



Pennsylvania Commission on Judicial Independence Condemns Unsubstantiated Accusations that Threaten Judicial Independence and the Rule of Law

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Philadelphia – The Pennsylvania Commission on Judicial Independence emphatically condemns all threats against and intimidation of judges. Public comments and social media postings that attack judges in visceral and physical terms are contrary to our constitutional system and the rule of law on which our freedoms are based. This includes attacks that call for the wholesale removal of judges based upon their decisions or suggest that they should be the object of physical violence.

As Americans, we should freely welcome reasoned disagreement by our fellow citizens, including disagreement with judicial decisions. But unfounded accusations of “corruption” or personal assaults on judges create mistrust and threaten the public’s confidence in both the judicial system and the individual judges who are sworn and duty-bound to apply the rule of law. Such accusations and attacks are an affront to our state and federal constitutions.

Judges are particularly vulnerable to accusation and attack for two reasons that lie at the heart of the judicial function. One, judges are inevitably required to render difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions in the exercise of their judicial duties. Two, judges are bound by ethical rules that prevent them from responding to attacks from outside the judicial process about their decisions. While judges are therefore limited in their ability to answer unfair criticism, the critical work judges perform daily is crucial to maintaining our communities and constitutional system.

We urge Americans to recognize that respect for the judicial system is essential to democracy itself. Personal attacks, threats, and intimidation directed toward judges must be condemned in the strongest possible terms as threatening the very well-being of our republic. We urge Americans to reject such attacks on the integrity of judges and the judicial system.

The non-partisan Commission is composed of academics and other scholars, practicing attorneys, and jurists. The Commission seeks to foster greater public understanding of the role of the judiciary and the crucial importance of an independent judiciary. Essential to this mission

is promoting respect for the rule of law and encouraging engaged and constructive public discourse about the judiciary.

The Commission calls upon all lawyers and legal organizations to join and support our efforts to preserve an independent judiciary and to protect the safety of those who work within it. Our professional obligations demand no less of us.

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