

Judicial Conduct Board
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joseph A. Massa, Jr., Chief Counsel
717-234-7911

Press Release

April 22, 2008

TO: Media/Press

FROM: Judicial Conduct Board/Joseph A. Massa, Jr., Chief Counsel

**SUBJECT: Filing of Formal Charges
Willie F. Singletary
Judge
Philadelphia Traffic Court
Philadelphia County**

JUDICIAL CONDUCT BOARD INITIATES FORMAL PROCEEDINGS CONCERNING PHILADELPHIA TRAFFIC COURT JUDGE WILLIE F. SINGLETARY

HARRISBURG, April 22, 2008 –The Judicial Conduct Board has announced today that it has instituted formal proceedings against Willie F. Singletary, Philadelphia Traffic Court Judge, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. A Board Complaint has been filed with the Court of Judicial Discipline in Harrisburg, five (5) counts of misconduct.

The Board Complaint alleges that during his successful 2007 bid for judge of the Philadelphia Traffic Court, Singletary (1) personally solicited funds from a group of motorcyclists, and (2) promised prospective donors assistance in exchange for their financial support.

It is alleged that this conduct brought the judicial office into disrepute.

In accordance with the rules which govern proceedings before the Court of Judicial Discipline, Judge Singletary has an opportunity to respond to the charges, obtain and inspect the evidence which forms the basis of the allegations and the right to a public trial before the Court of Judicial Discipline.

Upon completion of the trial, if the Court determines that one or more of the charges have been proven by clear and convincing evidence, it will schedule a Sanctions Hearing to determine what sanctions should be imposed upon the judge for violating the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges and the

Pennsylvania Constitution. Possible sanctions include reprimand, suspension, removal from office and restriction of future judicial employment.

A copy of the Board Complaint is attached to this press release. For more information about the Judicial Conduct Board, please visit our website at www.jcbpa.org.

Counsel: Joseph A. Massa, Jr., Chief Counsel

Respondent's John W. Morris, Esquire

Contact: Joseph A. Massa, Jr., Chief Counsel
Judicial Conduct Board

Note: Board Complaint attached.

(This information may also be found on www.jcbpa.org)

END

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

COURT OF JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE

RECEIVED AND FILED
COURT OF
JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE
OF PENNSYLVANIA

2008 APR 22 A 11:45

In re:

Willie F. Singletary, :
Judge; :
Philadelphia Traffic Court; :
Philadelphia County : 1 JD 2008
:

NOTICE OF FORMAL CHARGES

TO: WILLIE F. SINGLETARY, PHILADELPHIA TRAFFIC COURT JUDGE:

The Pennsylvania Judicial Conduct Board has determined that there is probable cause to file formal charges against you for conduct proscribed by Article V, §§ 17 and 18 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Board's counsel will present the case in support of the charges before the Pennsylvania Court of Judicial Discipline.

You have an absolute right to be represented by a lawyer in all proceedings before the Court of Judicial Discipline. Your attorney should file an entry of appearance with the Court of Judicial Discipline within fifteen (15) days of service of this Board Complaint in accordance with C.J.D.R.P. No. 302(B).

You are hereby notified, pursuant to C.J.D.R.P. No. 302(E), that should you elect to file an omnibus motion, that motion should be filed no later than thirty (30) days after the service of this complaint in accordance with C.J.D.R.P. No. 411.

FORMAL COMPLAINT

AND NOW, this 22nd day of April, 2008, comes the Judicial Conduct Board of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (hereinafter “Board”) and files this Board Complaint against Philadelphia Traffic Court Judge Willie F. Singletary (hereinafter “Respondent”), a Judge for Philadelphia Traffic Court, in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, alleging that the Respondent has violated the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, and Article V, §§ 17(b) and 18(d)(1) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as more specifically delineated herein.

1. This action is taken pursuant to the authority of the Board under Article V, § 18 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Judicial Conduct Board Rule of Procedure 31(A)(3), promulgated by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on March 20, 1995 (amended 1996), the Board is granted authority to determine whether there is probable cause to file formal charges, and, when it concludes that probable cause exists, to file formal charges, against a justice, judge, or magisterial district judge, for proscribed conduct and to present the case in support of such charges before the Court of Judicial Discipline.

2. Since on or about January 7, 2008, the Respondent has served continuously to the present as judge for the Philadelphia Traffic Court, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with an office located at 800 Spring Garden Street, Room 207, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19123-2690.

3. The Philadelphia Traffic Court is a summary court of limited jurisdiction with seven (7) elected judges, trained by the Commonwealth specifically to preside over and adjudicate citations for moving violations issued within the City and County of Philadelphia, as provided in Title 75 of the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code. Additionally, the Traffic Court is

responsible for the collection of fines resulting from the issuance of citations by the Philadelphia Police Department and other law enforcement agencies.

4. Pursuant to Rule 18 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, the Rules also apply to, and “magisterial district judge” as used therein additionally includes, the judges of the Philadelphia Traffic Court.

FORMAL CHARGES

5. On or about April 22, 2007, while campaigning during the Primary Election for the position of Judge of the Philadelphia Traffic Court, the Respondent personally solicited funds and promised prospective donors assistance in exchange for their financial support.

6. On Sunday, April 22, 2007, the Respondent appeared before a gathering of the Philadelphia First State Road Rattlers, a motorcycle club, and/or others, at the Malcolm X Park located at 52nd and Pine Streets in the City of Philadelphia.

7. The purposes of the gathering were: (1) the “blessing of the bikes” at the beginning of the summer, and (2) to raise funds for the Respondent’s campaign for the Philadelphia Traffic Court bench.

8. The Respondent called into a circle a group of people wearing the colors of the motorcycle club.

9. The Respondent offered a blessing for the riders and their bikes and then queried:

“You’re all going to help me out?”

10. The Respondent continued:

“There’s going to be a basket going around because I’m running for Traffic Court Judge, right, and I need some money. I got some stuff that I got to do, but if you all can give me twenty (\$20) dollars you’re going to need me in Traffic Court, am I right about that?”

11. Respondent further stated:

“Now you all want me to get there, you’re all going to need my hook-up, right?”

12. The Respondent closed by stating:

“It costs money. I have to raise \$15,000 dollars by Friday, I just hope you have it, because I have to raise \$15,000 dollars by Friday.”

13. A total of \$285 was collected and duly reported on the Respondent’s Campaign Financial Report.

14. By virtue of some or all of the facts alleged in paragraphs one (1) through thirteen (13) of this Board Complaint, the Respondent is subject to discipline pursuant to Article V, §18(d)(1) of the Pennsylvania Constitution for the following reasons:

COUNT 1: The Respondent has violated Article V, §18(d)(1) of the Pennsylvania Constitution by engaging in activity which brings the judicial office into disrepute.

COUNT 2: The Respondent has violated Rule 15(B)(2) of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, which provides in relevant part:

Magisterial district judges or a candidate for such office shall not engage in partisan political activity, deliver political speeches, make or solicit political contributions (including purchasing tickets for political party dinners or other

functions) or attend political or party conventions or gatherings, except as authorized in subdivision C of Rule 15.¹

COUNT 3: Respondent has violated Rule 15(D)(1) of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges which provides in relevant part that with respect to their campaign conduct, magisterial district judges or candidates for such office shall:

maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office, and shall encourage members of their family to adhere to the same standards of political conduct that apply to them.

COUNT 4: Respondent has violated Rule 15(D)(3) of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, which provides in relevant part that with respect to their campaign conduct, magisterial district judges or candidate for such office shall:

not make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; make statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court; or misrepresent their identity, qualifications, present position, or other fact.

¹ Rule 15C provides:

Magisterial district judges or candidates for such office may, in the year they run for office, attend political or party conventions or gatherings, speak to such gatherings or conventions on their own behalf, identify themselves as members of a political party, and contribute to their own campaign, a political party or political organization (including purchasing tickets for political party dinners or other functions).

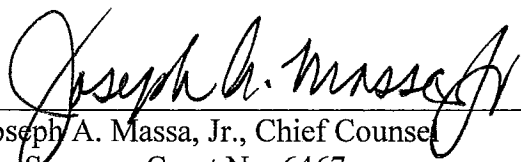
COUNT 5: Respondent has violated Rule 15(D)(4) of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, which provides in relevant part:

A magisterial district judge or candidate for such office shall not themselves solicit or accept campaign funds, or solicit publicly stated support, but they may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for their campaign and to obtain public statements of support for their candidacy.

WHEREFORE, Willie F. Singletary, the Philadelphia Traffic Court Judge named in these charges, is subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Article V, §§17(b) and 18(d)(1).

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 22, 2008



Joseph A. Massa, Jr., Chief Counsel
Pa. Supreme Court No. 6467

Judicial Conduct Board
301 Chestnut Street, Suite 403
Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 234-7911
Fax: (717) 234-9307

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
COURT OF JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE

In re:

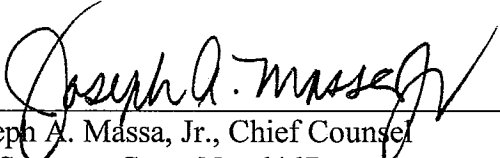
Willie F. Singletary :
Judge :
Philadelphia Traffic Court :
Philadelphia County : 1 JD 2008
:

VERIFICATION

I am the Chief Counsel for the Judicial Conduct Board and I am authorized to make this verification and file the foregoing *BOARD COMPLAINT*. I verify that the Judicial Conduct Board found probable cause to file the formal charges contained in the Board Complaint. I understand that the statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann. Section 4904, relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 22, 2008



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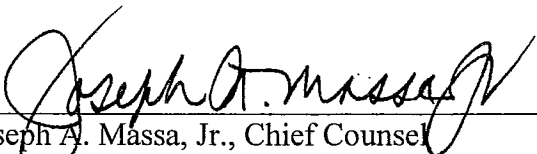
PROOF OF SERVICE

In compliance with Rule 122(D) of the Court of Judicial Discipline Rules of Procedure, on April 22, 2008, a copy of this *BOARD COMPLAINT* was sent by Certified Mail to counsel for the Respondent:

John W. Morris, Esquire
1717 Arch Street, Suite 3710
Bell Atlantic Tower
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2713
(215) 772-2290
(215) 735-5170 (Fax)
Certified Mail No. 7161 7145 5373 0040 7371
Return Receipt Requested

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 22, 2008



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