

**HOUSE . . . . . No.**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

**Benjamin Swan**

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act to establish standards of conduct for district attorneys and provide for duties of the supreme judicial court and for penalties.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Benjamin Swan

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

11th Hampden

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE HOUSE, NO. 1736 OF 2007-2008.]

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

### AN ACT TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEYS AND PROVIDE FOR DUTIES OF THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT AND FOR PENALTIES.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority  
of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, this act is to establish ethical standards for district  
2 attorneys.

3 (a) General Rule. District attorneys and assistant district attorneys, and employees of the district attorney in  
4 counties or districts shall be subject to Massachusetts laws and rules and local court rules governing attorneys,  
5 including the rules of professional conduct, where the attorney engages in the duties of district attorney to the same  
6 extent and in the same manner as other attorneys in that jurisdiction.

7 (b) Violations. No district attorney or assistant district attorney shall:

8 (1) in the absence of probable cause seek the indictment of any person;

9 (2) fail promptly to release information that would exonerate a person under indictment;

10 (3) intentionally or knowingly misstate evidence;

11 (4) intentionally or knowingly alter evidence;

12 (5) intentionally mislead a court as to the guilt of any person;

13 (6) attempt to influence or color the testimony of a witness;

14 (7) act to frustrate or impede a defendant's right to discovery;

15 (8) offer or provide sexual activities to any government witness or potential witness;

16 (9) leak or otherwise improperly disseminate information to any person during an investigation;

17 (10) knowingly misstate statutory or case law; or

18 (11) engage in conduct that discredits the office of the District Attorney.

19 (c) Penalties. Persons violating the provisions described in subsection (b) shall, upon finding that a violation  
20 occurred, be subject to:

21 (1) Probation.

22 (2) Demotion.

23 (3) Dismissal.

24 (4) Referral of ethical charge to the bar.

25 (5) Loss of pension or other retirement benefits.

- 26 (6) Suspension from employment.  
27 (7) Referral of the allegations, if appropriate, to a grand jury for possible criminal prosecution.

28 SECTION 2. Complaints.

29 (a) Written statement. A person who believes that a district attorney or employee of the office of district  
30 attorney in a county or district has engaged in conduct in violation of Section 1, may submit a written statement to  
31 the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, in such form as the Supreme Judicial Court  
32 may require, describing the alleged conduct.

33 (b) Preliminary investigation. Not later than thirty days after receipt of a written statement submitted under  
34 subsection (a), the Supreme Judicial Court Disciplinary Counsel shall conduct a preliminary investigation and  
35 determine whether the allegations contained in such statement warrant further investigation.

36 (c) Investigation and penalty. If the Supreme Judicial Court, upon receipt of findings by the Supreme Judicial  
37 Court Disciplinary Counsel, determines that further investigation is warranted, the court shall within ninety days  
38 further investigate the allegations and, if the court determines that a preponderance of evidence supports the  
39 allegations, impose an appropriate penalty.

40 SECTION 3. Definitions. The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings  
41 given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:  
42 "Employee." The term shall include, but not be limited to, an attorney, investigator, special prosecutor or  
43 other employee of the office of district attorney in a county or district as well as an attorney, investigator, accountant  
44 or a special prosecutor acting under the authority of the office of district attorney.

45 SECTION 4. Effective Date. This act shall take effect ninety days after passage.

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