

SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA, MIDDLE DISTRICT

In re: Charles Alexander, Pro Se, and Carris Kocher, Pro Se, Gregory Stenstrom, Pro Se, and John Proctor Child v. Delaware County Board of Elections, et al.

Alexander v. Delaware County Board of Elections · No. 49 MM 2025 · Decided May 1, 2025

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania denied an emergency application challenging the validity of an earlier unsigned per curiam order denying election-related relief. The Court explained that a per curiam ruling represents the collective judgment of the participating Justices and that the Prothonotary’s certification of a true copy is ministerial rather than a substantive decision. The Court dismissed a related reconsideration and clarification application as moot and warned that further frivolous filings could result in sanctions or filing restrictions.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, Middle District
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, Middle District
DECIDED	May 1, 2025
DOCKET	49 MM 2025
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se applicant Gregory Stenstrom sought relief from the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania challenging the validity of the Court's earlier per curiam order summarily denying an emergency election petition. He argued that the earlier order was invalid and ultra vires because it was unsigned by a Justice and unexplained.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion; precedential status reported as published.
PARTIES	Charles Alexander, pro se, Carris Kocher, pro se, Gregory Stenstrom, pro se, John Proctor Child, pro se v. Delaware County Board of Elections, et al.

TOPICS

- appellate procedure
- election law
- civil procedure
- sanctions

PRACTICE AREAS

appellate procedure

election law

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether an unsigned per curiam order of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is invalid or ultra vires because it is not signed by an individual Justice.
2. Whether certification of a per curiam order as a true copy by the Prothonotary's Office indicates that the Prothonotary or its employees decided the matter.
3. Whether the applicant was entitled to relief striking the prior per curiam denial or reconsidering and clarifying that denial.

HOLDINGS

1. A per curiam ruling of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is not invalid merely because it is unsigned by an individual Justice; the ruling is institutional and represents the collective judgment of the participating appellate judges.
2. The Prothonotary's Office and its employees do not decide petitions on behalf of the Supreme Court; their stamping or signing of an order as a true copy is a ministerial certification and does not affect the merits or validity of the Court's decision.
3. The Emergency Application for Relief to Strike Unlawful Per Curiam Denial was properly denied because the challenge was frivolous, and the Emergency Application for Reconsideration and Clarification was properly dismissed as moot.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A per curiam decision is unsigned because, as its translation suggests, it is intended to be institutional rather than individual — it is attributable to the court as an entity, not any single jurist." (2)

"The IOP makes clear, however, that it is this Court, and this Court alone, that ultimately acts on any such filing." (3)

"When an employee of the Prothonotary's Office stamps or signs an order issued by this Court as 'a true copy,' it is not intended to convey that the Office or employee unilaterally decided the matter in the Court's stead." (3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The applicants had filed an emergency petition for relief in an election matter on the Supreme Court's miscellaneous docket. The Court summarily denied that petition by per curiam order on April 22, 2025. Gregory Stenstrom challenged the order because it was unsigned by an individual Justice and was certified as a true copy by the Prothonotary's Office, which he interpreted as an unauthorized delegation of the Court's decision-making authority.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Supreme Court had previously denied an emergency petition for relief filed by Stenstrom and three co-petitioners on April 22, 2025. Stenstrom then filed an Emergency Application for Relief to Strike Unlawful Per Curiam Denial and an Emergency Application for Reconsideration and Clarification. The Court denied the motion to strike as frivolous and dismissed the reconsideration application as moot.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Commonwealth v. Tilghman, 673 A.2d 898 (Pa. 1996)

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