

STATEMENT FROM DePERNO LAW OFFICE, PLLC

In the matter of People v Todd Courser

As the attorney for Todd Courser, for months this firm has alleged in pleadings and in court that Judge Collette and the Assistant Attorney General attorneys Denise Hart and Gregory Townsend have behaved badly, coordinated hearings, and engaged in ex parte communications. In response, I have been verbally attacked, insulted, threatened, and called names, all in an effort to silence me and force me to back down from my efforts to put up a vigorous defense in an obviously political prosecution. On March 22, 2017, Judge Collette denied my motion to disqualify him from this case, insulted me, and defiantly stated that he is "a West Virginia hillbilly" who has "never run away from a fight in [his] life." He further stated that if he is going to be disqualified, "it'll have to be by somebody else." That same day, I demanded a rehearing before Chief Judge Lawless (chief judge of the Ingham County Circuit Court) on the motion to disqualify.

Following that hearing, two witnesses, Georgeann Courser (Todd's mother) and Pastor Todd Petty, described that Judge Collette approached the Courser family without any provocation and in a hostile manner. Judge Collette demanded that Georgeann Courser tell him if she had anything to say to him. She said she did not, and was only gathering her belongings. Judge Collette then told her to leave his courtroom immediately or she would hold her in contempt. Pastor Petty describes that Judge Collette was "very threatening, hostile, and inappropriate." Later that afternoon, two witnesses spotted Judge Collette and the prosecutors (Denise Hart and Gregory Townsend) having two separate ex parte meetings, one near a secretary's office and the other down a more secluded hallway.

In a separate letter to Judge Lawless, I described these events as part of the defense's continued efforts to disqualify Judge Collette on rehearing. In a rather shocking move, Judge Collette issued his own memorandum denying the allegations and accusing me of fabricating the story and lying. That same day, Denise Hart issued a shockingly similar and clearly coordinated letter using nearly identical words, denying the allegations, and also accusing me of fabricating the story and lying. Once the defense had the statement of Judge Collette and Denise Hart as part of the record, I submitted affidavits which verify the witness accounts and discredit the memorandum and letter issued by Judge Collette and Denise Hart.

This morning I was notified by Judge Lawless' staff that Judge Collette has disqualified himself. I am told the case has been assigned to Judge Jamo. We have every confidence that Judge Jamo will not allow this type of unethical nonsense and coordination to continue. Of course, this presumes that the Attorney General decides to continue this case in light of the outrageous behavior of his assistant prosecutors.