



## Stuart Bar Center

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# Cumberland County Bar Association Cumberland Law Journal

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Contact:

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### **Judicial Evaluation Commission Results** **February 11, 2011**

The Judicial Evaluation Commission of the Cumberland County Bar Association released its rating of potential judicial candidates seeking election to the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

#### **Judicial Succession & Evaluation Process Summary**

The Cumberland County Bar Association Board of Directors has authorized the formation of a process for evaluating candidates for the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County. The evaluation procedure is modeled on the PBA Commission for evaluating candidates for the appellate courts. The committee has proposed a Commission of nine individuals: six CCBA members and three non-attorney Cumberland County residents. The investigation was done by panels. A panel of three (comprised of two CCBA members and one non-attorney Cumberland County resident) interviewed individuals who have knowledge of the candidate and interviewed the candidate. The panel submitted a written report to the Commission. The Commission interviewed the candidate and made a recommendation as to whether the candidate is highly recommended, recommended or not recommended. Participants in the process, Commission members and panelists, agreed to Confidentiality and not to participate in election activities of a candidate, financially or otherwise.

#### Ratings' Definitions:

- **Highly Recommended:** The candidate possesses the highest combination of legal ability, experience, integrity and temperament and would be capable of outstanding performance as a judge of justice of the court for which he/she is a candidate.
- **Recommended:** Based on legal ability, experience, integrity and temperament, the candidate would be able to perform satisfactorily as a judge or justice of the court for which he/she is a candidate
- **Not Recommended:** Based on legal ability, experience, integrity and temperament, or any combination thereof, at the present time, the candidate is inadequate to perform satisfactorily as a judge or justice of the court for which he/she is a candidate.

Seven candidates requested an evaluation by the Commission. The ratings are as follows:

#### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:

Re: James D. Flower, Jr., Esq.: Highly Recommended

The candidate was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1978. His practice over the years has been general in nature, giving him broad legal experience, and he has more recently developed an extensive expertise in family law. He is highly respected by his colleagues. He is intelligent, knowledgeable of the law, fair, and hardworking. The candidate is currently serving as the Cumberland County Juvenile Court Dependency Master, a role that entails many quasi-judicial functions. He has an

exemplary career of community service, including chairmanships of the boards of the Carlisle Hospital, the Carlisle Area United Way, and other community organizations. He has also served as the President of the Carlisle Rotary Club, the Treasurer of Historic Carlisle, Inc., and the Assistant Treasurer of St. John's Episcopal Church. Based on the Candidate's legal ability, experience, and temperament, along with other qualities identified above, the Commission highly recommends him for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

Re: Thomas A. Placey, Esq.: Highly Recommended

The candidate has practiced in a general law practice for 2 years, served as an Assistant District Attorney in Cumberland County for 5 ½ years, and, more recently, has served for 12 years [2 terms] as Magisterial District Judge for Hampden and Silver Spring Townships. He has extensive experience as a Magisterial District Judge, having presided over several thousand cases, both criminal and civil. He has been an innovator in the use of technology in his Court. He has served as Chair of the Pennsylvania Minor Court Rules Committee. Attorneys who have appeared before him hold him in high regard. The candidate is heavily involved in a range of community activities, many of them associated with educational presentations on legal issues. Based on his experience, intelligence, judicial temperament and character, the Commission highly recommends the candidate for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

Re: Jacqueline M. Verney, Esq.: Highly Recommended

The candidate has broad and extensive experience in a number of areas of the law, including civil, governmental and criminal. She started her career as an Assistant District Attorney in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania handling a substantial case load. The candidate has been in private practice since 1994 as a solo practitioner, with an emphasis on family law. She has also been a custody conciliator for the County since 2001 and acted as Guardian ad litem (representing the best interests of the child) in juvenile cases since 1996. The candidate has been described as detailed, fair, and always well prepared. She is a passionate and caring advocate for children and the recipient of the George E. Hoffer Service to Youth Award. The candidate held a supervisory role at the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and has managed a successful private practice. She is hardworking and committed to improving the practice of law, as indicated by her years of service as a board member and Secretary of the Cumberland County Bar Association. The candidate is also active in the community as an advisor to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). Based on her legal knowledge, experience, and dedication, the Commission highly recommends the candidate for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

#### RECOMMENDED:

Re: Matthew R. Gover, Esq.: Recommended

The candidate was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1986. He served as a law clerk for a judge in the Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County and as a Deputy District Attorney in Dauphin County. Since 1989, the candidate has extensively practiced both criminal and civil law. He has also served as a senior partner and managing partner of his law firm. He has limited involvement with community affairs, pro-bono activities and volunteer services. His practice involves representing defendants in criminal and civil cases. He has limited experience in family law practice. Based on the candidate's legal knowledge, intellect and ability, the Commission recommends him for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

Re: Christylee L. Peck, Esq.: Recommended

The candidate was admitted to the practice of law in 2001. She started her career at Rhoads & Sinon, LLP as a transactional attorney. She was an Assistant District Attorney in the Lancaster County District Attorney's Office and, since September 2005, has served as a Senior District Attorney in Cumberland County. She has extensive criminal law experience, participating in at least 40 trials; however, her experience with the civil practice of law is limited. She has a respectable record for community service, including serving as a former board member of the Board of Governors for the Dickinson School of Law and, currently, as a board member of Pinnacle Health Children's Resource Center. Based on her legal ability, integrity and temperament, the Commission recommends the candidate for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

Re: Elizabeth Stone, Esq.: Recommended

The candidate was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1990. She was a public defender from 1992-1996, at which point she went into general practice with a concentration in family law. She has no experience in the areas of personal injury or medical malpractice and has limited administrative experience. She is well respected by her colleagues for her character, integrity, energy, and commitment. She has an impressive record of community service, including involvement with the YMCA, the Neighborhood Dispute Settlement Services, and the Cub Scouts of America. Based on her legal knowledge and ability, the Commission recommends the candidate for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

Re: R. Mark Thomas, Esq.:           Recommended

The candidate has maintained a general law practice in Mechanicsburg for approximately 20 years. Before that he worked as a probation officer, an Assistant District Attorney in Montgomery County, and, for a short time, as an Assistant Public Defender in Cumberland County. Although the emphasis of his practice has been criminal defense, he has handled civil litigation, probate and family law matters. The candidate's experience includes a drug addiction that interrupted his practice in the late 1980's. Many colleagues, associates, and friends have verified his ongoing recovery and related substantial personal and spiritual growth. He is very active in his church community. He is regarded as having excellent legal ability, a good temperament, and good character. The Commission recommends the candidate for a position on the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County.

Applications received in 2010 were evaluated by the Commission. The Cumberland County Bar Association has received requests for an evaluation from other interested candidates in 2011. The Judicial Evaluation Commission will accept requests to evaluate from those candidates who appear on the ballot and request an evaluation.