

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
COURT OF JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE

May 6, 2020
RECEIVED and filed
Court of
Judicial Discipline
of
PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: :
: :
John I. Waltman :
Magisterial District Judge : No. 7 JD 16
Magisterial District Court 07-1-06 :
Bucks County :

BEFORE: Honorable Doris Carson Williams, P.J., Honorable Jeffrey P. Minehart, J., Honorable Michael J. Barrassé, J., Honorable Jazelle M. Jones, J., Honorable John H. Foradora, J., Honorable James C. Schwartzman, J.,¹ Honorable James J. Eisenhower, J., Honorable Andrea E. Puppio, J.

PER CURIAM

FILED: May 6, 2020

Opinion and Order

Former Magisterial District Judge John I. Waltman is before the Court for ethical violations stemming from his admitted conduct in participating in several criminal acts including laundering \$400,000 he believed to be the proceeds of illegal drug sales and health care fraud. Waltman understood he and two others were to receive payments for their part in this scheme. Additionally, Waltman conspired to use his political influence to aid businesses which had secretly paid him and also accepted \$1,000 to corruptly dismiss a traffic case.

Waltman was sentenced to six and a half years in federal prison which he is presently serving.

Waltman was suspended without pay by this Court on December 16, 2016. Former Judge Waltman did not contest the Complaint against him or put forth any defense at any point in this proceeding.

¹ The Honorable James C. Schwartzman did not participate in this Decision.

II. Findings of Fact

1. Article V, § 18 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania grants to the Board the authority to determine whether there is probable cause to file formal charges against a judicial officer in this Court, and thereafter, to prosecute the case in support of such charges in this Court.

2. From approximately October 26, 2010, until his suspension without pay, former Judge Waltman served continuously as the duly elected magisterial district judge of Magisterial District Court 07-1-06, Bucks County, located at 1500 Desire Avenue, Feasterville, PA 19053.

3. As a duly elected magisterial district judge, former Judge Waltman was at all times relevant hereto subject to all the duties and responsibilities imposed on him by the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges adopted by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

4. On December 13, 2016, at ***United States v. John I. Waltman, et al***, 16-509, former Judge Waltman was indicted by the federal grand jury and thereby accused of committing the following felonies during his term of judicial office between June 2015 and November 2016: (1) conspiracy to commit money laundering, 18 U.S.C. § 1956(h); and (2) money laundering (3 counts), 18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(3).

5. Thereafter, on December 16, 2016, at ***In re John I. Waltman***, 7 JD 2016, this Court suspended former Judge Waltman without pay based

upon the Board's request for same due to his then-pending federal felony criminal charges.

6. As a result of two subsequent superseding indictments filed April 1, 2017 (superseding indictment), and December 5, 2017 (second superseding indictment), the federal government charged former Judge Waltman with additional felony crimes.

7. Initially, former Judge Waltman pleaded "not guilty" to the federal felony charges pending against him at the aforementioned indictment and superseding indictments.

8. On January 18, 2019, as part of a negotiated plea agreement, former Judge Waltman changed his initial "not guilty" plea to "guilty" to conspiracy to commit money laundering, 18 U.S.C. § 1956(h), and five counts of Hobbs Act Extortion Under Color of Official Right, 18 U.S.C. § 1951(b). In exchange for the plea, the federal government agreed to dismiss the remaining charges pending against former Judge Waltman at time of sentencing.

9. The factual basis for former Judge Waltman's guilty plea was that he engaged in the following criminal acts:

- a. Partook in a scheme with his co-defendants to launder the proceeds of alleged criminal activity in New York in exchange for cash;
- b. Partook in a scheme with his co-defendants to fix a traffic ticket in his court in exchange for a cash payment;
- c. Sought to obtain cash payments, *i.e.*, "kickbacks," from persons seeking to do business with municipalities in Bucks County in exchange for the use of his influence as a magisterial district

judge in the area to secure contracts for those persons from those municipalities.

10. On June 10, 2019, the Honorable Gene E.K. Pratter of the United States Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania sentenced former Judge Waltman to 6½ years in federal prison, as well as a \$5,000.00 fine, 2 years of probation, and 150 hours of community service on the basis of his January 18, 2019 guilty plea.

11. Former Judge Waltman is a convicted felon.

III. Discussion

Here, there is no question that Waltman's serious felony convictions are violations of all of the ethical violations against him. Accordingly, we make the following Conclusions of Law.

IV. Conclusions of Law

1. Waltman violated Canon 1, Rule 1.1 (Compliance with the Law);
2. Waltman violated Canon 1, Rule 1.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary);
3. Waltman violated Article V, § 17(b) of the Constitution of Pennsylvania (Magisterial District Judges to obey Canons Prescribed by the Supreme Court);
4. Waltman violated Article V, § 18(d)(1) of the Constitution of Pennsylvania (Conviction of a Felony) and Bringing Disrepute Upon the Judiciary).

V. Sanction

As a consequence of the serious felonies he committed the Court is administering its most serious sanction. Prior cases involving serious felony convictions have resulted in dismissal and a bar from further judicial service.

See, e.g. ***In re Ciavarella***, 108 A.3d 983 (Pa.Ct.Jud.Disc. 2014); ***In re Conahan***, 51 A.2d 922 (Pa.Ct.Jud.Disc. 2012); ***In re Tynes***, 149 A.3d 452 (2017).

Accordingly, the Court ORDERS that Former Magisterial District Judge John Waltman is removed from office and barred from further judicial service.