



**THE TENNESSEE
COURT OF THE JUDICIARY**

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Clerk of the Courts

511 Union Street
Suite 600
Nashville, TN 37219

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Michael W. Catalano, Clerk
100 Supreme Court Building
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Nashville, TN 37219-1407
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JUDGES OF THE TENNESSEE
COURT OF THE JUDICIARY

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FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Judge John Bell
111 Court Avenue, Suite 200
Newport, Tennessee 37821

RE: File No. 11-4567

Dear Judge Bell:

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

The complaint received by the Court relates to a period of time that you were called to military duty in April of 2011, and were stationed in Germany during your service. It was necessary during that period of time for substitute judges to serve in your place while you were away from Cocke County, Tennessee, where you served as the General Sessions Judge. The appointment of substitute judges in the General Sessions Court of Cocke County, Tennessee, was governed by a Standing Order of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, which was entered on July 27th, 2003, to specifically deal with the designation of substitute judges during your terms of military service, and which specifically named judges to be utilized as substitute judges during your absence. This order was in full force and effect during your April, 2011, absence for military service, and during that time you allowed an individual not authorized by the Tennessee Supreme Court to sit as a substitute judge on several occasions.

The complaint further indicated that while you were in Germany, and not sitting as the General Sessions Judge in Cocke,

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County, Tennessee, you gave instructions that you would continue to set bonds in cases in which the charge was D.U.I. by receiving information by email to your duty station in Germany and notifying jail personnel by email of the bonds to be set, causing the setting of bonds to be delayed in some cases.

Upon receiving notice from Disciplinary Counsel, you admitted that you had a responsibility to be aware of the judges who were to be utilized as substitute judges as designated by the standing order of the Tennessee Supreme Court, and to ensure that your staff utilized only approved judges in your absence. You also indicated that your attempt to set bonds by email while in Germany was inappropriate.

Your actions in the above cases were a violation of Canon 2A which requires 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." Accordingly, this letter constitutes a public reprimand for your actions in the above situations.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Craft", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Craft
Presiding Judge

CC/bep