

**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION  
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

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**CJC Nos. 18-1214, 18-1227, 18-1283, 18-1329, 18-1331, 18-1344 & 18-1613**

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**PUBLIC ADMONITION**

**HONORABLE JAMES OAKLEY  
BURNET COUNTY JUDGE  
BURNET, TEXAS**

During its regularly scheduled meeting on April 3-5, 2019, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable James Oakley, Burnet County Judge, Burnet, Texas. Judge Oakley was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided a written response. Judge Oakley appeared before the Commission on April 3, 2019, and gave testimony. 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 Oakley was the Burnet County Judge.
2. Judge Oakley also serves on the Board of Directors for the Pedernales Electric Cooperative (the "PEC"), a member-owned, non-profit entity organized pursuant to the Texas Electric Cooperative Corporation Act, Tex. Util. Code Ann. §§ 161.00, *et seq.* (West 2007).
3. The Commission received seven complaints alleging that Judge Oakley publicly endorsed Donna Holland Wilcox in the 2018 election for PEC Director, District 1.
4. Specifically, Judge Oakley was identified by name and title as an endorser of Ms. Wilcox's candidacy on flyers and social media posts supporting her campaign. A photograph of Judge Oakley appeared on Ms. Wilcox's Facebook page beneath the words "I stand with Donna Holland Wilcox for PEC Director," along with the quote, "Donna is exactly the type of common sense fiscal conservative with customer service focus we need on the Board of Directors." Ms. Wilcox's biography on the PEC website identified "Burnet County Judge James Oakley" as one of the "elected leaders around the District 1 area" who endorsed her candidacy. A photograph featuring Judge Oakley, Ms. Wilcox, and four other individuals appeared on the website

www.hollandwilcox.com, and Judge Oakley was listed by name and title on the website under the heading "Endorsements Include."

5. In his responses to the Commission, Judge Oakley explained that he is acquainted with Ms. Wilcox through their children's school, and that he agreed to endorse her in the PEC election at her request.
6. During his appearance before the Commission, Judge Oakley confirmed that he authorized the use of his name, title, and likeness on materials supporting Ms. Wilcox's campaign, and that he was aware the materials would publicly state that he endorsed her candidacy.

### RELEVANT STANDARD

Canon 2B of the Texas 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."

### CONCLUSION

The Commission concludes from the facts and evidence presented that by publicly endorsing Ms. Wilcox's 2018 bid to become the PEC Director for District 1, and authorizing the use of his name, title, and likeness on materials supporting her candidacy that advertised his endorsement, Judge Oakley lent the prestige of his judicial office to advance the private interests of Ms. Wilcox, in violation of Canon 2B of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct.

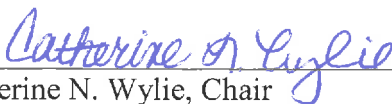
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In view of the conduct described above that violated Canon 2B of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, it is the Commission's decision to issue a **PUBLIC ADMONITION** to the Honorable James Oakley, Burnet County Judge, Burnet, Texas.

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 Oakley 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 24<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2019.

  
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Catherine N. Wylie, Chair  
State Commission on Judicial Conduct