareness." [Read more here.](#)
- [Robert Philip Tuerk](#) sought reinstatement from disbarment. The Disciplinary Board conducted a searching examination of the issue of his rehabilitation. It found that he "leaves a trail of tribunals over many years who have found that he mischaracterizes his discipline, fails to accept responsibility, and is not credible." It found that, far from accepting responsibility for his past misconduct, he would often "soft pedal" and minimize it. For this and other reasons, reinstatement was denied.
- [William J. Weiss](#) was suspended for a year and a day on consent. After the effective date of his suspension, he engaged in prohibited law-related activities when he appeared at three court conferences, one of which he was introduced by another attorney representing the client as his assistant. For this conduct, and due to substantial aggravating circumstances, he was suspended for five years.
- [Andrew Scott Ziegler](#) agreed to a suspension for one year and one day after admitting that he represented clients on the side in violation of the terms of his employment by a law firm, failed to inform the firm of his practice on the side, and created duplicate records to

conceal the practice and to divert fees into his own accounts.

- The Court issued an opinion in the following case that is for an unnamed attorney. In a [decision](#) dated October 24, 2024, in the case of *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Anonymous Attorney*, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania dismissed a disciplinary proceeding against an attorney and held that a petition for attorney fees requesting clearly excessive fees did not violate the prohibition on such fees of [Rule 1.5\(a\)](#) of the Rules of Professional Conduct, nor did it constitute conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice in violation of [Rule 8.4\(d\)](#). [Read more here](#).

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### **Allegheny County Attorney Suspended Over Failure to Consult on Appeal**

By [Order](#) dated November 6, 2024, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania suspended Pittsburgh attorney Milton E. Raiford for one year and one day. Raiford was disbarred by the Supreme Court in 1997 and reinstated in 2010.

Raiford's discipline arose from a criminal case in which he represented a client with offenses related to controlled substances. He negotiated a plea to those charges, and the client was sentenced to imprisonment for two to four years. The client's fiancée contacted Raiford multiple times expressing the client's desire to appeal. He responded that if the client appealed, "he will lose and be exposed to 7½ years in prison from the door. [The client] is a child spoiled by his mom who lives a child's life who always latches on to someone like you." He also received inquiries from the client's mother. He did not communicate with the client himself about his desire to appeal, file an appeal within the time allowed, or withdraw his appearance.

The client filed a *pro se* appeal with the Superior Court two days after expiration of the appeal period. The Superior Court ordered the prothonotary to record Raiford's appearance as counsel and issued a rule for Raiford to show cause why the appeal should not be quashed as untimely. He failed to respond to the rule to show cause, so the Superior Court issued a second rule. He addressed that rule with a letter explaining that he had been contacted by the client's mother but not by the client, that he had not been retained for appeal, and that he saw no reason why the appeal should not be quashed. The Superior Court remanded the matter to the Court of Common Pleas for a determination of whether Raiford had abandoned his client. After hearing, the trial court determined that Raiford did abandon his client and appointed new counsel who, after consultation with the client, discontinued the appeal.

Raiford did not help himself with his response to the disciplinary inquiry. The Disciplinary Board found that he failed to respond meaningfully to the DB-7 Request for Statement of Respondent's Position or to provide records requested by Disciplinary Counsel. The Board concluded that his testimony at the disciplinary hearing was inaccurate though not deceptive.

The Disciplinary Board found that his conduct in the underlying case involved violation of several Rules of Professional Conduct relating to diligence, failure to consult and communicate, conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, and improper handling of funds received as his fee. Based on the circumstances including his prior record of a disbarment and a recent public reprimand, the Disciplinary Board recommended that he be suspended for nine months which would not have required him to petition and prove his fitness for reinstatement. However, the Supreme Court suspended him for one year and one day which will require him to undergo a reinstatement proceeding.

The *ABA Journal* has published its annual list of the [top ten legal stories](#) from its articles from the past year. In brief, the following are the 2024 stories cited by the *Journal*:

1. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled that states cannot ban guns in public facilities](#) like banks, hospitals, and churches but refused to extend that prohibition to the owners of those facilities.
2. The ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar reveals that [several law schools fell short of its requirement](#) of 75% passage of bar examinations, including a Michigan school whose graduates only passed the bar at a rate of 55.9%, compared to a national average of 90.4%.
3. [US News compiled its list of top law schools](#) with a few shakeups and a couple of ties. The University of Pennsylvania (Carey) Law School maintains its standing in a four-way tie for #4. In fairness to the great state of Michigan, whose cellar-dwelling law school we mentioned in the previous item, the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor Law School made the list in a tie for #9.
4. A [New York village and town court judge](#) facing a Judicial Conduct investigation into his attendance at the January 6, 2021 rally in Washington D.C. resigned his seat and agreed never to seek judicial office while proclaiming, "I would do it again."
5. A Black retired judge from Chicago said she was [flying first class when](#) an American Airlines flight attendant accused her of slamming the first-class restroom door and later directed her to use the facilities in the back of the plane.
6. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a [decision to impose a \\$1.05 million sanction](#) against a national law firm that tried to "sabotage" the District Court's jurisdiction by asking state courts to order an end to the Federal litigation.
7. [Law firm consultants relate that lawyers reaching retirement age](#), usually including senior partners, often don't want to go when their time has come, and many law firms struggle to enforce their retirement policies and lack any sort of plan for older lawyers.
8. The [state court judge appointed to preside](#) in the Georgia racketeering case against President Donald Trump once worked for Fani T. Willis, the current Fulton County, Georgia district attorney who obtained the indictment.
9. A [partner at Duane Morris in Chicago](#) was ousted from the firm after his wife was found dead in a stairwell and her parents accused him of domestic violence.
10. A [seventeen-year-old who enrolled in law school at age thirteen](#) has beaten her brother's record to become the youngest person to pass the California bar exam.

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### **Hot-tubbing, Coffee Badging, and MDM: Law Professors Identify New Words in Legal Lexicon**

Each year, a team of law professors led by University of California, Berkeley School of Law Professor of Legal Writing Margaret Wu and William C. Burton, the creator of Burton's Legal Thesaurus, get together to identify new words or phrases that have entered into the practice of law. In 2022 they flagged "meme stock," referring to viral popularity of a company due to heightened social media interest, and in 2023 they recognized "hallucination" for a nonexistent



legal authority produced by defective artificial intelligence (AI) research.

The group has compiled a [new list](#) of terms that [caught on in 2024](#). The new arrivals to the lexicon include:

**Hot-tubbing:** When experts for both sides meet with the judge for a discussion on the record to help clarify the issues and promote settlement

**Coffee badging:** When a home-based employee shows up to work for a minimal period of time to satisfy in-office work requirements

**Word salad:** A nonsensical stream of disconnected verbiage

**Cybersmear:** Online defamation, usually posted anonymously

**AI washing:** Misleading advertising regarding the effectiveness of an artificial intelligence product (Related terms for bad output from AI research include “slop” and “sea of junk.”)

**MDM:** Misinformation (the unintentional sharing of false information), disinformation (the intentional use of false information to deceive), and malinformation (the use of true facts arranged or presented in a way that creates false impressions or conclusions)

Professor Wu explained, “We go through and try to find words that we think are interesting and seem to be growing in popularity and words that we think would be helpful for both practicing lawyers as well as legal scholars to be aware of.”

Mr. Burton expressed his thanks to the committee, saying, “I am delighted the profession now has a highly qualified academic body which evaluates new words and expressions in law each year and records them for posterity.”

## *Attorney Well-Being*

### **The 2025 Institute for Well-Being in Law Conference to Be Held This Month!**

The [Institute for Well-Being in Law](#) (IWIL) will hold its annual Well-Being Conference on Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> and Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>. This year's conference features a keynote each day and a mix of tracked concurrent sessions that include individual well-being, organizational well-being, state-level well-being programs, and teaching and promoting well-being in law school. Attendees will engage with expert speakers and participate in interactive workshops and insightful panel discussions, gaining valuable insights into the latest research on well-being in law.

Learn more and register [here](#) on IWIL's website.



## Institute For Well-Being In Law

Well-Being Conference | January 21-22, 2025


### Explore the Disciplinary Board's Lawyer Well-Being Webpage

The Disciplinary Board's "["Lawyer Well-Being" webpage](https://padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being) connects Pennsylvania attorneys with pertinent resources, [articles](#), events, and CLE opportunities to better understand and support their mental health and well-being. To access the Board's "Lawyer Well-Being" page, visit [padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being](https://padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being).


## LAWYER WELL-BEING

Connect to available resources to better understand and support mental health and well-being, particularly as they relate to the legal profession.

[padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being](https://padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being)



- Digital resources
- Informative articles
- Upcoming events
- CLE opportunities




The DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers is a confidential and safe resource for Pennsylvania attorneys and their family members who may be struggling with their mental health or substance use. Since 1988, LCL has confidentially assisted and supported thousands of individuals who have faced a myriad of challenges (including grief, stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, gambling problems, problematic alcohol or prescription drug use, etc.), helping them navigate through dark and difficult times. If you or someone you know is struggling, please call us. You may save a life.

● ● ●

There is help, and there is hope.



LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS  
PENNSYLVANIA

[lclpa.org](https://lclpa.org) | 1-888-999-1941

- Evaluation by a healthcare professional
- Information and literature
- Peer and staff support
- Assistance with interventions
- Recovery meetings
- Online resources and CLE

[Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#) is a confidential assistance program for the Pennsylvania legal community and their family members. LCL may not report information about a subject attorney back to the Disciplinary Board.

### **Confidential 24/7 Helpline: 1-888-999-1941**

Last year, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted amendments to the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement (Pa.R.D.E.) relating to confidentiality of proceedings, providing for three exceptions to the requirement of confidentiality under [Pa.R.D.E. 402\(d\)](#). Included in these exceptions is the allowance for Disciplinary Counsel to make a referral of an attorney to [Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania](#) (LCL) and share information as part of the referral. *However*, it is crucial to note that LCL may *not* report information about a subject attorney back to the Disciplinary Board. LCL is a **confidential** assistance program for the Pennsylvania legal community and their family members.

## *Around the Court*



### **Pennsylvania Courts to Again Hold Interpreter Certification Program Orientation Workshops**

The Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania will once again hold orientation workshops for its [Interpreter Certification Program](#). The program was established to provide trained and qualified spoken language and sign language interpreters for PA courts. A statewide roster of qualified and certified spoken language and sign language interpreters helps each judicial district implement effective interpreter services.

The upcoming workshops will provide a step-by-step guide on the process to become a PA court interpreter. An online workshop will be held in March while in-person workshops will be held in April (Pittsburgh), July (Harrisburg), and September (Philadelphia).

Access the 2025 orientation workshop registration form [here](#). Access the Interpreter Certification Program registration form [here](#).

Learn more about [language access](#) and the Courts' [interpreter program](#) on the UJS website.

## *From the Pennsylvania Bar Association*



## Happy New Year!

As we launch into a new year, it is a great time to explain the [Pennsylvania Bar Association](#) (PBA).

The PBA operates with a mission to: propound the precepts of the rule of law; advance the science and art of jurisprudence; support and promote a diverse and inclusive system of justice; support and promote the equal administration of justice for all and that no one on account of poverty be denied their legal rights; support and promote a thorough and continuing legal education; uphold the honor and dignity of the bar by supporting and promoting civility and professionalism in the practice of law and with the judiciary and community; serve as the organization most broadly representative of the members of the bar of this commonwealth; honor and preserve the history of the profession and the legacy of its members; uphold and defend the independence of the judiciary; and secure proper legislation in support of all these purposes.

As the state voluntary bar, PBA's 22,000 members are located throughout Pennsylvania. They include law firm practitioners, solo practitioners, judges, academics, retired attorneys, legal administrators, and now paralegals. There are eighteen sections and fifty-five committees, each with specialized practice areas in addition to Young Lawyers Division.

Joining the PBA helps expand knowledge, make connections, and grow careers. From insurance to free legal research to discounted office products, a PBA membership provides dramatic savings on the critical services every lawyer needs.

The [Pennsylvania Bar Institute](#) (PBI) is the legal education arm of the PBA. For sixty years, PBI has been a leader in developing and delivering gold-standard CLE.

The PBA also supports the [Pennsylvania Bar Foundation](#) (PBF). The PBF was created to improve the public's understanding of law and PA's judicial system as well as to ensure that citizens have full access to justice through the legal system. The work involves scholarships, IOLTA loan repayment (LRAP), Mock Trial, Wills for Heroes, pro bono work, and more.

PBA looks forward to partnering with you this year! For additional information, please visit [pabar.org](#).

*PBA thanks you for your support!*

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*Please note that the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) are separate organizations. For more information about PBA, visit [pabar.org](#) or follow on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.*

*We Want To Hear From You...*

We are always on the lookout for stories of interest relating to legal ethics, new issues in the practice of law, lawyer wellness, and funny or just plain weird stories about the legal profession. If you come across something you think might be enlightening, educational, or entertaining to our readers or social media followers, [pass it along](#). If you are our original source, there may be a hat tip in it for you.

## *Resources*

[Pending Cases](#)

[Recent Cases](#)

[Case Research Collection](#)

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