



News for Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania Judicial Independence Commission Co-Chair Responds to Impeachment Resolution Involving Justice David N. Wecht

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania Judicial Independence Commission Co-Chair United States District Court of the Middle District of Pennsylvania Chief Judge John E. Jones III today reacted following the introduction of a House Resolution calling for the impeachment of Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice David N. Wecht:

“As a member of the federal judiciary, I am subject to a Code of Conduct that prohibits me from engaging in political activity. But I have also been privileged to serve since 2005 as a charter member of the Pennsylvania Judicial Independence Commission, a non-partisan commission formed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to educate and encourage preservation of the decisional independence of the judiciary. I am thus speaking in that capacity and not in any political sense because I passionately believe that all judges, be they state or federal, should not be subject to removal by another co-equal branch simply because they are doing their job in interpreting the law.

“This effort by some members of the Pennsylvania legislature is just the latest bid in what seems like a national trend -- threatening to impeach judges because of disagreement with their decisions. This challenge, like the others, is a direct threat to a bedrock of our constitutional democracy -- an independent judiciary. Judges need to decide cases based on their understanding of what the law requires, without worrying that they might be removed from office if political actors don't like their decisions.

“The good news is that impeachment as retribution for decisions is almost never successful. Ever since the failed attempt to remove Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase in 1805, we have operated under a norm that judicial decisions should not be a basis for legislatures to remove judges from the bench. I hope that the General Assembly as a whole appreciates the grave harm that would result from ignoring that norm.”

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