

**SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY  
D-135 September Term 2023  
089609**

**In the Matter of** :  
**Richard Obuch** : **ORDER**  
**A Judge of the Municipal Court** :

The Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct (ACJC) having submitted to the Court a report and recommendation in ACJC 2024-205, pursuant to Rule 2:15-15A(a), recommending that the Court accept the removal by consent of **Richard Obuch**, a Judge of the Municipal Court, who has been suspended from the exercise of respondent's judicial duties, without pay, since July 8, 2024; and

Respondent having submitted an executed affidavit of consent to permanent removal from judicial office, acknowledging that the material facts alleged in the complaint are true, the alleged unethical conduct cannot be defended, and respondent's conduct violated Canon 1, Rule 1.1 (requiring judges to observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the Judiciary may be preserved), Canon 2, Rule 2.1 (requiring judges to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety and to always act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and

impartiality of the Judiciary), Canon 2, Rule 2.3(A) (prohibiting judges from lending the prestige of judicial office to advance personal or economic interests), and Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A) (requiring judges to conduct their extrajudicial activities in a manner that would not cast doubt on the ability to act impartially, demean the judicial office, or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties); and

The Court having determined to accept the tendered removal by consent;  
And good cause appearing;

It is ORDERED that **Richard Obuch** is removed from judicial office and is permanently barred from holding judicial office in this State; and it is further

ORDERED that respondent's affidavit of consent with the attached formal complaint and the ACJC's report and recommendation are attached to this order. The additional supporting documentation in the certified record submitted to the Court is hereby incorporated by reference into this order, in accordance with Rule 2:15-15A(a)(3).

WITNESS, the Honorable Stuart Rabner, Chief Justice, at Trenton, this  
17th day of September, 2024.

  
CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON  
JUDICIAL CONDUCT

DOCKET NO: ACJC 2024-205

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IN THE MATTER OF :  
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RICHARD OBUCH, :  
JUDGE OF THE MUNICIPAL COURT :  
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AFFIDAVIT OF CONSENT  
R. 2:15-15A(a)(2)

STATE OF NEW JERSEY :  
 :  
COUNTY OF UNION :

1. I am the named Respondent in this matter, and I sign this Affidavit consenting to permanent removal from judicial office, pursuant to R. 2:15-15A(a).
2. I have consulted with an attorney; and
3. My consent is freely and voluntarily given; I have not been subjected to any coercion or duress; I am fully aware of the implications of submitting my consent to Removal by Consent; and
4. I am not under any disability, mental or physical, nor under the influence of any medication, intoxicants or other substances that would impair my ability to knowingly and voluntarily execute the removal by consent; and

5. I am aware there is presently pending a Formal Complaint filed against me involving allegations of unethical judicial conduct, filed July 2, 2024 and (attached hereto) alleging the following:

**Count I**

On December 14, 2023, I attended the annual holiday party (“the party”) hosted by the Union County Municipal Court Judge’s Association held at a restaurant in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The event, which featured food and complimentary alcohol, was open to judges and their court staff. It is alleged during the three hours that I remained at the party, I consumed two Old Fashioneds, sangria, and five or more shots of tequila and vodka. It is further alleged I was intoxicated within 45 minutes of arriving at the party, but continued to drink alcohol for more than two hours thereafter before leaving the party for the evening.

It is further alleged while at the party, I inappropriately touched three female Rahway Municipal Court employees, T.G., S.B., and M.V.<sup>1</sup> and made several inappropriate and/or sexually suggestive remarks to these women and asked them personal questions, including their marital status, and offered unsolicited relationship advice. It is alleged my conduct created discomfort and embarrassment to the

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<sup>1</sup> All individuals involved in the matter will be referred to by their initials to maintain the confidentiality of their identities.

individuals involved. Some of the alleged inappropriate behavior, including kissing the women without their consent, was captured on camera when I invited myself into photos with the women in a photo booth.

The Formal Complaint alleges at one point during the party, I approached S.B. on the dance floor while inappropriately dancing and gyrating towards her. My actions are alleged to have caused S.B. to abruptly leave the dance floor. It is alleged I followed S.B. to the women's restroom and jammed my foot in the doorway, thereby preventing S.B. from closing the restroom door, saying, "wait, wait, come on, let's take a shot [of alcohol]. Several court employees witnessed me waiting outside the women's restroom while S.B. remained inside. After receiving several complaints from various court employees concerning my behavior, a municipal court administrator asked me to leave the party.

I acknowledge that the acts of inappropriately touching female court employees, including kissing them, without their consent, following them to the women's restroom, and making several inappropriate and/or sexually suggestive remarks to them, I demeaned the judicial office, demonstrated disrespect for the Judiciary, and an

inability to conform my conduct to the high standards of conduct expected of judges, and exhibited poor judgment.

### **Count II**

I acknowledge my private law practice website contains references to my judicial office. On my “New Clients” page, it states, “I take a lot of pride in my work as an attorney, as well as being the municipal judge, and I really care about my clients.” On my “My Practice” page, I again reference my position as a Municipal Court Judge in the City of Elizabeth. On Alignable.com, a referral network for small business owners, my account page refers to my judicial office, stating “I am a Municipal Court Judge in Elizabeth, NJ.”

At all times relevant to this matter, I maintained personal Instagram, Facebook, and “X” (formerly known as Twitter) accounts. On my personal Facebook page, which is public, my account profile includes a photo of myself, as well as my full name. On my law firm’s Facebook page, which is public, I include links to my private law firm website, wherein I identified myself as a municipal court judge. On my Instagram account, which is private, my account profile includes a photo of myself, as well as my full name.

Though having been advised by the Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct of these ethical issues and acknowledging the

impropriety of the referenced ethically inappropriate content from my social media accounts, I failed to remove same from those accounts. These multiple and varied references to my judicial office were ongoing up to the filing of this Affidavit but have been removed.

### Count III

At all times relevant to this matter, I maintained an "X" account that was public. Any user, even those not affiliated with me, had open access to view my account in full. My "X" account included a photo of me, my full name, and that I am an attorney who lives in Elizabeth, New Jersey. My "X" account shows me engaging with adult entertainment figures and commenting on their photos in such a way that brings my judicial office into disrepute when I made inappropriate comments on their photos and responded to their explicit, vulgar, and sexual comments and questions. I acknowledge I posted a photo on November 14, 2023, which shows me embracing an adult film actress at an "Exxxotica Convention." I am acquainted with this actress through my subscription to her OnlyFans account and other exchanges with her.

I acknowledge by my conduct in publicly interacting with adult entertainment figures and/or commenting on their photos, and posting comments that include vulgarity, lewdness, explicit sexual references, and nudity, I exhibited poor judgment and demonstrated disrespect for

the Judiciary and an inability to conform to the high standards of conduct expected of judges.

6. I acknowledge that the material facts so alleged in the attached Formal Complaint are true; and

7. I concede, through the filing of this Affidavit of Consent, that my conduct constitutes violations of the following canons of the Code:

Canon 1, Rule 1.1, which requires judges to observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the Judiciary may be preserved;

Canon 2, Rule 2.1, which requires judges to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety and to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the Judiciary;

Canon 2, Rule 2.3(A), which prohibits jurists from lending the prestige of the judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the judge or others or to allow others to do so;

Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A), which requires judges to conduct their extracurricular activities in a manner that would not cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge, demean the judicial office, or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.

8. I acknowledge that the allegations of unethical judicial conduct cannot be successfully defended; and



9. I understand that this removal by consent, if accepted by the Supreme Court, is tantamount to an order of removal and constitutes an absolute bar to holding judicial office in the future; and

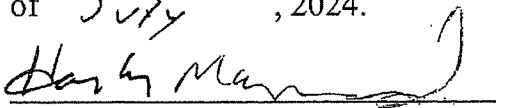
10. The implications of submitting this consent are fully known to me; and

11. I understand that this document and the record, to include the attached Exhibits 1 through 8, will become part of the public record.



Richard Obuch, J.M.C.  
Respondent

Sworn and subscribed to  
Before me this 12 day  
of July, 2024.

  
Notary Public or Attorney-At-Law,  
The State of New Jersey

HAYLEY MAYNARD  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
ID#50039565  
COMMISSION EXPIRES JUNE 6, 2026

**FILED**

JUL - 2 2024

A.C.J.C.

**SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON  
JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

**DOCKET NO: ACJC 2024-205**

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**IN THE MATTER OF**

**RICHARD OBUCH,  
JUDGE OF THE MUNICIPAL COURT**

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**FORMAL COMPLAINT**

Maureen G. Bauman, Disciplinary Counsel, Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct (“Complainant”), complaining of Municipal Court Judge Richard Obuch (“Respondent”), says:

**Facts**

1. Respondent is a member of the Bar of the State of New Jersey, having been admitted to the practice of law in 1992.
2. At all times relevant to this matter, Respondent served as a judge in the City of Elizabeth’s Municipal Court, a position to which he was first appointed on October 1, 2002, and continues to hold.
3. Respondent maintains a private office in Union Township for the practice of law.

**COUNT I**

4. On December 14, 2023, Respondent attended the annual holiday party (“the party”) hosted by the Union County Municipal Court Judge’s Association held at a restaurant in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The event, which featured food and complimentary alcohol, was open to judges and their court staff.

5. Respondent, during the three hours that he remained at the party, consumed two Old Fashioneds, sangria, and five or more shots of tequila and vodka.

6. Respondent was intoxicated within 45 minutes of arriving at the party, but continued to drink alcohol for more than two hours thereafter before leaving the party for the evening.

7. While at the party, Respondent inappropriately touched three female Rahway Municipal Court employees, T.G., S.B., and M.V.<sup>1</sup>

8. Respondent made several inappropriate and/or sexually suggestive remarks to these women and asked them personal questions, including their marital status, and offered unsolicited relationship advice.

9. Due to the offensive nature of the remarks, Respondent’s conduct created discomfort and embarrassment.

10. Some of Respondent’s inappropriate behavior, including kissing the women

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<sup>1</sup> All individuals involved in the matter will be referred to by their initials to maintain the confidentiality of their identities. See In re Seaman 133 N.J. 67, 75 (1993) (directing that “judicial-disciplinary cases involving . . . activities that humiliate or degrade those with whom a judge comes into contact, should preserve the anonymity of the alleged victim.”).

without their consent, was captured on camera when Respondent invited himself into photos with the women in a photo booth.

11. At one point during the party, Respondent approached S.B. on the dance floor while inappropriately dancing and gyrating towards her. Respondent's actions caused S.B. to abruptly leave the dance floor.

12. Respondent followed S.B. to the women's restroom and jammed his foot in the doorway, thereby preventing S.B. from closing the restroom door, saying, "wait, wait, come on, let's take a shot [of alcohol]."

13. Several court employees witnessed Respondent waiting outside the women's restroom while S.B. remained inside.

14. After receiving several complaints from various court employees concerning Respondent's behavior, a municipal court administrator asked Respondent to leave the party.

15. By inappropriately touching female court employees, including kissing them, without their consent, following them to the women's restroom, and making several inappropriate and/or sexually suggestive remarks to them, Respondent demeaned the judicial office, demonstrated disrespect for the Judiciary, and an inability to conform his conduct to the high standards of conduct expected of judges, and exhibited poor judgment in violation of Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A), Canon 1, Rule 1.1 and Canon 2, Rule 2.1 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

**COUNT II**

16. Complainant repeats the allegations contained in the foregoing paragraphs as if each were set forth fully and at length herein.

17. Respondent's private law practice website contains references to his judicial office.

18. On his "New Clients" page, Respondent states, "I take a lot of pride in my work as an attorney, as well as being the municipal judge, and I really care about my clients."

19. On his "My Practice" page, Respondent again references his position as a Municipal Court Judge in the City of Elizabeth.

20. On Alignable.com, a referral network for small business owners, Respondent's account page refers to his judicial office, stating "I am a Municipal Court Judge in Elizabeth, NJ."

21. At all times relevant to this matter, Respondent maintained personal Instagram, Facebook, and "X" (formerly known as Twitter) accounts.

22. On his personal Facebook page, which is public, Respondent's account profile includes a photo of himself, as well as his full name.

23. On his law firm's Facebook page, which is public, Respondent includes links to his private law firm website, wherein Respondent identifies himself as a municipal court judge.

24. On his Instagram account, which is private, Respondent's account profile includes a photo of himself, as well as his full name.

25. Respondent, though having been advised by the Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct of these ethical issues and acknowledging the impropriety of the referenced ethically inappropriate content from his social media accounts, failed to remove same from those accounts.

26. By his multiple and varied references to his judicial office, which are ongoing, Respondent has used or attempted to use the power and prestige of his judicial office to advance his personal and economic interests in violation of Canon 2, Rule 2.3(A) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

27. By this same conduct, Respondent has demonstrated a failure to conform his conduct to the high standards of conduct expected of judges and has impugned the integrity of the Judiciary in violation of Canon 1, Rule 1.1 and Canon 2, Rule 2.1 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

### **COUNT III**

28. Complainant repeats the allegations contained in the foregoing paragraphs as if each were set forth fully and at length herein.

29. At all times relevant to this matter, Respondent maintained an "X" account that was public. Any user, even those not affiliated with Respondent, had open access to view Respondent's account in full.

30. Respondent's "X" account included Respondent's photo, his full name, and revealed that he is an attorney who lives in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

31. Respondent's "X" account shows him engaging with adult entertainment figures and commenting on their photos in such a way that brings Respondent's judicial office into disrepute.

32. In posts by Respondent to several accounts depicting nude women, Respondent made inappropriate comments on their photos and responded to their explicit, vulgar, and sexual comments and questions.

33. In a photo posted by Respondent on November 14, 2023, Respondent is shown embracing an adult film actress at an "Exxxotica Convention." Respondent is acquainted with the actress, including through his subscription to her OnlyFans account and other exchanges with her.

34. By his conduct in publicly interacting with adult entertainment figures and/or commenting on their photos, posting comments that include vulgarity, lewdness, explicit sexual references, and nudity, Respondent exhibited poor judgment and demonstrated disrespect for the Judiciary and an inability to conform to the high standards of conduct expected of judges. Such conduct demeans the judicial office and undermines public confidence in the Judiciary in violation of Canon 1, Rule 1.1, Canon 2, Rule 2.1, and Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A), of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

WHEREFORE, Complainant charges that Respondent has violated the following Canons of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

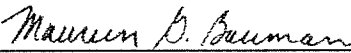
Canon 1, Rule 1.1, which requires judges to observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the Judiciary may be preserved;

Canon 2, Rule 2.1, which requires judges to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety and to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the Judiciary;

Canon 2, Rule 2.3(A), which prohibits jurists from lending the prestige of the judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the judge or others or to allow others to do so; and

Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A), which requires judges to conduct their extrajudicial activities in a manner that would not cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge, demean the judicial office, or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.

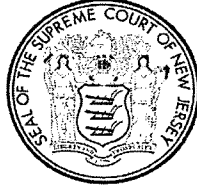
DATED: July 2, 2024

  
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Maureen G. Bauman, Disciplinary Counsel  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT  
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex  
25 Market Street  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, North Wing  
P.O. Box 037  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
(609) 815-2900 Ext. 51910



SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

HONORABLE VIRGINIA A. LONG, CHAIR  
HONORABLE STEPHEN SKILLMAN, VICE CHAIR  
HONORABLE GEORGIA M. CURIO  
HONORABLE ROBERT T. ZANE  
A. MATTHEW BOXER, ESQUIRE  
PAUL J. WALKER  
VINCENT E. GENTILE, ESQUIRE  
KAREN KESSLER  
DIANA C. MANNING, ESQUIRE  
KATHERINE B. CARTER



MAILING ADDRESS  
THE ACJC  
PO Box 037  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0037

PRINCIPAL OFFICE:  
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TRENTON, NEW JERSEY  
(609) 815-2900 EXT. 51910  
CANDACE MOODY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/COUNSEL  
DANIEL BURNS, ASSISTANT COUNSEL  
LOUIS H. TARANTO, CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

August 14, 2024

**VIA HAND-DELIVERY AND ELECTRONIC TRANSMITTAL**

Supreme Court of New Jersey  
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex  
25 W. Market Street  
P.O. Box 970  
Trenton, N.J. 08625

**Re: IMO Richard Obuch, Judge of the Municipal Court**  
**ACJC 2024-205**

Dear Chief Justice and Associate Justices:

Pursuant to R. 2:15-15A(a)(1), the Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct (“the Committee” or “ACJC”) submits this “Report and Recommendation” to the Supreme Court relative to its disposition of the above-referenced matter. This Court’s July 8, 2024 Order, which was effective immediately, suspended the Honorable Richard Obuch, J.M.C. (“Respondent” or “Judge Obuch”) from the exercise of judicial duties, without pay.

Respondent’s Affidavit of Consent, filed July 19, 2024 and executed in accordance with R. 2:15-15A(a)(2), is enclosed, along with a copy of the Committee’s Formal Complaint (“the Complaint”) filed July 2, 2024. Respondent did not file a Verified Answer. Respondent was admitted to the practice of law in 1992 and served as a judge for the City of Elizabeth’s Municipal Court since 2002. Through the enclosed filing, submitted by his counsel, Anthony B. Vignuolo, Esq. of BORRUS, GOLDIN, FOLEY, VIGNUOLO, HYMAN & STAHL, P.C., Respondent has

conceded that the material facts as alleged in the Committee's three-count Complaint are true and constitute unethical judicial conduct which could not be successfully defended. As such, Respondent acknowledged the concomitant multitude of violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct ("the Code"). Judge Obuch conceded that, through his conduct as set forth in each of the three counts of the Complaint, he demonstrated a failure to conform his conduct to the high standards expected of judges and impugned the integrity of the Judiciary in violation of Canon 1, Rule 1.1 and Canon 2, Rule 2.1 of the Code.

In Count I of the Complaint, Respondent was charged with inappropriately touching three female court employees, including kissing them, without their consent, following them to the women's restroom, and making several inappropriate and/or sexually suggestive remarks while under the influence of alcohol during an annual holiday dinner on December 14, 2023 at a local restaurant. Through this filing, Respondent agreed that his conduct demeaned the judicial office, demonstrated disrespect for the Judiciary, and reflected poor judgment in violation of Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A) of the Code. Exhibit 1, RO-1 thru RO-3; Exhibits 2 thru 6.

Count II of the Committee's Complaint charged Judge Obuch with impropriety relating to the operation of his private law office's website, an *Alignable.com* account, and multiple social media accounts (including *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and 'X' (formerly known as *Twitter*)), all of which contained impermissible references to his judicial office. Respondent conceded that by his multiple and varied references to his position, Respondent used, or attempted to use, the power and prestige of his judicial office to advance his personal and economic interests in violation of Canon 2, Rule 2.3(A) of the Code. Exhibit 1, RO-6 thru RO-9; Exhibits 7 thru 8.

Finally, in Count III of the Complaint, Respondent was charged with demeaning the judicial office and exhibiting poor judgment in violation of Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A) of the Code by his conduct in publicly interacting with adult entertainment figures and/or commenting on their photos, posting comments that include vulgarity, lewdness, explicit sexual references, and nudity. Exhibit 1, RO-10. Respondent agreed that the nature and content of Respondent's online interactions brought Respondent's judicial office into disrepute.

After careful consideration of the record, which includes Exhibits 1 through 8, the Committee respectfully recommends to this Court that Judge Obuch's consent to permanent removal from judicial office be accepted. Notably, Respondent's judicial disciplinary history includes a private letter of caution, issued by the

Committee on March 3, 2011, which related to the poor demeanor Respondent exhibited while addressing a self-represented litigant in open court. In addition, Respondent was publicly reprimanded by this Court for his private representation of a public employee in violation of R. 1:15-1(b). In re Obuch, 212 N.J. 474 (2012). The tendered discipline, submitted to the Committee through Respondent's counsel, conforms to the technical requirements set forth in R. 2:15-15A(a).

Respondent's consent to removal serves as an appropriate imposition of discipline, given the undisputed material facts, the pervasive and varied instances of misconduct, and this State's judicial disciplinary precedent. See In re Falcone, 251 N.J. 476 (2022) (publicly censuring and permanently barring municipal court judge for offensive touching of a client's representative at his private law practice); In re Toledo, 253 N.J. 330 (2023) (publicly censuring and permanently barring Surrogate Court judge for, *inter alia*, failing to disqualify from a proceeding in which there existed reasonable doubt about the judge's capacity to act impartially); In re Korngut (D-109 September Term 2023; 089519 – filed July 11, 2024) (removing and permanently barring municipal court judge from judicial office for numerous acts of misconduct, *inter alia*, engaging in *ex parte* communications, failing to be patient, dignified, and courteous to others, demonstrating bias, failing to maintain order and decorum in judicial proceedings, and failing to disqualify from proceedings in which there existed reasonable doubt about the judge's impartiality); In re Russo, 242 N.J. 179 (2020) (removing Superior Court judge from office for, *inter alia*, engaging in *ex parte* communications, failing to be patient, dignified, and courteous to others, and failing to disqualify from proceedings in which there existed reasonable doubt about the judge's capacity to act impartially); and In re Scattergood, 224 N.J. 268 (2016) (publicly reprimanding and permanently barring municipal court judge for failing to disqualify from proceedings in which there existed reasonable doubt about the judge's capacity to act impartially, multiple instances of inappropriate judicial demeanor, and other acts of misconduct).

Please find enclosed herewith the record in this matter, which consists of the following documents:

1. Respondent's Affidavit of Consent (per R. 2:15-15(A(a))) notarized July 12, 2024 and filed July 19, 2024;
2. The Committee's Formal Complaint filed July 2, 2024;
3. All material exhibits (Exhibits 1 through 8) in support of the tendered removal by consent;
4. Certification of Record dated August 14, 2024; and
5. Certification of Service dated August 14, 2024.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Virginia A. Long

Virginia A. Long, Chair

Enclosures

Cc: Maureen G. Bauman, Esq., ACJC Presenter (*via email only*)

Anthony B. Vignuolo, Esq., Counsel to Respondent

(*via UPS ground delivery and electronically: [avignuolo@borrus.com](mailto:avignuolo@borrus.com)*)