



THE TENNESSEE BOARD OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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February 13, 2013

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Nashville, TN 37219-1407
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FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

The Honorable Billy D. Baliles
General Sessions and Juvenile Judge
General Sessions Court of Polk County
P.O. Box 529
Benton, TN 37307

RE: Complaint of Jeff S. Patterson
File No. B12-5030

Dear Judge Baliles:

This letter shall serve as a public letter of reprimand pursuant to your agreement with an investigative panel of this Court.

The reprimand relates to a complaint initiated in the Board of Judicial Conduct arising from a child custody and parenting time determination made by you while you were acting in your capacity as General Sessions and Juvenile Judge of Polk County, Tennessee in April of 2011.

The complaint and investigation revealed that you were presented with an alleged emergency situation involving a child by DCS and made or issued an "Order" altering child custody without engaging in proper procedural elements of a petition or hearing. The "Order" also lacked sufficient findings and details. In addition, you received a telephone call from the father of the child's mother, *i.e.*, the child's grandfather, and as a result engaged in a telephone conversation that was an impermissible *ex parte* contact.

Upon receiving notice from Disciplinary Counsel you promptly responded, admitting the factual basis for the complaint, and have cooperated fully with the Board. You have also served as General Sessions and Juvenile Judge of Polk County for several years and have no prior negative history with the Court of the Judiciary or Board of Judicial Conduct.

Your actions in the above matter constituted a violation of Canon 1 as it existed at the time of the incidents described above, which requires that "A Judge Shall Uphold the Integrity and Independence of the Judiciary," Canon 2A stating that "A judge shall respect and comply with the law* and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary" and Canon 3 B (7) stating that "A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding"

Accordingly, this letter constitutes a public reprimand for your actions in the above situations.

Sincerely,


Chris Craft
Board Chair

CC/bep

cc: Disciplinary Counsel
Investigative Panel