



CHESTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

TELEPHONE: 610-344-6801
FAX: 610-344-5905

THOMAS P. HOGAN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

201 W. MARKET STREET, SUITE 4450
POST OFFICE BOX 2748
WEST CHESTER, PA 19380-0991

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PRESS RELEASE

**Lawyer Charged With
Defrauding Over 25 Clients**

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced the arrest of attorney Joshua Janis on charges that he defrauded over 25 clients.

The defendant is 37 years old. During the relevant time period, he resided in Downingtown, Pennsylvania. From 2006 – 2013, he worked for a law firm in West Chester, Chester County, Pennsylvania. From 2013 – 2015, the defendant worked for his own law firm. He started his own firm in Downingtown but moved around to various other locations in Chester County.

District Attorney Hogan stated, “People turn to an attorney when they need help with often stressful personal or business issues. The defendant betrayed the trust of his clients, taking their money and often doing no work in return.”

The facts alleged in the criminal complaint are as follows:¹

The defendant had a general law practice, handling family court matters, civil disputes, and criminal cases. During the course of his practice, the Office of

¹ A criminal defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

Disciplinary Counsel of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania received multiple complaints about the defendant from clients and a judge. Those complaints eventually led to the defendant being suspended from the practice of law and triggered a criminal investigation by the Chester County Detectives, the investigative arm of the Chester County District Attorney's Office.

The investigation of the defendant revealed a simple pattern. The defendant would be retained by a client to do work. The client would give the defendant money for the case. Instead of depositing the client's money into the trust account required for client's money, the defendant would deposit the money into his own account or otherwise take the money. Then the defendant would do no work, or very little, on the case, all the while assuring the client that he was handling the matter. When the client discovered the problem, the client would have to hire another lawyer to address the problem, represent him or herself, or the problem remained unresolved.

For instance, Andrew Whitmore hired the defendant to represent him in a divorce case. Mr. Whitmore paid the defendant a total of \$2,650. The defendant never even entered his appearance in the case to represent Mr. Whitmore. Instead, by 2016, Mr. Whitmore had to retain a different attorney and had lost \$2,650 to the defendant.

Dawn DiDonato hired the defendant to file a civil cause of action for invasion of privacy. She paid the defendant a retainer of \$1,500. The defendant told Ms. DiDonato that he filed a civil complaint on her behalf. In fact, the defendant never filed any complaint on Ms. DiDonato's behalf.

Gary Willman hired the defendant to represent him in a divorce case. Mr. Willman paid the defendant \$1,500. The defendant took the money, deposited it into his own account, but never even filed an entry of appearance in the case on behalf of Mr. Willman. Mr. Willman eventually had to hire another lawyer to handle the case.

Elizabeth Flower hired the defendant to obtain a civil-union divorce for her son Charles, who had married his partner in a civil union in Vermont in 2001. Ms. Flower paid the defendant \$1,000. The defendant told Ms. Flower that he had filed the paperwork, but that the case was delayed because the judge had "something against gay people and that straight people's divorces are put first." The defendant eventually told Ms. Flower that the divorce was final. In fact, the defendant never filed any divorce proceeding. Ms. Flower had to hire another attorney.

In total, over 25 victims have come forward at this point. The defendant has been charged with felony theft charges. This case will be consolidated with an earlier criminal case with other victims. The combined losses suffered by the victims in both cases are over \$90,000.

District Attorney Hogan added, "This is not the first criminal complaint filed against the defendant, and I fear it will not be the last. We are concerned that there are other victims out there. If anybody else has been defrauded by Joshua Janis, they should report it to the Chester County Detectives immediately."

The Chester County Detectives investigated this matter. The assigned prosecutor is Chief Deputy District Attorney Ron Yen. Anybody with more information should contact Detective Jerry Davis at (610) 344-6866.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan