

BEFORE THE WEST VIRGINIA ETHICS COMMISSION

IN RE:

**STEPHEN L. DEWEESE,
former Sheriff of Putnam County**

VCRB 2022-44

Conciliation Agreement

The West Virginia Ethics Commission and Stephen Deweese freely and voluntarily enter into the following Conciliation Agreement pursuant to W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(t) to resolve all the potential charges arising from allegations of violations of the West Virginia Governmental Ethics Act based upon the facts set forth below.

Findings of Fact

1. Stephen Deweese was the sheriff of Putnam County from 2013 through 2021.
2. At all times pertinent herein, Stephen Deweese was a "public official" as defined in the Ethics Act, at W. Va. Code § 6B-1-3(j) and (k).
3. The Ethics Commission has jurisdiction over alleged violations of the West Virginia Ethics Act committed by employees or officials, such as Stephen Deweese. W. Va. Code §§ 6B-1-1 through 6B-3-11.
4. In 2018 and 2019, a photograph of the Putnam County Sheriff's Department staff was provided to an organization called Scholarship Calendars. The photograph was used in calendars it published and sold.

5. Scholarship Calendars annually sent a \$1,000 check to the Putnam County Sheriff. While serving as Sheriff, Deweese kept at least four of these checks from Scholarship Calendars for himself.

6. On March 7, 2024, the West Virginia Ethics Commission referred the complaint to the prosecuting attorney appointed to investigate the matter pursuant to W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(w)(1).

7. On December 16, 2024, Deweese entered an "Alford" plea to one count of Fraudulent Schemes in violation of W. Va. Code § 61-3-24.

8. On February 12, 2025, Deweese was sentenced to one year in jail. That sentence was suspended and Deweese was placed on probation for a year. Deweese agreed to resign his position as county commissioner and not to run for public office. He also made restitution of \$4,000 to the Putnam County Deputy's Association for the funds he received from Scholarship Calendars as part of the plea.

Relevant Legal Provisions

W. Va. Code § 6B-2-5(b)(1) provides in pertinent part:

A public official or public employee may not knowingly and intentionally use his or her office or the prestige of his or her office for his or her own private gain or that of another person.

W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(w)(1) provides in pertinent part:

If at any stage in the proceedings under this section it appears to a Review Board, a hearing examiner or the commission that there is credible information or evidence that the respondent may have committed a criminal violation, the matter shall be referred to the full commission for its consideration. If, by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the full commission, it is determined that probable cause exists to believe a criminal violation has occurred, the commission shall refer the matter to the appropriate county prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction for a

criminal investigation and possible prosecution. Deliberations of the commission with regard to referring a matter for criminal investigation by a prosecuting attorney shall be private and confidential. Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, once a referral for criminal investigation is made under the provisions of this subsection, the ethics proceedings shall be held in abeyance until action on the referred matter is concluded. If the referral of the matter to the prosecuting attorney results in a criminal conviction of the respondent, the commission may resume its investigation or prosecution of the ethics violation, but may not impose a fine as a sanction if a violation is found to have occurred.

Conciliation of Violations

I, Stephen Deweese, admit that I violated W. Va. Code §§ 6B-2-5(b)(1) of the West Virginia Governmental Ethics Act when I kept the checks from Scholarship Calendars.

In order to resolve this matter, I am entering into this Conciliation Agreement. I understand that for this Agreement to be finalized, the Ethics Commission must approve it.

In accordance with W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(w)(1), the Commission does not seek the imposition of a fine.

I understand and agree that if the Ethics Commission fails to approve this Conciliation Agreement, then this Conciliation Agreement is null and void and the Complaint against me will proceed before the Probable Cause Review Board, where it will be processed in accordance with the West Virginia Code and the Ethics Commission's Legislative Rules.

If the Ethics Commission approves the Agreement, it will enter an Order in which it approves the Agreement.



SW

Both parties understand that, pursuant to W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(t), this Conciliation Agreement and Commission Order must be made available to the public.

11/6/25
Date


Robert J. Wolfe, Chairperson
West Virginia Ethics Commission

29 Sept 25
Date


Stephen Deweese, Respondent

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COMMISSION'S ORDER

After considering the Findings of Fact, Relevant Legal Provisions, and Conciliation of Violations in the Conciliation Agreement, the West Virginia Ethics Commission finds that the Conciliation Agreement is in the best interests of the State and Stephen Deweese, as required by W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(t). In accordance with W. Va. Code § 6B-2-4(s), the Commission imposes no sanctions in this matter.

Date: November 6, 2025



Robert J. Wolfe, Chairperson
West Virginia Ethics Commission