



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION  
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

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**CJC No. 17-1329-CO**

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**PUBLIC ADMONITION**

**HONORABLE JAMES OREN METTS, SR.  
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, PRECINCT 4, PLACE 1  
NEW CANEY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on August 8-9, 2018, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable James Oren Metts, Sr., Justice of the Peace, Precinct 4, Place 1, New Caney, Montgomery County, Texas. Judge Metts was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided a written response. 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 James Oren Metts, Sr. was the Montgomery County Justice of the Peace for Precinct 4, Place 1, in New Caney, Montgomery County, Texas.
2. The Commission received a confidential complaint against Judge Metts that alleged, in part, that certain of Judge Metts' Facebook posts violated the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct.
3. In July and August of 2017, a number of posts appeared on Judge Metts' Facebook page promoting the "Judge James Metts and Constable Rowdy Hayden's Annual School Supply Drive."
4. In these Facebook posts, Judge Metts provided a list of school supplies and asked for donations of the requested items to benefit elementary school students in Montgomery County. He welcomed cash donations in lieu of school supplies, and asked donors to make their checks payable to him personally. Pictures of several donors appeared on the Judge's Facebook page, with posts thanking them individually by name.
5. The Facebook posts advertising the school supply drive advised that donations would be accepted "from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday, at the JP4 Office," and provided the telephone number for the Precinct 4 Justice Court as the contact number for questions.

6. In July of 2017, a post appeared on Judge Metts' Facebook page promoting a fundraising effort to help a Montgomery County resident Sherry Lilley repair his driveway. The post began, "I'm Jamie, with Judge Metts' office and I'm setting up this page at his request," and provided a link to a "gofundme.com" account she established to benefit Mr. Lilley. The Facebook post included a photograph of Judge Metts working on Mr. Lilley's driveway.
7. In April of 2017, Judge Metts' Facebook page reposted an article from the Montgomery County Police Reporter regarding the Judge's donation of an AR-15 Rifle to raise funds for Project Graduation, a charitable organization that provides sober graduation parties. Included in the post was a copy of the flyer advertising the raffle of the firearm, which stated in relevant part, "AR-15 Raffle Tickets \$10 . . . Donated by Judge James Metts and Constable Rowdy Hayden."
8. In his responses to the Commission, Judge Metts indicated that a member of his judicial staff, Jamie Nash, handles his Facebook page and other social media accounts. He acknowledged that many posts were made without his prior authorization, and that he is often unaware of what appears on his Facebook page.

### RELEVANT STANDARD

1. Canon 2A of the Code of Judicial Conduct provides in relevant part that a judge shall comply with the law.
2. Canon 2B of the Code of Judicial Conduct provides in relevant part, "A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance the private interests of the judge or others."
3. Canon 4C(2) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides in relevant part, "A judge shall not solicit funds for any educational, religious, charitable, fraternal or civic organization."

### CONCLUSION

The Commission concludes from the facts and evidence presented that by organizing and advertising the "Judge James Metts and Constable Rowdy Hayden's Annual School Supply Drive," Judge Metts solicited funds for a charitable organization in violation of Canon 4C(2). Moreover, by utilizing his judicial staff and office resources to conduct this school supply drive, Judge Metts misused Montgomery County resources, in violation of Canon 2A. The Commission further concludes that Judge Metts lent the prestige of his judicial office to advance the private interests of Sherry Lilley in violation of Canon 2B when a post appeared on his Facebook page soliciting donations on behalf of Mr. Lilley. The Commission also concludes that Judge Metts lent the prestige of his judicial office to advance the private interests of Project Graduation, in violation of Canon 2B, and solicited funds on its behalf, in violation of Canon 4C(2), when a post appeared on his Facebook page advertising the raffle of a firearm that Judge Metts and Constable Hayden donated to the organization.

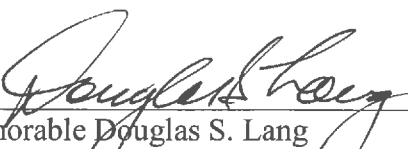
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In view of the conduct described above that violated Canons 2A, 2B, and 4C(2) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, it is the Commission's decision to issue a **PUBLIC ADMONITION** to the Honorable James Oren Metts, Sr., Justice of the Peace, Precinct 4, Place 1, New Caney, Montgomery 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 ADMONITION**.

The Commission has taken this action with the intent of assisting Judge Metts in his continued judicial service, as well as in a continuing effort to protect 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 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October 2018.

  
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Honorable Douglas S. Lang  
State Commission on Judicial Conduct