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State Disciplinary Board Issues Recommendation for Ex-DA's Suspension

MAX MITCHELL
Of the Legal Staff

Former Centre County District Attorney Gregory Parks Miller should be suspended one year and one day, the Pennsylvania Disciplinary Board has recommended. The board's recommendation, which was issued Dec. 6, is an increase over the three-month suspension that the hearing committee recommended in the case. The state Supreme Court must make the ultimate decision regarding Parks Miller's discipline, but if the high court imposes the stiffer suspension, it will add more than seven months, since attorneys suspended longer than one year need to petition for reinstatement before they can begin practicing again.

Suspension continues on 9

Organizations Tied to Pond-Lehocky Penalized for Lobbying Violations

BY LIZZY MCLELLAN
Of the Legal Staff

Two lobbying groups funded by Pennsylvania plaintiffs firm Pond Lehigh Stern Giordano have agreed to pay a fine for failing to register as lobbyists before working to oppose two pieces of workers' compensation legislation.

The Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission announced a final adjudication Dec. 7 stating that PA Works Now and Citizens to Protect Our Pennsylvania both violated the state's lobbying disclosure laws by failing to register with the Pennsylvania Department of State. Their failure to register was deemed to be negligent, the commission said. According to the announcement, the organizations entered into a consent agreement to pay an administrative penalty.

Lawyer Matthew Haverstick of Kleinbard confirmed that he represented Pond Lehigh Stern in the Ethics Commission proceedings.



HAVERSTICK

for comment Monday.

PA Works Now has been ordered to pay a fine of \$13,580, and Citizens to Protect Our Pennsylvania was ordered to pay \$15,500. Once that fine is paid and each organization has registered with the Department of State, the case will be closed, the commission said.

According to the adjudication documents, PA Works Now was formed in 2017, after the Pennsylvania House of Representatives introduced House Bill 18, which "involved a prescription drug formulary for workers' Pharmacy. The pharmacy's certificate of organization also listed Bryan Reilly, Pond Lehigh's chief financial officer, as the company's organizer.

Lobbying continues on 9

"This was acknowledged by all parties, including the commission, to have been a mistake," he said.

A spokeswoman for Pond Lehigh did not immediately respond to a request

Lobbying

continued from 1

compensation recipients." According to the commission, PA Works Now's website said the organization was dedicated to advocating for "common sense reform to Pennsylvania's workers' comp system."

PA Works Now used communications including Twitter and emails to oppose the House Bill and related Senate Bill 936, the commission said. But the organization did not register with the department until May 2018. According to the adjudication, PA Works Now's expenses for April to September 2017 were more than \$80,000.

Citizens to Protect Our Pennsylvania was created to oppose Senate Bill 936, the commission's adjudication said, but it was 90 days late in registering with the State Department.

The Morning Call first reported on the connection between PA Works Now and Pond Lehigh in a news story last year, writing that name partner Samuel Pond was paying for ads about House Bill 18 on behalf of PA Works Now.

Pond Lehigh found itself in the spotlight in 2017 when a report by The Philadelphia Inquirer revealed that partners of the firm had ownership stakes in a Philadelphia-area mail-order pharmacy. According to state documents, attorneys Pond, Jerry Lehigh and David Stern each own 20 percent stakes in Workers First

Pharmacy. The pharmacy's certificate of organization also listed Bryan Reilly, Pond Lehigh's chief financial officer, as the company's organizer.

In response to the article in The Inquirer, the firm posted a statement that called the report "a political hatchet job." A lawyer representing the firm at the time had argued

that the relationship with Workers First Pharmacy was not unethical.

Lehigh was also named as a member of the Pennsylvania Disciplinary Board earlier this year.

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Crediting a diversity scholarship that once provided his own pathway into the firm, Archer's newly named chief diversity officer Lloyd Freeman put his charge in no uncertain terms: "I have a moral obligation to do this."

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Contributor Howard J. Bashman writes on the start of the appellate process—filing a notice of appeal or its equivalent to initiate an appeal.

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