

BEFORE THE JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION COMMISSION OF WEST VIRGINIA

**IN THE MATTER OF:
THE HONORABLE DONALD SANSOM,
MAGISTRATE OF MINGO COUNTY**

COMPLAINT NO. 159-2025

PUBLIC ADMONISHMENT OF MAGISTRATE DONALD SANSOM

The matter is before the Judicial Investigation Commission (“JIC” or “Commission”) upon complaint filed by Tiffany Hall setting forth certain allegations against the Honorable Donald Sansom, Magistrate of Mingo County (“Respondent”). Upon opening of the complaint, an investigation was conducted pursuant to the Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure (“RJDP”). After a review of the complaint, Respondent’s written response, Respondent’s sworn statement and the information, documents and other evidence obtained from the investigation, the JIC found probable cause that Respondent violated Rules 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 2.5(A) and 2.5(B) of the Code of Judicial Conduct at a recent meeting and ordered that he be **PUBLICLY ADMONISHED** pursuant to RJDP 1.11 and 2.7(c), as set forth in the following statement of facts and conclusions found by the Commission.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Respondent was elected Magistrate for Mingo County in 2016 and took office on January 1, 2017. Respondent was re-elected in 2020, in 2024 and remains Magistrate in Mingo County. At all times relevant to this Admonishment, Respondent was serving as Magistrate.

On August 28, 2025, Tiffany Hall filed Complaint No. 159-2025. JDC began an immediate investigation into the matter. Respondent filed a written response on October 1, 2025. Respondent sat for a sworn statement on January 14, 2026.

On July 23, 2025, at about 3 p.m., Complainant filed a petition for a Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVP or EPO) on her husband with Respondent. Respondent granted her the DVP including custody of the couple’s two-year-old child. About 15 minutes after Complainant left

Respondent's office, the Mingo County Sheriff called Respondent. The Sheriff asked Respondent if Complainant had just applied for a DVP. Respondent told the Sheriff that she had and that Respondent had granted the DVP.

The Sheriff told Respondent that Complainant's husband had accused Complainant of lying to get the DVP. The Sheriff had directed Complainant's husband to Respondent's office to speak to Respondent directly. A few minutes later, the husband arrived at Respondent's office.

Complainant's husband expressed grave concern about the minor child involved. The husband also told Respondent that he had recently discovered that Complainant had a disturbing past before they met that included multiple other children, abuse of the DVP system and violent felony charges. The husband allegedly showed Respondent text messages that indicated Complainant threatened him with filing for a DVP in response to his stating that he was filing for divorce.

Respondent now believed that the two-year-old child was in danger because of the DVP that Respondent had granted. Respondent tried calling other members of the judiciary to determine if there was anything that he could do but was unable to reach anyone since it was after office hours.

Instead, Respondent contacted an attorney who practiced in Mingo County in front of Respondent. When Respondent asked for advice on what he should do the attorney told him that the issue was for the family court judge to take up because Respondent lost jurisdiction upon issuance of the DVP.

Respondent also contacted the Chief Circuit Judge. The Judge unequivocally advised that once a DVP was issued any change or modification must be made by a family court judge. The Judge advised Respondent that he could "absolutely not" rescind or modify the DVP. Further, the Judge advised that if the husband was concerned about the child he could make a referral to CPS, and also

could go to the clerk's office to file an emergency modification of that DVP and ask for an expedited hearing. The Judge was confident that Respondent understood her directives.

Before leaving his office, Respondent called the Sheriff. Based on the conversation, the Sheriff sent out a group text to the Mingo County Deputies directing them not to serve the DVP. On the Respondent's drive home a Mingo County Deputy, who was about to serve the Complainant's DVP (EPO), called Respondent and the following colloquy occurred.

DEPUTY: So we're here at [husband's] mom's house to serve that EPO [DVP].

JUDGE SANSOM: Uh-huh.

DEPUTY: Has there been -- does there need to be some amendments to it or anything like that? Like, you know, you told us --

JUDGE SANSOM: Where?

DEPUTY: -- to call it off.

JUDGE SANSOM: Well, don't -- yeah, don't serve it if you can't keep from it. ...

...

DEPUTY: Okay. So where we're here on the porch now --

JUDGE SANSOM: Yeah.

DEPUTY: -- and the baby's here, what do we need to do?

JUDGE SANSOM: Well, I don't know the law enforcement part of it. But, I mean, it's no good, really. She's made allegations that it's false. He told her he was going to get a divorce, and she come down and filed an EPO [DVP].

...

DEPUTY: Yeah. How could -- could we do like an emergency cancellation on it?

JUDGE SANSOM: Well, they tell me I can't. But I mean if you want to -- if you want to cancel, that's fine with me. They've got to go through the family -- We just issue them. We just go on whatever evidence, hearsay evidence as they present to us.

As a result of the text sent by the Sheriff and the call between Respondent and the Deputy, the DVP was not served even though it should have been.

CONCLUSIONS

The Commission unanimously found that probable cause does exist in the matters set forth above to find that the Honorable Donald Sansom, Magistrate of Mingo County, violated Rules 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 2.5(A) and 2.5(B) of the Code of Judicial Conduct as set forth below:

Rule 1.1 – Compliance with the Law

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

Rule 1.2 – 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 2.2 -- Impartiality and Fairness

A judge shall uphold and apply the law, and shall perform all duties of judicial office fairly and impartially.

Rule 2.5 – Competence, Diligence, and Cooperation

- (A) A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties, competently and diligently.
- (B) A judge shall cooperate with other judges and court officials in the administration of court business.

Rule 2.6 – Ensuring the Right to be Heard

- (A) A judge shall accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person's lawyer, the right to be heard according to law.

By directing or causing law enforcement not to serve a duly issued emergency protective order and communicating that service was to be withheld, Respondent failed to comply with the law and undermined public confidence in the judiciary, in violation of Rules 1.1 and 1.2, and failed to uphold and apply the law and to perform judicial duties fairly and impartially, in violation of Rule 2.2.

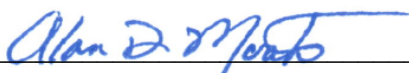
After being expressly advised by the Chief Judge that any alteration of the DVP must be addressed by a Family Court Judge, Respondent persisted thereby failing to cooperate in the proper

administration of court business in violation of Rule 2.5(B) and to perform duties competently and diligently, in violation of Rule 2.5(A).

Based on the foregoing violations the Commission voted to **PUBLICLY ADMONISH** Respondent.

Therefore, it is the decision of the Judicial Investigation Commission that the Honorable Donald Sansom, Magistrate for Mingo, be disciplined by this **ADMONISHMENT**. Consequently, the Judicial Investigation Commission hereby **PUBLICLY ADMONISHES** Donald Sansom for his conduct as fully set forth in the matters asserted herein.

Pursuant to Rule 2.7(c) of the Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure, the Respondent has fourteen (14) days after receipt of the public admonishment to file a written objection to the contents thereof. If the Respondent timely files an objection, the Judicial Investigation Commission shall, pursuant to the Rule, file formal charges with the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.



The Honorable Alan D. Moats, Chairperson
Judicial Investigation Commission

8/24/26
Date

ADM/bjl