



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

CJC Nos. 13-0112-JP, 14-0914-JP & 15-0162-JP

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

**HONORABLE BRADLEY WAYNE STRINGER
FORMER JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, PRECINCT 3, PLACE 1
HUNTINGTON, ANGELINA COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on February 10-12, 2016, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of allegations against the Honorable Bradley Wayne Stringer, Former Justice of the Peace, Precinct 3, Place 1, Huntington, Angelina County, Texas. Judge Stringer was advised of the Commission's concerns, but failed to file a timely response. Judge Stringer was invited to appear before the Commission on February 11, 2016, but failed to respond or attend the scheduled hearing. Prior to his scheduled appearance, however, Judge Stringer did provide written responses to the Commission's original inquiry. After considering the evidence before it, the Commission entered the following Findings and Conclusion:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Honorable Bradley Wayne Stringer was Justice of the Peace for Precinct 3, Place 1 in Huntington, Angelina County, Texas.

CJC Nos. 13-0112-JP & 14-0914-JP

2. Based on reports received in the course of the Commission's investigation, Judge Stringer repeatedly dismissed traffic citations without a motion or consent from the prosecutor as required by law.
3. Based on reports received in the course of the Commission's investigation, Judge Stringer was frequently absent from court during regular business hours, and could often be found working at his privately-owned-and-operated daycare center, located across the street from the offices of the justice of the peace.
4. As a result of the judge's absences from court, litigants and others wishing to take care of official court business were often unable to do so.

5. In Cause Number 0248-3, styled *Myrtle Hall v. Rory Stringer/The Pool Store*, Judge Stringer failed to timely or appropriately handle the case.
6. According to court records, Rory filed a Motion to Change Venue on March 17, 2014; however, the motion was not heard until May 12, 2014, at which time Judge Stringer denied the motion.
7. According to Rory, on May 12, 2014, after denying his motions, including an oral motion that the judge recuse himself due to a conflict of interest, Judge Stringer heard some evidence in the case and indicated he would issue a ruling within 48 hours.
8. Rory stated that he contacted the court on several occasions to find out how the judge ruled, but was unable to obtain that information.
9. According to court records, on June 9, 2014, the case was heard before another judge and an agreed judgment was entered.

CJC No. 15-0162-JP

10. In 2014, following an audit of his court by the Angelina County Auditor, Judge Stringer was investigated by the Texas Rangers for allegedly taking money from the justice of the peace office and using it to pay expenses at his daycare facility.
11. According to the investigative report filed by the Texas Rangers, Judge Stringer admitted that he had taken money from the court's cash register to cover his daycare's payroll expenses. Judge Stringer also reported that he repaid all of the money at a later time.¹
12. In a brief telephone discussion with Commission Staff and in his written responses to the Commission's inquiry, Judge Stringer generally denied all of the allegations raised in the above-referenced complaints and, instead, accused his former clerk and political opponent² of malfeasance and misconduct.
13. With regard to the allegations that he dismissed criminal cases without a motion from the prosecutor, Judge Stringer stated that the judgments of dismissal were based on "'Judicial Discretion' and 'Common Sense'" and that it was his understanding that the judgments were not final until the County Attorney could "review and sign off of the cases."
14. With regard to the veracity of the statement filed by the Texas Rangers in connection with his use of court funds to cover the payroll of his private daycare, Judge Stringer provided no information or explanation about the incident other than, "I was cleared of any and all 'Allegations' by the Grand Jury."
15. Because the grand jury declined to indict him, Judge Stringer believed that any media reports concerning the investigation of the alleged theft of court funds did not cast public discredit upon the judiciary.

¹ This matter was presented to an Angelina County grand jury, which declined to indict Judge Stringer for the theft.

² Judge Stringer's former court clerk defeated him in the November 2014 General Election and became the Angelina County Justice of the Peace for Precinct 3, Place 1, on January 1, 2015.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

1. Canon 2A of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct states, in pertinent part: “A judge shall comply with the law and should act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.”
2. Canon 3B(2) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct states, in pertinent part: “A judge should be faithful to the law and shall maintain professional competence in it.”
3. Canon 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct states, in pertinent part: “A judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity”
4. Article V, section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution provides that a judge may be disciplined for willful or persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of his duties or casts public discredit on the judiciary or on the administration of justice.

CONCLUSION

The Commission concludes based on the facts and evidence before it that Judge Stringer failed to comply with the law and engaged in willful conduct that was inconsistent with the proper performance of his duties and cast public discredit upon the judiciary or the administration of justice by using court funds for his personal financial benefit. Moreover, Judge Stringer failed to comply with the law and failed to maintain professional competence in the law by dismissing criminal cases without a motion from the prosecutor and by the delays and confusion caused by his handling of Rory Stringer’s case. Finally, the Commission concludes that Judge Stringer failed to treat litigants and others with the dignity and courtesy expected of a judicial officer due to his frequent and extended absences from the court, which also interfered with the proper performance of his judicial duties. The Commission concludes that Judge Stringer’s conduct, as described above, constituted willful and/or persistent violations of Canons 2A, 3B(2), and 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, and Article V, section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

In reaching its determination of the appropriate sanction in this case, the Commission noted that Judge Stringer’s failure to cooperate with the Commission’s investigation and the lack of candor in his responses were aggravating factors.

In condemnation of the conduct described above that violated Canons 2A, 3B(2), and 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, and Article V, section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution, it is the Commission’s decision to issue a **PUBLIC REPRIMAND** to the Honorable Bradley Wayne Stringer, Former Justice of the Peace for Precinct 3, Place 1, Huntington, Angelina County, Texas.

Pursuant to the authority contained in Article V, §1-a(8) of the Texas Constitution, it is ordered that the actions described above be made the subject of a **PUBLIC REPRIMAND** by the Commission.

The Commission has taken this action in a continuing effort to protect the public confidence in the judicial system and to assist the state's judiciary in its efforts to embody the principles and values set forth in the Texas Constitution and the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct.

Issued this the 29th day of February, 2016.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Honorable Valerie E. Ertz, Chair
State Commission on Judicial Conduct