



## *Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission*

July 21, 2023

Honorable Chaney Taylor  
Independence County District Court  
Batesville, AR

Re: JDDC Case No. 22-131

### **LETTER OF ADMONISHMENT**

Dear Judge Taylor:

You were alleged to have committed violations of the Arkansas Code of Judicial Conduct in Case No. 22-131. The following facts comprise the violations which you agree are no longer alleged but proven:

### **UNDISPUTED FACTS:**

1. Judge Chaney Taylor (hereinafter referred to as "*Taylor*") has served as a district court judge in Independence County, Arkansas, for almost 19 years.
2. JDDC Investigation Panel 3 authorized a full investigation of the allegations against Taylor. The staff of the JDDC obtained, analyzed, and presented to the Panel: court records and dockets, witness statements and letters, information pertaining to Quorum Court matters, investigation information from law enforcement agencies, an audio recording (dash camera footage), and Taylor's responses to the allegations.
3. During the course of the investigation of JDDC Case No. 22-131, the Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission ("*JDDC*") confirmed that, following a phone call from a third party informing of him of the situation and a request for assistance, Taylor contacted an Arkansas State

Trooper while the Trooper was transporting an individual charged with speeding and reckless driving.

4. Taylor asked that the Trooper give the suspect a citation instead of transporting the suspect to jail. When the Trooper told Taylor that Arkansas State Police protocol for transporting the suspect to jail had been initiated, Taylor asked that the suspect be released on his own recognizance and given a court date. The suspect did not have a previous criminal history and later entered a negotiated plea to the speeding charge. Pursuant to the negotiation, the prosecution nolle prossed the reckless driving charge.
5. Taylor accepts full responsibility for his conduct and has indicated that he will not initiate similar communications with law enforcement in the future.
6. Taylor has been open and candid in communications with the JDDC in compliance with Canon 2, Rule 2.16 and has willingly provided additional information throughout the investigation when requested by JDDC staff or the Investigation Panel.

### **RELEVANT AUTHORITY:**

The Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission determined, and you agree, that the above described behavior violated the following sections of the Code of Judicial Conduct (*hereinafter referred to as the "Code"*): Rules 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3.

### **CANON 1**

**A JUDGE SHALL UPHOLD AND PROMOTE THE INDEPENDENCE, INTEGRITY, AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE JUDICIARY, AND SHALL AVOID IMPROPRIETY AND THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY.**

#### **RULE 1.1 Compliance with the Law**

A judge shall comply with the law, including the Arkansas Code of Judicial Conduct.

#### **RULE 1.2 Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary**

A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

RULE 1.3 Avoiding Abuse of Prestige of Judicial Office

A judge shall not abuse the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the judge or others, or allow others to do so.

**CONCLUSION:**

You agree that an admonishment is the appropriate sanction for your actions in JDDC Case #22-131. Your willingness to accept that your actions were in violation of the Code and your commitment to be aware of these issues in the future led the Investigation Panel to refrain from recommending a more serious sanction to the Commission, authorizing public charges, or proceeding to a public disciplinary hearing. An admonishment can be viewed as more of a corrective sanction. It is an expression of disapproval of a judge's conduct and may contain a proscription to follow a corrective course of conduct.

Public confidence in the judiciary is eroded by improper conduct committed by a judge. As such, inappropriate interactions with law enforcement, however well-meaning, impugn the integrity of the judiciary. Your promise to avoid such behavior in the future resolved this matter without further proceedings. However, if there are additional complaints filed against you in the future that allege violations of the Code, the JDDC may initiate a new investigation under the Rules of Procedure of the Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission, and this case may be considered.

In view of these circumstances, it is the decision of the Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission that you are hereby admonished for your conduct at issue in #22-131. This Commission action is public information.

Sincerely,



Emily Abbott  
Executive Director