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January 23, 2023

## **Via Electronic Mail**

Tom Murse  
Executive Editor  
LNP Media Group, Inc.  
[tmurse@LNPnews.com](mailto:tmurse@LNPnews.com)

## **Re: Retraction Demand and Litigation Hold**

Dear Mr. Murse:

We represent Judge Craig Stedman. We write to you regarding the litany of false and defamatory statements you and your now former employee, Carter Walker, have penned and published concerning the Judge continuing through 2022. Although it seemed unlikely that any reasonable actor would want to continue a disparagement campaign against Craig Stedman once he left the DA's Office, you did just that.

The list of demonstrably false and malicious publications concerning the integrity of Judge Stedman is too long to address individually in any letter. Rather the purpose of this letter is two-fold; first, to request you cease publishing any further false and defamatory communications concerning Judge Stedman and second, to request that we meet to draft a mutually agreeable retraction and correction at the earliest opportunity. The latter is an attempt to mitigate the harm you have caused and continue to inflict pertaining to all your statements that claim, imply, or suggest that Judge Stedman improperly and corruptly spent both taxpayer funds and/or non-taxpayer drug forfeiture funds and even engaged in a cover-up. It is also the alternative to litigation.

The well-documented evidence of your knowledge of the falsity in your initial publications and ongoing malicious active republications is alarming.

For years LNP has published and republished the same false and defamatory claims. You hitched your wagon to Commissioner Parsons fully aware of his palpable malice toward Judge Stedman and his volatility (a trait about which you have subsequently published). You cited Parsons for quotes every chance you could despite his obvious separation from reality and your collective knowledge that what he was saying was patently false. You did this not only when Judge Stedman was DA but even years after Judge Stedman took the bench. Despite the Judge and others repeatedly providing you with clear evidence your claims of his purported illegality and impropriety were false, you never stopped. Mr. Parsons even admitted to your collusion in one of his recent unprovoked rants during the October 4 Commissioners' "Work Session."

You have taken every opportunity to republish your prior defamatory statements and direct readers to your prior actionable publications, even after having been provided – repeatedly – definitive evidence your statements and implications are false. This equates to actual malice.

First, you continue to publish that Judge Stedman obtained a work vehicle outside the normal procurement process, suggesting over and over that this was illegal, improper, and/or unethical. Yet, you knew and know that the very vehicle lease that you claim improper was specifically *approved in advance without a Board of Commissioners procurement process* by both Controller Hurter and the Controller's solicitor. You also know that there is annual independent oversight by the Controller and Office of Attorney General of forfeiture expenses. The Controller and OAG are required by law to audit every single forfeiture expense, including Judge Stedman's vehicle when he was DA. Further, the annual audits, which you have possessed for years, specifically address the fact that not only were all expenses proper but that proper procurement procedures were followed every year; every audit found every expenditure proper under the law with zero misuse of funds.

You also knew Controller Hurter specifically alerted the Commissioners in advance of five other cars to be purchased with Drug Task Force funds in the summer of 2019, after the Commissioners had declared that improper and the Commissioners never so much as raised any objection or suggested that a procurement process was required, because it was not. The Commissioners consented to the very thing you claimed was corrupt. Yet, LNP still reports – even in February of 2022 – that Stedman used \$20,000 to lease a vehicle for himself outside of the county's normal procurement process. Since at least March 2019, you have known that Craig Stedman followed the *same* procedure that every other DA followed for thirty (30) years; it was not only proper, but the only way things were done. Nonetheless, to this day, you place Judge Stedman's photo on the LNP Investigations webpage alongside "*DA Office Use of Public Funds. Discovery of misuse of public drug forfeiture funds by a local government official, to pay for a rental car.*" The defamatory meaning you intended to relay is obvious and you have known of its falsity for years now.

Given the dispositive information you possess and have possessed, your past and ongoing publications asserting or implying there was any improper spending or misuse of funds is outrageous and clearly defamatory.

Second, your claims that Judge Stedman engaged in a cover-up by improperly withholding records from the Commissioners are also provable falsehoods. You knew all members of the Board of Commissioners received the records of *every single expenditure in advance of purchase* as part of the normal county process; far from being obstructed as to what forfeiture monies are being spent on. You knew the Commissioners even received detailed spreadsheets of every single forfeiture expenditure dating back to 2010 as part of budget studies that were requested by then DA Stedman. You also knew that Judge Stedman requested Budget Services conduct *independent* exhaustive reviews of all Drug Task Force financial records in 2013 and 2018 on his own initiative. Indeed, the Board of Commissioners possessed in advance the very records that you continued to accuse Judge Stedman of concealing. You also knew the Board of Commissioners were given an ongoing open invitation since March 2019 to review all unredacted forfeiture records but never did. You have known this but continue to publish statements to the contrary even in 2022.

Finally, you still promote a knowingly false story that somehow Judge Stedman was aware of and/or was involved in the missing Drug Task Force funds and was under investigation.

LNP continues to actively republish Mr. Walker's defamatory March 2019 article, which contains claims and implications you know to be false. It is precisely where you direct readers in the purported "Background" to all your subsequent articles involving Judge Stedman, even in the **LNP Editorial Board's** own Article dated February 22, 2022. The decision to include a link to a prior defamatory article knowing it contains false and defamatory claims of illegality and impropriety is the very legal definition of actual malice.<sup>1</sup>

This is by no means an exhaustive list of your actionable personal conduct or that of your self-proclaimed co-conspirator, Commissioner Parsons.

We hope you will accept our invitation to meet and confer on a retraction and correction. If you decline or you do not unequivocally state that Judge Stedman, among other things (1) never improperly spent or used tax-payer dollars and/or non-tax-payer drug forfeiture funds, (2) never engaged in any improper procurement and (3) never committed or covered up any crime or ethical violation, in a forum of equal or greater publicity than those in which you have previously made such claims to the contrary, then you will find yourselves as Defendants.

We also demand that you place a litigation hold on all materials made, received, and/or reviewed by you related in any way to your publications, spoken and/or written, and to ensure that you preserve all documents and communications, including emails, text messages, and/or voice messages in any way related to Judge Stedman over the previous six (6) years. This preservation especially applies to those same materials from former employee Carter Walker and current editor Suzanne Cassidy. Please also preserve all data such as article drafts, newspaper print circulations, and electronic user

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<sup>1</sup> [https://lancasteronline.com/opinion/editorials/lancaster-county-taxpayers-shouldnt-have-to-foot-the-bill-for-former-das-lawsuit-editorial/article\\_1788727c-9377-11ec-a3bf-f7461c2dd5b5.html](https://lancasteronline.com/opinion/editorials/lancaster-county-taxpayers-shouldnt-have-to-foot-the-bill-for-former-das-lawsuit-editorial/article_1788727c-9377-11ec-a3bf-f7461c2dd5b5.html), which includes a citation to LNP's and Walker's March 2019 article, [https://lancasteronline.com/news/local/das-spent-21-000-intended-for-drug-enforcement-to-lease-suv-records-show/article\\_34d90d86-3f5c-11e9-a42c-035d89dc0997.html](https://lancasteronline.com/news/local/das-spent-21-000-intended-for-drug-enforcement-to-lease-suv-records-show/article_34d90d86-3f5c-11e9-a42c-035d89dc0997.html).

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clicks. Finally, please preserve all correspondence with Commissioner Parsons and his agents.

We hope to hear back from you, one way or the other, as to our request to meet by the end of this week to avoid judicial intervention.

Very truly yours,

**THE BEASLEY FIRM, LLC**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lane R. Jubb, Jr.", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

**LANE R. JUBB, JR., ESQUIRE**

LRJ/sm

Cc: Carter Walker (cwalker@votebeat.org)