

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA
HAMMOND DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Plaintiff,

v.

CASE NUMBER: 2:20 CR 118

JOSEPH STAHURA

Defendant.

SUPPLEMENTAL SENTENCING MEMORANDUM

Comes Now, Defendant Joseph Stahura, by counsel Kerry C. Connor, and files the attached letters from family, friends, Whiting residents, employees, business owners, consultants, engineers, community leaders, public servants and even other mayors. Over the last several months, Counsel has received many phone calls, messages, emails and approximately 130 letters of support on Mr. Stahura's behalf. The letters submitted here are a representative sampling of the whole.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kerry C. Connor
Kerry C. Connor
Attorney at Law
8320 Kennedy Ave.,
Highland, IN 46322
Phone: (219) 803-8030
Fax: (219) 247-1980
kcconnor@sbcglobal.net

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on December 15, 2020, I electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system which sent notification of such filing to all attorneys of record.

/s/ Kerry C. Connor
Kerry C. Connor

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Joseph M. Stahura
1930 Schrage Ave.
Whiting, IN 46394

December 13, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

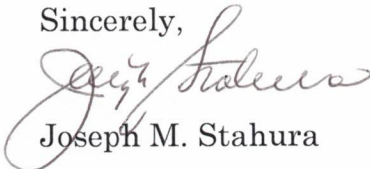
RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

During my lifetime I have faced a multitude of challenges, but few have been more difficult than writing this letter to you today. I am terribly sorry for the pain and disappointment that I have caused. My actions have embarrassed my community and the people who entrusted me. My actions have also brought unnecessary anguish to my family, friends, and former staff members. I also sincerely regret casting another shadow of doubt over the many good and ethical public servants in Northwest Indiana.

I was wrong and wish to express my sincere regret and remorse. There is nothing I can ever say or write that will ever capture how terribly sorry I am. I am sorry for what I did, but I am devastated by how I hurt the countless people who believed in me. Unfortunately, whatever I write to you today will not change this. I will never forget this profound feeling of disappointment and failure as long as I live. I am sorry far beyond whatever words I can express to you.

Sincerely,



Joseph M. Stahura

Eileen Adam
6388 Meadowview Drive
Whitestown, Indiana 46075

October 11, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, Indiana 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you for allowing me to write a letter today to share with you my very unique and personal perspective of Joseph Stahura. As you carefully review his case, I hope you will find my words helpful in weighing your decision for his sentencing.

Joseph Stahura is my father. He is also the loving grandfather to my three children, his absolute pride and joy. As his daughter, I have intimately witnessed his life – his finest hours, lowest moments, and everything in between. At all of these moments, he has consistently remained a hardworking, honest man, who will never leave a conversation without laughter.

I grew up in a very stable, loving home with my parents and one sister. My parents have been faithfully married for 44 years. During my childhood, my mother stayed home while my father worked intensely hard employed as a Process Operator and then Training Coordinator at Amoco Oil/ BP. In 1987, my father worked 127 days straight at the oil refinery to provide for our family. That stretch of hard work was what afforded him to save and build the home I grew up in, and my parents continue to live in today. He worked holidays, weekends, and any overtime he was offered. He was often called out in the middle of the night, as he also volunteered to serve on the BP Fire Department. His dedication and remarkable work ethic is something he instilled in me at a very early age.

Despite all this hard work, I somehow never felt his absence. He seemed to rarely miss any of my important high school events, including sporting events or school assemblies. His support helped me land a volleyball scholarship at the University of Southern Indiana. In true fashion, he again found time to attend every game despite the location (Southern Indiana, Illinois, Alabama, Missouri). His presence was so constant, that my teammates would joke how my parents were certain to arrive even before the team. I've been fortunate to have such a loving father, and I have never lacked his support from the bleachers or in life.

I lived with my parents for a short time after college, when he was first elected Mayor in 2004. I was there to hear the home phone ring at all hours of the day and night - calls directly to our home, not his office. As a lifelong citizen of Whiting, he knew everyone, and everyone felt comfortable calling the house or simply ringing the doorbell. He always welcomed it. I would dictate these phone messages from concerned citizens regarding seemingly simple things such as

broken trash cans, sidewalk repairs, or trees needing trimmed. He was sure to return every call, and resolve any issue he could.

I was there, during those years, to routinely watch his car back out of the driveway at 4am heading to work at City Hall. He wouldn't sleep if something needed attention - starting with the tax crisis of 2004 and ending with the pandemic in 2020, he consistently gave all his time and energy to the City of Whiting. In 2004, he traveled to Indianapolis countless times to lobby for tax law changes that would eventually benefit Whiting and other region towns. Many elderly citizens on fixed incomes could have lost their homes without his dedication and tenacity. In 2020, despite sleepless nights over this very case before you today, he creatively found ways to give grants to local businesses to keep them afloat through months of Covid quarantine. Many businesses have acknowledged they would not have survived without this support.

I now have three children of my own and live near Indianapolis. Despite his busy work schedule, and the 2.5-hour drive between our homes, he again has never missed a pre-school graduation, concert, or sporting event for my children. Once again, his car will back out of the driveway at 4am to see his grandson play basketball on Saturday at 8am (EST). He once made a 5-hour round trip car ride to be the surprise guest reader in my sons 2nd grade classroom, just to read a simple 15-minute book and spend a few moments with his grandchild. He volunteered to give a presentation during Career Day to my child's kindergarten classroom, where he spoke about the importance of public service and community involvement. His presence was so constant during my son's 3rd grade year, that his teacher still asks about him every time I see her. When my 4th grader was studying government and Indiana history, he invited his grandson to spend the day with him as "Deputy Mayor" teaching him the importance of all city departments - from the street department, to public safety, to the city court.

By now I'm sure you've been made aware of his many accomplishments, infrastructure enhancements, and volunteer board positions throughout the state. Undoubtedly, he's built a remarkable legacy. However, I believe his biggest accomplishments were never etched into a newly erected stone building. I watched a much different highlight reel through the years. I watched as he donated money to countless people struggling with serious illness and no health insurance. I watched as he helped guide a newly single mother with employment opportunities to get her back on her feet. I watched as he visited hospital beds and nursing homes to let them know someone cares. I watched as he carefully selected every new hire based on skill and ability vs political connection. I watched as he rotated his patronage to the many restaurants in town to help them thrive. I watched as my kids opened Christmas presents filled with t-shirts and toys from Whiting businesses to show his support. I watched when he offered his phone to veterans so they could call home on Christmas. I watched as he mentored countless new Mayors across the state. I watched as he picked up trash on the sidewalk when needed. I watched as he continually gave his time to any citizen or group who could be positively affected by his involvement. I watched as he led the city with the same responsibility and dedication that he has led our family for many years.

Unfortunately, this past year I've watched a much different side of my father's life and career. He admitted to mistakes in the most public manner possible. However, even during this most trying time of his life, he again provided me with prime examples of his good character. Throughout the investigation, he consistently expressed to me his desire to fully cooperate and the importance of his honesty. Despite his mistakes, I'm proud of the man, father and grandfather he is today and always has been. I ask that when considering his sentence, you weigh his

cooperation with investigators, along with his impeccable character and the amazing legacy of he leaves behind.

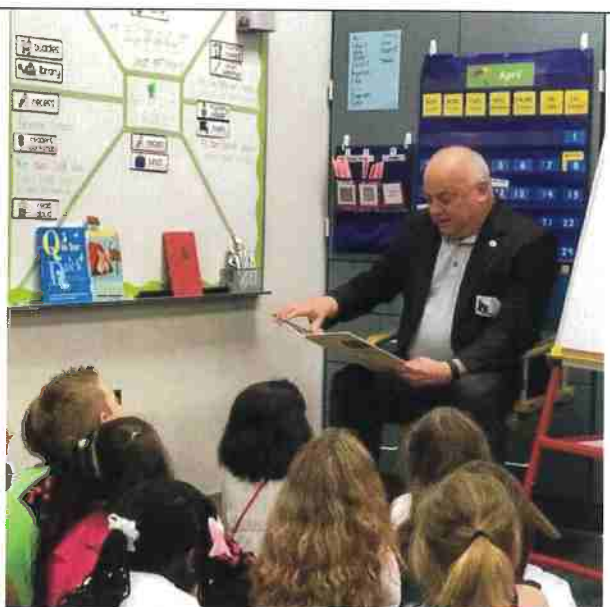
Sincerely,

Eileen Adam

Eileen Adam



Career Day presentation



Surprise Guest Reader



Helping my daughters deliver Girl Scout cookies



Supporting my daughter at a soccer game

NATALIE M. PISHKUR

1219-120TH STREET

WHITING, INDIANA 46394

OCTOBER 4, 2020

THE HONORABLE JAMES T. MOODY

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

5400 FEDERAL PLAZA

HAMMOND, INDIANA 46320

RE: UNITED STATES V. JOSEPH STAHURA

CAUSE No. 2:20 CR 118

DEAR JUDGE MOODY:

JOE STAHURA IS MY BROTHER. HE IS SEVEN YEARS YOUNGER THAN I AM. WE COME FROM A LARGE FAMILY WITH OUR FATHER WHO WAS A TRUCK DRIVER AND OUR MOM WAS A STAY AT HOME MOM TO TAKE CARE OF US.

OUR MOTHER ALWAYS FOUND THE TIME TO REACH OUT TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE; BY BEING A BOYS SCOUT DEN LEADER, HELPING THE NEIGHBORS, SENDING US TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CONVENT WITH ITEMS FOR THE NUNS AS SOME EXAMPLES.

MY BROTHER JOE LEARNED HOW TO HELP AND REACH OUT FROM OUR MOM.

YEARS AGO I REMEMBER THAT HE WORKED FOR THE WHITING SCHOOL SYSTEM. ONE OF HIS JOBS WAS TO DRIVE THE SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS TO THEIR DIFFERENT SCHOOL LOCATIONS. HE DID AN AMAZING JOB.

FROM AN EARLY AGE I CAN REMEMBER MY BROTHER TALKING ABOUT MAYBE BECOMING THE MAYOR OF WHITING SOME DAY.

IN JOE'S EYES HE SAW A VISION FOR THE CITY OF WHITING. HE COULD SEE WHAT NEEDED TO BE IMPROVED AND ALSO TO BEAUTIFY THE CITY, THE LAKEFRONT AND THE TREE LINED STREETS.

PEOPLE WILL SAY "BEING MAYOR" IS HIS JOB AND HE NEEDS TO WORK HARD FOR THE CITY.

BEING MAYOR WAS MORE THAN A JOB FOR HIM. HE LIVED AND BREATHED THE CITY OF WHITING. HE WENT WAY BEYOND THE DUTIES OF MAYOR. YOU JUST HAVE TO LOOK AT ALL OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE CITY. HIS CHARACTER SHOWED HOW MUCH HE WAS TRULY DEDICATED TO THIS CITY!

DURING ONE OF THE PIEKOGI FESTS I CAME ACROSS HIM ON 119TH STREET. HE SAID, "SORRY, I CAN'T TALK NOW, THEY RAN OUT OF TOILET PAPER IN THE PORTABLE WASHROOMS AND I AM ON MY WAY TO GET SOME TO PUT IN THE WASHROOMS."

DURING MY LIFE I WENT THRU SOME "TRYING TIMES"
AND TURNED TO HIM FOR GUIDANCE, ADVICE AND SUPPORT. HE
DID NOT HESITATE TO HELP ME.

DO TO MEDICAL REASONS I CANNOT DRIVE A CAR
ANY MORE. MY BROTHER WOULD CALL TO MAKE SURE I HAD
A RIDE TO FUNCTIONS AND FAMILY GATHERINGS. HE WOULD PICK
ME UP, OPEN THE CAR DOOR AND MAKE SURE I WAS SETTLED
IN. THE SAME WHEN HE DROPPED ME OFF, NOT LEAVING UNTIL
I WAS IN THE HOUSE AND SAFE.

THIS IS WHAT JOE STAHURA'S CHARACTER IS ALL ABOUT.

ANYONE WHO READS THIS LETTER WILL SAY, "HE'S YOUR
BROTHER AND YOU HAVE TO SAY GREAT THINGS ABOUT HIM."

JUST SO EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS, I AM NOT ONLY JOE
STAHURA'S SISTER, I HAVE BEEN A CITIZEN OF WHITING FOR ALL
71 YEARS OF MY LIFE. I AM ALSO CELEBRATING 44 YEARS OF LIVING
IN THE SAME HOUSE THIS MONTH IN WHITING.

THE PEOPLE OF WHITING HAVE CONSISTENTLY COME UP TO ME TO SHARE
WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THE CITY AND HOW GRATEFUL THEY ARE FOR
HIS SERVICE TO THIS CITY.

I AM PROUD OF MY BROTHER FOR ALL OF HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS!
JOE STAHURA WILL ALWAYS BE "MAYOR JOE" IN MY EYES.

SINCERELY,

Natalie M. Pishkur

NATALIE M. PISHKUR

Richard Stahura
7049 Monroe Avenue
Hammond, IN 46324

October 4, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am writing this letter in support of my brother Joseph Stahura, who I have known all my life.

In the late sixties while growing up in Whiting, Indiana on John Street, we played ball in the street, sat on porches and spent time with family and friends. There was an incident when a small child ran into the street after a ball while a vehicle was approaching at a high rate of speed. There were cars parked on the street with little room in between. My brother Joe came from nowhere, and grabbed the child in front of the speeding vehicle and carried the child to the other side of the street saving this child's life. Undoubtedly, it would have been very traumatic for us, and a tragedy for their family. Right then I knew there was something special about him, being a teenager and putting his life on the line for that child.

Indeed, he is special. In high school, onto Lakeland College and then a career at B.P., continuing as a council member and then Mayor while helping people in Whiting. As Mayor, he spent years working hard to bring a beautiful baseball stadium for Whiting High School and area college players, new fields for the younger players in the city and improvements to Whiting's Lakefront and numerous improvements to the downtown area. These improvements have been a benefit to Whiting residence and other area residence as well.

As you can see by my letter, Joe is a selfless person who truly helped others.

Joe is our family's rock and although our whole family has been effected by the unfortunate events of late, we all support him, his wife and family. I ask you to consider leniency in his sentencing as underlying health concerns and looming Covid 19 along with possible incarceration certainly can mean a death sentence for him. Please consider saving his life the way he saved that child's life when we were young. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Respectfully,

Richard Stahura

John F. Wilkening
5840 Huron Dr. Cedar Lake, IN 46303

October 14, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Your Honor, thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I don't know I have ever written a more personal and hopeful letter in my life. I write to you today to talk about Joe Stahura. I am sure you will receive many letters for him referencing his incredibly important tenure as Mayor of Whiting. Many will speak of his great accomplishments and all he did to return a diminishing city to all time heights. Joe did all of those things, including leading our hometown through the tax crisis. No one disputes his achievements as mayor and as a community leader. I however, do not want to focus on that, nor the mistakes made. I will say that Joe again showed his true character. Unlike the many in Lake County that came before him to visit the bench... Joe didn't proclaim innocence and drag the city through the mud for a year. Joe didn't proclaim his innocence and insult the court's intelligence. Unlike all that have stumbled in Lake County.... Joe owned it. He loved his town and his family far too much to drag all through a very painful process. Joe again stood up and said "guilty as charged" and apologized to many people in person. Admitting fault, owning his mistakes, and showing true character through that admission.

Everyone knows Joe Stahura as "Mayor Joe" and he will likely be referenced that way in every letter you receive. My story is a little different. The Joe Stahura I write about lived on John Street by Weiner's grocery store. It was a green sided home with a porch that many gathered on. For lack of better terms, it was a neighborhood center, where people would gather to talk and catch up. There was no Joe Stahura or Mayor Joe... there was just a good man and role model known to all as Axle. I was raised in an apartment building over a bar and took the alley every day down that way to hear the messages and talk to the older guys. Axle was about

12 years older than me. So, throughout my formative years, he was always someone I looked up to.

He always called me Johnny and I don't think there was a day when I came out of the alley that I wasn't asked what I was doing or what I had done. There was a group of us who certainly could have gone the wrong way in life. Some of Joe's finest moments were not done by spot light in front of the city... they were done by candlelight, with no one watching but the midtown kids who all looked up to him. It was every day and it was consistent. If Joe saw us, he was putting in time with us. His appearance at the ballfield was a big thing. He would yell out encouragement, provide quick tips, waive and be gone. It was always just enough to let us know he was around and there for us. If something happened that should not have, you could always count on Joe asking if we knew anything about it... and then you either received some guidance or a foot in the backside.

In 2019, I was named the top credit union executive in the United States. I do not put that in here for any reason but to say that with every step I took to receive that award, Joe Stahura's life lessons walked with me daily. There is no "aha moment" with some big occurrence to point Joe's character out....it was every day, one interaction at a time.

If you want to know my best memory of Joe Stahura, it happened during 3rd grade at Immaculate Conception in Whiting. My family was very poor, and there is just no getting around that. My father drank too much, and living above a tavern was not beneficial for my mom, sister and I. The 5th grade basketball coach decided to let 4th graders and a few 3rd graders go out for the team. As a terrible player, but a kid who needed something positive in his life, I went out for the team. At the time I couldn't figure out how someone so awful could make the basketball team... until I realized it was because a guy on John Street named Axle put in a good word and it made all the difference in the world. I lived off that through a tough childhood winter. Of course, Joe wasn't done; when I showed up at practice and had no gear and was lacking the money for shoes or knee pads I stood out. The story of these blue knee pads is one that will always stand out. My memory of Joe has always come back to those blue knee pads. I know he has no recollection of this story, but of all the things that folks have done for me, this is one thing has always been top of mind. We had no money and I wasn't getting knee pads. It was bad enough my chunky taylor's were war torn, but throw in the fact that I had the worst shoes on the team and was the only kid with no knee pads... I sure felt out of place. Those knee pads were sold at the Whiting Sports store on Schrage Avenue. The guy running that store was Joe Stahura. I don't know how Axle knew that not having knee pads bothered me so much and there was no way in heck I was asking my mother. I guess I went in the store so much and looked at them that Joe just knew.

Once day Joe said the knee pads are \$4.00 and with .11 cents tax the total was \$4.11. He said he could give them to me in exchange for doing things in the neighborhood... as long as they were positive things with “no shortcuts”. I had knee pads and felt like a million dollars. The snow came and I shoveled it until I raised the money. It took 3 weeks and of course, on the way to pay Axle back, I got in a fight in front of the grocery store and lost the money. I found the 4 singles. I went to pay Joe and told him I lost the .11 cents. He cleared the bill and then gave me the word on the fight. That story to me has personified my relationship with Joe. Joe probably can’t recall it, but I just can’t forget it. I never have. I can’t return home and see that house on John Street and not recall how great it was to be the 5 year old or 8 year old who talked to the Stahura’s.

Joe’s legacy is not for his time as mayor or a business owner... Joe’s legacy is that he always cared for his community and he was always nice. He was a good man who took time for all. Joe’s greatness to me was not done at events, it was done one conversation at a time and by devoting his time. Joe made a difference in my life not as the mayor. I am not some political crony. I was a poor Whiting kid who needed guidance and role models. Joe Stahura influenced every child that came up in the 70’s and 80’s in that city. It was long before he became known as Mayor Joe. Axel Stahura was the guy... and that guy loved us. That guy guided us. That guy cared and always took time.

I can’t be more sincere Your Honor, when I ask you to consider your sentencing, what an important man Joe was to us growing up. It brings tears to write a letter like this for a man that was so important and such a driving force to getting a generation of kids to college and to become successful adults. I always believe that no one truly knows like a kid from the neighborhood does because they’re always around and see so much. I saw Joe often and he never hurt anyone. Joe is being punished and is hurting. He is walking away from his hometown, a flourishing city he rebuilt. He will leave us all, whether you send him away or he gets mercy and he decides to move away with his family for a fresh start somewhere maybe no one knows about this and he lives wondering the rest of his days what his hometown thinks about him now. The jail of his thoughts and shame and leaving all he loves is the greatest sentence anyone can give him.

I don’t know how this turns out, but I do know how it turns out if Joe “AXEL” Stahura doesn’t come into my life and the lives of so many who grew up in that era. Your Honor, I want you to know, Joe is a good man who was a role model. It is important that both you and Joe know the man made a difference in lives he didn’t even know he touched. Every accomplishment I have had in my life all goes back to that green aluminum sided house on John Street and that front porch.....not city hall.

Sincerely and God Bless,

John F. Wilkening

Donna Cafferata
1424 Center Street
Whiting, IN 46394

10/18/2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Joe Stahura for over 46 years going back to my youth when he was coaching or umpiring for my Father, Andrew Yanas who ran the Whiting Little League program and utilized the local High School and college students to help run things and volunteer with the local youth. Later as I worked at the Community Center we utilized the trophy and sporting goods store in town that Joe was working at and managing. I have followed Joe's career as a council member in Whiting as a young resident and through his years as mayor for this fine city.

It is due to Joe's efforts and vision of a 30 year landscape and revitalization program that convinced my husband and I to return to this fine city, build a home, and be close to my elderly Mother back in 2016 when we relocated back from Louisiana. We truly felt it was more than Joe just being a mayor, it was his heart, community pride, and tenacious desire to personally care for the folks that have chose to live here for decades and raise their families that he continued to serve in Whiting and strived to clean up the desolate and abandoned areas, as well as enforcing absentee landlord codes to improve dwellings for the local renters.

I watched Joe work as Mayor back in 2006 or 2007 when the residents were all hit with property tax adjustments due to BP taking an extremely large tax abatement, that all mills were filing for at the time. Many residents annual property tax bills jumped from \$300 to \$500 annually up to \$5,600 to \$7,200 over night and many did not know how they would be able to come up with the funds to stay in their homes. Joe worked with the local Whiting Robertsdale Community Improvement Corp to help bail out the citizens with funds and went to bat to create a tiered increase to their property taxes over the next several years so they could adjust to the drastic increases from the recent property re-assessments. This was a dilemma that Joe went beyond for his fine city and help elderly residents that had lived in their homes for decades without a mortgage allow to remain.

Joe created a Whiting Scholarship program for the School City of Whiting. There had been a scholarship given out by one of our previous judges, Mr. Bill Ciesar but it went on the way side when he relocated to

Virginia and the incoming judge didn't want to continue the program, but went a different direction with her community service efforts. Joe felt it was important to recognize and support our local students in providing them with four years of assistance through maintaining their annual GPA and community service hours. This program has grown over the last decade or so and over \$60,000 goes out annually. Joe created a scholarship committee that reviews the applicants annually.

Joe has taken an active role in the arts within the community. As the city has acquired abandoned commercial buildings in town he has worked to offer them as homes to the local art associations to have a vessel to reach out to the community for art or music shows, as well as craft programs. These organizations must maintain their monthly utility costs and pay a minimal annual rent to the city. Something unheard of in many communities across the country. Fundraising for a nonprofit can be very difficult and Joe made sure their doors remained open.

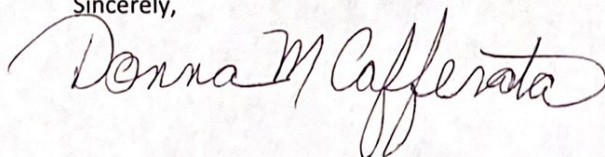
As a businesswoman in town I have been impressed how the mayor would reach out to the various banks in town to spend time with failing businesses, usually ones that weren't even their local clients. In one situation the bank I worked for was asked to try and help a business rework their business plan and see if there was any chance to keep their doors open, we brought in a counselor with the SBA Incubator at Purdue University to meet with the client and rework their goals, projections, and revenue growth. And with a city small business grant we helped to keep the business from closing. Not only were my senior lenders impressed with Mayor Joe Stahura's commitment to his local business owners, so was the SBA Advisor.

When I sit on my front porch in the evenings at the entrance to Whiting Lakefront park and watch the families on their evening strolls to and from the park along with the bikers, folks of all ages walking dogs at all hours of the days I'm blessed to feel safe in my home. My husband, Tom, elderly mother of 83 years, and all our friends believe it's due to the dedication from this fine individual Joe Stahura.

Joe like so many of us that were raised in this fine city threw his heart and soul into making it a better place for so many of us to return to after living in other parts of the state or further away. Joe raised his family here and knew that being a "Mayor" in position only wasn't going to get the job done. He rolled up his sleeves and attended community association meetings years after years. He held focus groups and truly listened to residents when relocating the local little league fields that allowed for a new and improved state of the art facility or not to tear down fixtures such as the pavilion in Whiting Park that had over a 100 years history to the city. He worked to support the creation of the Whiting Lakefront Festival Orchestra to bring enjoyment to families and individuals of all ages every summer on the park hills for 25 years.

Joe opened his office doors and even published his email so constituents felt they could reach him on advice or to complain about things not going right in the city. Joe was a mayor that made himself available and approachable. In closing I hope I have painted a picture through these specific incidents or experiences that drove me to putting my pen to paper for Joe Stahura's character and the man he was and will continue to be in all our eyes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna M Cafferata". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

David J. Knish

Carol J. Knish

1410 West 93rd Place

Saint John, IN 46373

Re: United States vs. Joseph Stahura

Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody,

My wife Carol and I appreciate the opportunity to write on behalf of Joseph Stahura. We both were raised in Whiting and the Stahura family name was very familiar to us. We know that Joe can be credited for many improvements to Whiting as a whole, but I would like to write about one personal phone call that meant so much to me. I was diagnosed with heart disease and needed open heart surgery to repair some blockage in my arteries. Needless to say, I was frightened and concerned although I tried my best not to show it. Joe took the time to call me and gave me the encouragement and confidence I needed to face this major surgery and life crisis. He certainly did not have to make the call, but out of concern for my family and me he made an incredibly positive difference at an exceedingly difficult time.

I understand that Joe made some poor decisions but I sincerely hope that the court will take into account the many wonderful things that he has accomplished as mayor and as a friend to many. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for Joseph Stahura.

Sincerely yours,

Carol and David Knish

David J. Danko
9489 Sullivan Court
Crown Point, IN 46307

October 12, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

Dear Judge Moody:

I want to share with you my personal story and experience regarding Joseph Stahura before you make your final determination in his sentencing. I met Joe in 1992 when I was 19 years old. I had just been hired at the Whiting Refinery and Joe was an hourly co-worker at one of the process units. Joe was working in the training department and was responsible for teaching new employees the skill sets necessary to become process operators. He made a point to get to know each of us and took a personal interest in our development and our entire class held him in high regard. A few years later Joe took a salaried position which made him responsible for overseeing and developing training for a large portion of the Refinery. It was around this time that I had my first of a series of knee surgeries. While I was home recovering Joe called and asked if I would be interested in joining the training department which would allow me to return to work early. I gratefully accepted. At first, I was not much help to Joe, but he continued to work with me and eventually I became an hourly trainer myself. I worked side-by-side with Joe for almost 5 years helping him develop and deliver training to the Refinery workforce. During this time, I had an office right next to his and witnessed many conversations and interactions he had with my co-workers. Joe was the one person we all felt genuinely cared about us and that we trusted to go to for advice. I saw him repeatedly help folks work through family illness, divorce, drug addiction, troubled children... you name it, Joe saw it and he always seemed to find a way to make things better. I was in my 20s and like most young men at that age I had plenty of friends and co-workers that gave me every reason to go down a wrong path. Joe encouraged me to choose a better life for myself and my family. He challenged me with additional responsibilities, educational opportunities, and counseled me on several difficult decisions.

In 2002 I moved to a different position and Joe moved on to become the Mayor of Whiting, but we kept in touch over the years. Every so often we would cross paths or check in on one another with a phone call. My job has changed over the years and in 2008 I ran for a Union position. I worked my way up through the ranks and in 2014 I was elected President of USW Local 7-1 which represents 1,000 oil workers. Over the years I have interfaced with quite a few people (both in business and in the community) and whenever Joe's name was mentioned smiles and personal stories, like the one I am sharing with you now, were always exchanged. In 2015 our Union went on strike and once again Joe was one of the first to reach out to see how he could help. Recently, I have reflected a lot on Joe and all that has been said about him. I wanted

to share my experience and let you know that for almost 30 years Joe has had a positive influence on me and the community where I work and live. I ask that you take this into consideration when determining his future. I am so glad to have crossed paths with Joe all those years ago and hope you will give him an opportunity for atonement.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DJD' with a stylized flourish.

David J. Danko
President, USW Local 7-1

September 30th, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Joseph Stahura for much of my 56 years of life. I would have no reservations in saying this person is a fair, honest, and decent human-being.

My first encounter with Mr. Stahura was when he owned the Whiting Sport Shop, I was just a kid that won a gift certificate that he donated to the Whiting Little League. I went to his store to buy a Blackhawk's jersey. The certificate amount didn't cover the entire amount of the jersey and I didn't have enough cash to cover the difference, Mr. Stahura said "he kid, this is close enough" and gave me my first Blackhawks jersey. I bet Mr. Stahura doesn't remember this, but I do. I know of his support of the Whiting Little League and of the many local kids growing up in Whiting. I know you have lived in the area for a long time as I have seen your name in the newspapers many times, so you are well aware of Mr. Stahura's love for Whiting and it's people.

Later in life, I would run into "Axle" (Mr. Stahura's nickname) on and off the softball field at Standard Diamonds. He was a fierce competitor but played by the rules. After one game, I was dejected for losing to his team, he came up, shook my hand and said, you pitched a good game and patted me on the back. I said, we will get you next time, doubt it, he replied. We both smiled. I think we might have beat his team once out of all of the encounters, but I guarantee you, he shook my hand that game too.

My next encounter with Mr. Stahura was when I was hired by Amoco Oil Company. Joe would become my trainer. He taught me the skills he possessed to be a Process Operator. Just like in softball, his passion for doing tasks the right way, the safest way, all of the time, was instilled in me. Follow the rules and you will go home to your family. This isn't something that you can fake, explosions happen in refineries because people don't follow the rules. Mr. Stahura would have none of that, either give 110% or leave.

After a few years, Mr. Stahura was promoted to Training Coordinator. He asked me to train a class. This was a huge honor and a very challenging task. How could I live up to the perfection he required. If students test scores were low, this is a reflection on my teaching skills and his selection of me as a trainer. After a round of very difficult tests and low test scores, he called me into his office and said, we have procedures so nobody gets hurt. He pointed to a photo of the 1956 Standard Oil explosion, he said, we cannot ever let that happen again. Follow the rules and procedures. We learned from that explosion, we cannot take shortcuts.

Whiting is a small community, I was active in the community, I would volunteer at the Whiting Fire Department while growing up, I became a Bailiff for the Whiting City Court. Being an officer of the court, I have learned that there are many ways with dealing with people who don't follow the rules. Criminals deserve jail time, misguided citizens can be a resource through community service programs.

Your Honor, judging by the bad apples in Lake County that you sentence, many politicians are in it for what they can get out of it. I truly believe Joe was in it to see what else he can do FOR Whiting, how he could help everyone enjoy a small town.

While I can't comment on what rules Mr. Stahura broke, knowing his passion for procedures and following steps, I can only conclude he wasn't fully aware of all of the rules or the consequences of not following them. Knowing him, he wouldn't do anything malicious to hurt the image of Whiting. He wouldn't tolerate another 1956 explosion.

The City of Whiting has lost a great mayor with his resignation, please find it in your heart for Whiting to not lose a great citizen too.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James J. Witczak', with a stylized, cursive script.

James J. Witczak

Andres Duarte Casillas
1536 John St, Whiting, IN 46394

16 October 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

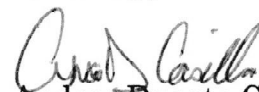
Dear Judge Moody:

My name is Andres Casillas. I am a Senior Technical Network Engineer at Orange Business Services where I have worked for 19 years. Before that I served 4 years in the military working in Information Technology following my graduation from Whiting High School.

I have known Joe for over 30 years, and during that time I have come to value his commitment to our community and approach to life.

Our family moved to Whiting, Indiana in 1985 and was one of the first Latino families in the community. Joe Stahura and his Family were our neighbors and always made us feel accepted at a time when other members of the community did not. He has always been admirable to our family. I went to school with Joe's daughters, Cheryl and Eileen and can remember Joe as a family man. He built a life for his family that many aspire to have. I have seen the same hard work and commitment go into our community as he has transformed Whiting into an amazing beach town. Every year more people discover the towns Pierogi Fest, beautiful beach lined homes, and the old charm that has been preserved with historical homes and buildings. I left Whiting after graduation thinking I would never come back. Now I can say I consider myself a "Whiting Lifer" and that is a direct result of what this town has become under Joe and Joe himself.

Sincerely,



Andres Duarte Casillas

Laura R. Wright
1555 Ohio Avenue
Whiting, Indiana 46324

October 17, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak for my friend Joe Stahura. Even though I feel strongly that Joe was the best mayor this small city has ever known, this more about how he has impacted my life.

Through the years of our acquaintance, I have had much need for friends, with a grandson with a terminal illness. A few years ago, we needed to have a fundraiser to support my daughter Sarah and my beloved grandson Aaron to make it possible to move and live in Pittsburg for a liver and lung transplant. This journey for them could have meant up to two years if he survived. Joe stepped down from the position of Mayor, became a true friend, and rallied our entire city to donate services, buy raffle tickets, and donate time to this benefit. We are a large, well known family in this and other communities all over the county and would have had success, but the difference with our friend Joe and businesses and friends in Whiting put this event over the top. Sarah and Aaron made many trips to Pittsburg, where he was placed on the two organ transplant list. All expenses were covered, and Thank God because my Daughter was never able to be financially successful due to 21 years of constant caregiving or Aaron. Joe knew this and liked and respected her immensely. The saddest irony is that Aaron died unexpectedly 2 weeks ago, and the fund was used to help pay for his funeral. Within days of Aaron's death, Joe send me the most touching and personal card of his shock and sadness. He was in Aaron's journey until the end, despite his own personal situation. A true friend.

I could write extensively of his relationship with my husband whom he considered and respected as a second father and in my husband's case, and in many, he used the talents of those he respected for the good of the city. When my husband

died after a long illness, he found time to meet with me to advise how to have a memorial that would include all the city, where my husband was a teacher, coach, Library board member, and a true friend to the entire city and its children. Joe physically labored from early until the event was over to take the burden off me and our family. When asked to speak a few words at the Memorial, he was so emotional he was unable to speak.

These are only a few personal times in my life where he proved a true friend, and I wish his journey from this day forward to be remembered by all the wonderful things he did for a city he loved, the many he befriended, and not for a serious human error.

:

Sincerely,

Laura R. Wright

Joseph E. Pishkur
34 20th St. SE
Mason City, IA 50401

October 15, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:220 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I learned from a young age that Joe Stahura was an outstanding person. Growing up, I worked for a neighbor who owned a sports card store in downtown Whiting. When he decided to retire and move, Joe purchased the store from him. He took this on all while juggling his career with the local refinery and as well as being a city councilman.

He kept me on as an employee and immediately came in and put his vision to work. He transformed the store into a place to be proud of. His outside the box thinking, grew his store into one of the best sports stores in the Chicagoland area. With the changes in the industry, it was no longer just a hobby for children. He knew that in order to continue to be a viable, thriving store, in a small town, he had to do something to adapt to the changes. Joe did not want to just chase the money and cater to the adult collector; he still wanted to keep the children involved as well. He expanded the offerings of the store to more than just sports cards. He had the vision to put his inventory on the Internet so that he could sell more of his items that would not sell regionally, expanding his customer base to all fifty states and internationally as well. He carried more items that appealed to those that were older, while also keeping the youth involved.

One of the things that Joe implemented was in partnership with one of the trading card companies that when a child brought in their report card, they were rewarded for their good grades. Kids would bring them in and strive to make better grades when they saw that their friends received more rewards with the better grades that they had. They would work hard the next semester and come running through the door, report card in hand, to see what they would receive with their improved grades from the previous semester.

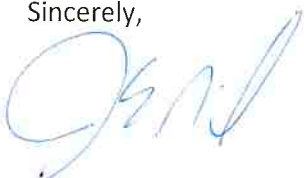
In a small city such as Whiting, as a youth there were not many "cool" places to hold your birthday party at. Joe thought to himself, why not the sports store. He then came up with reasonably priced birthday party packages that could be purchased and held in the store. I remember the first party that was held, how excited the kids were that attended and the excitement that Joe had for making memories for the birthday boy that would last a lifetime.

Some sports store owners have a stigma that they are not approachable and difficult to deal with. People would stop by the store to talk to Joe daily and he never turned anyone away. He always made a moment for them no matter how busy he may have been. He made them feel as if they were the only person in the room when he spoke to them. He made every single person that ever walked through the door of his store feel welcome and as if they belonged there. He preached to me that every last customer counted, it didn't matter if they were spending one dollar or a thousand dollars, each person deserved to be treated with the utmost respect.

I left the store after graduating college and starting my marketing career. When approached with something at work, I would often wonder to myself, how Joe would handle this situation if presented to him. I tend to think outside the box with unconventional ideas; I have treated each and every individual with respect and dignity when speaking to them, both of which I learned from watching Joe run his store. I learned how to speak to the public from listening to conversations that he had with his customers, as well as the people that would stop to just talk to him. I learned how to run a successful small business. Without Joe's guidance over the years, I would never be where I am at professionally. Joe took the time to instill the lessons that were taught to him at my age, in me.

Without Joe's guidance, I do not know where I would be at today. The time that he took to show me how to be professional in the way that I carry myself, to take the time to listen to those around me, to treat everyone with kindness and respect are things that can never be taken from me. I cannot thank him enough for molding me into the professional that I am today.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Pishkur

October 18, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, Indiana 46330

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Joe Stahura for over forty years as a customer of his, a friend and a fellow business owner. I am writing this letter on behalf of my Aunt and Uncle (twin brother and sister) who have been helped greatly over many years by Joe when he was Mayor. I am writing this letter on behalf of my Aunt and Uncle. My Uncle Paul is mentally handicapped, and his twin sister Aunt Pauline has taken care of him almost all of their lives. They have very little income because my Aunt has spent her entire life as a caretaker for not only her twin brother but an older brother and her parents. The home they live in is well over one-hundred years old and has many upkeep challenges. These challenges are magnified given their very low income. During his time as Mayor, Joe Stahura would look out for my Aunt and Uncle. When their home needed a new roof, Joe made sure they were given help in applying for a program which enabled them to have a new roof put on their home.....a roof that was failing but one they could not afford. There was a garage on the property that had fallen into disrepair over the decades and needed to be demolished. Once again, Joe found a program and enrolled my Aunt and Uncle in it. The program paid for all costs to not only demolish the garage but also haul away the debris. The front concrete stairs leading to the front door of my Aunt's and Uncle's home was crumbling and became dangerous. Joe found yet another program that paid for new stairs for them. Joe would often purchase tickets from organizations that would host fundraising dinners in town and pass them out to people in need. My Aunt and Uncle were recipients of many of these tickets over the years.

I, along with my Aunt and Uncle and the entire Gerba/Bednar family are very appreciative of the help Joe gave to my Aunt and Uncle. His kindness eased burdens and made life a little easier for my Aunt and Uncle and I am grateful to him for that. I thank you in advance for your time in reading this letter and considering it as a part of the legal process.

Sincerely,

John E. Gerba

James R. Klochan
2004 Davis Avenue Whiting, IN 46394

October 18, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

My name is James R. Klochan. I have known Joseph M. Stahura for sixty years. we have been friends for all of these years. We grew up around the block from each other. I also worked with and for Mr. Stahura for over twenty years at the BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana.

From a very young age Mr. Stahura displayed honesty and integrity. When we played baseball, we played pitcher's hand out. There wasn't enough players to have a first baseman. Without umpires all calls had to be mutually agreed upon. Joe's honesty was on display day after day and year after year on the baseball fields of Whiting. His integrity made it fun to play with him or against him in not only baseball, but also basketball, football, and many other assorted board games.

Mr. Stahura came from a very large family. He had five sisters and a brother. His mother was a great homemakers and his dad was a truck driver. I spent many night sleeping over and playing at their house. It was a great place to be. His mom and dad had the biggest kitchen that I had ever seen. His mother made the best breakfast meals. There was always plenty of food for everyone.

Mr. Stahura has a heart of gold and is very sensitive to other people's feelings. When we were twelve years old, Joe and I both made the Whiting All Star Team in baseball. The team was good enough to win the state of Indiana tournament. In the first game of the tournament, the bases were loaded and I was on third base. We were down by one run in the last inning with our best hitter batting. The pitch bounced past the catcher and I ran to home plate. I was tagged out, the game ended, and we were out of the tournament. I felt as if I had let down my teammates and the entire city of Whiting. I was devastated. I was crushed. Joe put his arm around me and said that it was okay. He also came to my house to be with me. The next morning, all was right in the world again. In the fifty two years that have passed since, Joe Stahura has never mentioned that game.

Joseph Stahura and I went to different grade schools, different high schools, and different colleges. Driver's education class at Whiting High School was the only class we ever attended together. They gave an award to the best student driver at the end of the course. Everyone in the class believed that Joe was going to win the award. His dad taught him how to drive. He was the best driver in the class and he knew all the rules of the road. He didn't win; Mary Golden was given the award. I could see the disappointment in his eyes. He walked over to Mary and congratulated her. That is Joseph M. Stahura.

Joseph Stahura owned and managed the Whiting Sport Shop. He was in his early twenties at the time. It was a small store that sold fishing equipment, live bait, team jerseys, and trophies. The Whiting Sport Shop sponsored baseball, basketball, softball, and bowling teams. Joe extended credit to almost everyone which eventually cost him the business. He was forced to close. It took him years to pay back all of his suppliers. Being a man of integrity, he did.

Joseph Stahura was hired by the Amoco Oil Company to work at the Whiting refinery. It was a union position as a process operator at fluidized catalytic cracking complex (FCCC). Early in his career, he worked hard to be promoted into a management position.

I transferred into the FCCC and worked as a process operator with Joe. Shortly after, Mr. Stahura was temporarily promoted to run a vapor recovery unit shutdown, mechanical repair, and

startup. The shutdown and the mechanical repair went well. A leak developed during the startup of the unit. Mr. Stahura built a scaffold and sent two pipe fitters in fresh air to change a gasket that was leaking. When the pipe fitters cracked the flange, one of them was splashed in his face mask and he panicked. He pulled off his fresh air mask and was overcome by the fumes. Mr. Stahura caught the pipe fitter as he was falling off the scaffold. Mr. Stahura pulled him to safety. Mr. Stahura then removed the hydrocarbons from the unit. Mr. Stahura saved the pipe fitter's life that night.

Mr. Stahura was the shift supervisor that the other shift supervisors would call when the process units were upset. He would show up day or night to help problem solve and keep us safe.

The most important position that Mr. Stahura held at the refinery was that of Training Coordinator for the FCCC. Mr. Stahura made all the employees more competent at their jobs. He made training both fun and knowledgeable. Mr. Stahura taught us how to use computers and computer programs and how to understand how the data related to safely operating the process units. When I left the FCCC and went to other process units, I realized that the training we received from Mr. Stahura was vastly superior to any other process operator's training.

Joseph M. Stahura has done wonders for the City of Whiting. How was responsible for upgrading Whiting's City Hall and the Whiting Public Library from a pen and paper system to computerized systems.

Mr. Stahura lessened gang activity in Whiting. The City of Whiting purchased downtrodden homes and businesses. The city either rehabbed the properties or demolished them. The properties were then resold.

Mr. Stahura reinvigorated downtown Whiting's business district. There are many new restaurants, coffee shops, bars, and businesses that Joe Stahura, as mayor, attracted to Whiting.

Joe, as mayor, also used grants and city funds to upscale Whiting Park and to build smaller parks throughout the city. Mr. Stahura placed parking meters in Whiting Park to help pay for the salaries of the city workers. The parking is free for the citizens of Whiting.

As mayor, Joseph Stahura used public, private, and corporate sponsorships to build and to maintain the Mascot Hall of Fame.

As mayor, Joseph Stahura implemented a program that enabled homeowners to remodel and upgrade their homes with financial help from the City of Whiting.

The City of Whiting gave month stipends to all the businesses in Whiting during the corona virus pandemic shutdown. This helped to keep the businesses viable while they were shut down.

Joseph M. Stahura is a great man. He has improved the quality of life for all the citizens of Whiting, Indiana. He has done more to improve the City of Whiting in his thirteen years as mayor than the last ten mayors combined.

Joseph M. Stahura became mayor to help and improve the City of Whiting. I am proud to be his friend. I am proud of all his accomplishments. The City of Whiting is better off with Joseph M. Stahura in it. The State of Indiana is better off with Joseph M. Stahura in it. The world is better off with Joseph M. Stahura in it. Please be lenient in judging my friend.

Sincerely,

James R. Klochan

Garry S. Kostyo
P.O. Box 216
Whiting, IN 46394

09/25/20

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States vs. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I initially met Mr. Stahura during a luncheon at St. John the Baptist Church in 2005.
That was the year I moved to Whiting IN.
My thoughts and impressions of Mr. Joseph Stahura are as follows:

He is a personable, thoughtful, caring, and compassionate man.
After my apartment building burnt down in 2013, a few days later I saw Mr. Stahura on 119th. St.
He asked how I was doing and if I needed any clothes or other items.
I told him I had renters insurance and I would be ok.

I started a Christmas gift project for the 80 resident's of a local nursing home, the Hammond-Whiting Care Center.
My Mother was a resident there for 9 years.
I noticed while visiting my Mother about 80% of the residents only receive a few visitors a year.
It's like we have become a throw away society of the elderly, many residents are in need of new clothes.
Every year since 2012, Mr. Stahura helps hand out Christmas stocking and stuffers to each resident.
Mr. Stahura always would pick up a large plate of cookies for the employees of the nursing home.
It is such an honor to have a man of Mr. Stahura's stature help me out with my nursing home project.


Once Mr. Stahura became involved with my project, many good things started to happen.
In 2013, I started sending letters requesting donations to individuals, and various organizations.
I would get donations from organizations that I never mailed a letter to.
I can't tell you how many times I would text Mr. Stahura and ask him who to send a thank you card to.
His answer was always the same "they finally listened to me" and then would give me a name.
He did a lot of networking for me, and I will always be grateful to Mr. Stahura for that.
It is nice to see the residents in new clothes; it helps bring some back dignity to their lives.

My Mother went to Heaven on Palm Sunday, April 9th. 2017.
I will always remember when all of us handed out the Christmas stockings and stuffers in 2017.
When we went by my Mothers room, it was empty, I told the other volunteers to go ahead, and I would catch up with them.
I wanted to have a private moment in the room my Mother spent the last 3 years of her life in.
After spending 5 minutes in the room crying and talking to my Mother as if she was there, I was an emotional wreck.
While trying to catch up to others in our group, Mr. Stahura walked back to me.
He put his hand on my shoulder and said "Garry its ok to cry" That brought me a great deal of comfort.

A month after my Mother went to heaven I received a call from city hall.
Mr. Stahura knew that every day for 9 years I was at the nursing 4-5 hours visiting my Mother.
I was offered a seasonal position in park security at the Whiting Lakefront Park.
This job helps fill the down time I now have, my grieving process, and it gets me out of my apartment.

Thank you for taking time to read my letter.

Respectfully,


Garry S. Kostyo

Michele Rohrman APN
1613 Caroline Avenue
Whiting, IN 46394
October 17, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am writing to you today to ask for leniency in the sentencing of Joseph Stahura. I am hoping that my knowledge of Joseph will help you in making your decision.

I have known of Joe since high school, when we were both elected to Student Council at Whiting High School. I was three years behind him in school, but we have never been friends or close. I knew him in high school as a leader in his class and someone active in sports and school activities.

My real interactions with Joseph Stahura occurred after becoming a nurse practitioner, joining the Whiting/Robertsedale Lions Club, and being the main organizer of Special Dances for Special People. (A monthly dance held by parents for the disabled community at Scott Middle School in Hammond once a month during the school year.) I have a daughter with special needs, which has driven me in my endeavors to increase the quality of life for the disabled.

Many people tend to "look the other way" in regard to the disabled community. They do not have money, power or status. They are marginalized, avoided, and often not valued as citizens.

As mayor of the City of Whiting, Joe Stahura could have looked the other way. However, he never did. He was ALWAYS supportive of endeavors of the Lions Club and Special Dances for Special People. He saw the value of these citizens and supported them whenever asked for help. He not only helped financially with these programs, but he would often attend various functions to support the cause. Some mayors would not bother themselves for this small group, but Joe always did.

Another example of his sensitivity to the disabled community was the construction of an accessible playground next to the Whiting Community Center. This was a very expensive project to be undertaken by such a small community. It has meant a lot for disabled children to finally be able to play in a safe and accessible area with other children.

Joe has never been my mayor, as I am a resident of Hammond with a Whiting address. My relationship with him was limited, but I greatly valued his support and ever willingness to help. I am hopeful that you will take his kindness and generosity to the disabled community into account as you prepare to sentence him. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michele Rohrman APN". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "APN" written at the end.

Michele Rohrman APN

Elaine "Skip" Gehring
1716 Davis Avenue
Whiting, IN 46394
October 5, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I've lived in this community for 92 years. And though I'm in the Robertsdale area, I've always felt like Mayor Joe was my Mayor because of all the Whiting community events I've been involved in. People kid me that wherever two or more are gathered to volunteer, you'll find me there. Well, I think that's true for Joe Stahura too.

I first met him at Pierogi Fest in 2000 when I was out early in the morning dressing up picnic tables. He stopped to talk and complimented us on how nice things looked and thanked us for helping out.

He did the zillion things he did for Whiting, FOR Whiting, not for his own ego. He was at every event, no matter how small. Do you know how that makes you feel when the Mayor comes to your organization's spaghetti dinner or sticks his head in at our Studio 659 to look at the art? It makes us feel pretty special and shows us that he cares! The man had a million obligations but he wanted you to know he thought what you were doing was important too.

He always strived to move Whiting forward. There's no end of Joe's accomplishments. He made our Park into a beauty. He gave us modern tennis courts, baseball stadiums, the Mascot Museum, blocked train horns, new and updated housing, and even free weekend entertainment for the little kids in the summer.

He involved the high school kids as an Advisory Team...AND he listened to them. As a former high school teacher, that said a lot about Joe as a real leader to me.

His head is/was loaded with projects to improve our little city. I admired him soooo much—still do. Joe made us all feel a part of the "big picture." It made all of us feel like part of a family. That's really important in a little place like Whiting.

He was always open—always could tell you everything that was going on from the sewers to the legislature in discussing Whiting stuff. He wasn't just a mayor...he was still one of us, born and bred here, and he would still stop & talk to people.

For me, Joe will always be Whiting and I hope when I see him walking the streets in the future, I hope he'll still hold his head up high because so many of us think he's still "tops." He still has so much to be proud of. He's a good man and for me, he will always be Mayor Joe, the best mayor this region has had in all my years of living here.

Sincerely,


Elaine "Skip" Gehring

October 16, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States vs. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR118

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Joe Stahura for over 40 years. We both attended Immaculate Conception Grade School. I was a few grades ahead of him, but I knew his older sisters quite well. He was always the younger brother who tagged along with them. When he opened his "Cheap Seats" card shop I was a regular weekly customer. He was always fair and honest with me as well as with anyone I would bring into his store.

I was a Social Studies teacher at St. John the Baptist Catholic Grade School in the Robertsdale section of Hammond for 42 years. Joe came to speak to my classes about the workings of city government whenever I invited him.

When the Diocese of Gary decided to close Immaculate Conception Church, Joe entered into negotiations with the diocese with the intent of purchasing the land the church occupied and to make certain that the church grotto would be saved. Not only was this accomplished but Mayor Joe instructed the demolition company to be very careful to preserve the church cornerstone, bell and steeple as well as the entrance doorway header so they would not be destroyed. Mayor Joe met with the IC Grotto and Park Committee numerous times to preserve the grotto and to design the Immaculate Conception Memorial Park for future generations. Joe made sure that his home parish would always have a place in the history of the city of Whiting. This is just one example of the way Mayor Joe has shown his love for his hometown.

Also on the Immaculate Conception property is what is known as the "Schrage Mansion." This was the home of the Schrage family for many years. This house was also the rectory for the priests at Immaculate Conception. When some people wanted to demolish it, Joe worked with the Schrage family as partners to not only save it but to restore it to its original grandeur.

Today the Schrage Mansion restoration is nearly complete and the Immaculate Conception Memorial Park is scheduled to be completed in 2021. These projects would never have been even attempted without the work of a person who truly loved his city and tried to make "The Little City by the Lake" one of the best places to live in Northwest Indiana.

Sincerely,


Frank J. Vargo

Alisa Crandol
7041 Monroe Avenue Hammond, IN 46324

October 4, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody,

I met Joe Stahura through his brother, my neighbor, when they moved in 20+ years ago. I have witnessed his kindness and generosity many times over the years. He has always been quick to help when someone needs it. Whether it be small or large. It's no surprise any time his name is brought up in conversation everyone says the same thing; HE'S AMAZING.

Our 16 year old daughter was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2011 and our world was turned upside down. Joe was quick to offer help and kindness, and when our medical bills started adding up he sent us a check to help with the expenses. More importantly, he continued to support and offer help over the next two year during her treatments; and helped celebrate when she was finished. When her cancer returned this year and she had to have multiple brain surgeries, therapy and treatments Joe again sent us money to help with the thousands of dollars in bills we were dealing with, even though unbeknownst to us he was already dealing with their own situation.

It is my opinion Joe Stahura is a kind, generous, empathetic person who doesn't see himself this way, which is rare for a politician these days. He doesn't do these things because he has to, but because it's his nature. He sees the resident of Whiting as family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alisa Crandol". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Alisa Crandol

Mark D. Harbin
1649 Sheridan Ave.
Whiting, IN 46394

October 18, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, Indiana 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Honorable Judge Moody:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to write a letter on behalf of Mayor Joe. I have been an employee of the City of Whiting for 26 years and have served three mayors. I have known Joe Stahura as a successful business owner, proactive councilman, and visionary mayor. My experience working with Mayor Joe over the past 17 years has always been positive like many people in the community and around the State of Indiana can testify. Working at City Hall under my given titles I was able to see the true character of Mayor Joe daily.

Mayor Joe is family centric. He enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and sharing those incredibly special stories. As an elected official his decisions were always guided by family values. Growing up and choosing to raise his family in the community that he loves guided his vision for the City of Whiting that have benefited residents, visitors, and future generations. Under his leadership his award-winning quality of life projects include the renovation of Whiting Lakefront Park, acquisition and improvements to Whihala Beach, and the adoption of the Marquette Plan to build green lighted biking and walking trails.

Mayor Joe's passion is baseball. His love for baseball can be seen in the construction of the state-of-the-art Oil City Stadium. Oil City Stadium gives a home field advantage to Whiting Oilers baseball, Calumet College baseball, and the Oilmen (an independent collegiate wooden bat league that feature students from around the country). Whiting Municipal Sports Complex is home to Whiting Little League, Whiting and Calumet College softball, a synthetic grass T-Ball field (which parents love), the Mary Lou Piatek Tennis Courts, and the best playground in the city. These venues create pride in our community and generate sportsmanship and friendships that will last a lifetime.

Mayor Joe is a natural born leader. He leads organically by example and is open to evolving based on the situation before him. When hit by the tax crisis at the beginning of his administration, Mayor Joe was proactive in minimizing the impact to residents and business property owners. He contracted a consultant to aid in reassessments and worked with legislators to identify a solution. Mayor Joe grew by identifying the need to diversify the tax base. His foresight to construct new single family housing on abandoned railroad property and in TIF designated districts during the recession, coordinate projects with BP to open land for construction of a new refinery fire department and office complex, and the purchase of signature properties along the business district stabilized the City of Whiting. Grants under his leadership

issued by the Redevelopment Commission and Historic Preservation building standards reimagined a decaying business district. Today these practices and results have opened the doors to private development along the Indianapolis Boulevard corridor and 119th St which is designated by the Experience Whiting Arch. Marketing of special events, the Mascot Hall of Fame, and the WHOA ZONE, a floating water park, made the City of Whiting a destination.

Mayor Joe's strength was his accessibility. He possesses the ability to listen and he made it a priority to be informed and open to new ideas. Media interviews and public forums were a staple of his administration. Changes in legislation impacted the Arts at the School City of Whiting. Established programs were on the verge of collapse. Mayor Joe met with the Whiting Band Director and Theatre Director separately and asked them to submit a wish list and associated cost for their programs to not only continue, but to make them the best for students to succeed. Grants were given to each program and their success continues today because of Mayor Joe's foresight. Now graduating high school students are following their dreams to career paths inspired by the Whiting Band Director and Theatre Director. My daughter Calla, born with Down Syndrome, performed in her first play in third grade. A proud moment for her parents and family. My nephew Ethan received a gold medal two years in a row in state competition in high school and is currently in the Purdue Collegiate Band. Little is known about this gesture in the community, but Mayor Joe's actions continue to make a positive impact on student lives interested in the Arts. My favorite days were when grade school students would visit City Hall to meet our staff and Mayor Joe. Mayor Joe always opened his office to allow students to meet him and answer their questions. Students would leave with smile on face knowing that they met Mayor Joe and inspired to one day sit in that chair. Whether it would be a concerned resident, a business owner with an idea, private investor, or the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee, Mayor Joe always made time, was supportive, and made you feel good about yourself. Mayor Joe always confronted problems head on, was truthful with the public, and identified solutions.

The City of Whiting underwent a renaissance under Mayor Joe's leadership. In the history of the City of Whiting this moment in time will be designated a milestone. I am thankful and proud to be part of Mayor Joe's administration. He consistently challenged Department Heads for continual improvement to better the serve our community regardless of political alliances. Mayor Joe was instrumental in joining the Shared Ethics Commission. Ethics training of department heads and employees was made a priority. All staff participated in ethics surveys and results were used to better daily operation. Safety was a priority. Employee benefits increased with a goal of retaining good employees through retirement. Under Mayor Joe's administration the City of Whiting set the standard for communities in the State of Indiana. Recognition awards for recycling, quality of life projects, and his personal achievements line the walls of City Hall. Mayor Joe was always humble and gave credit to his team. Empowering others was key to his personality and success.

Mayor Joe has lived up to the commitment he made to the citizens of Whiting. His list of goals has been completed. The City of Whiting is positioned to succeed thanks to his leadership. Like all good leaders Mayor Joe has shown the ability to learn from past mistakes and he has demonstrated the courage to move forward. Honorable Judge Moody in your consideration for sentencing, please focus on Joe Stahura's strengths and results and how to best utilize those strengths going forward to make a positive impact in his life and the community.

Sincerely,
Mark D. Harbin



Calla Harbin
49 Sheridan Ave
Whiting, IN 46394

page 1 of 4

10/19/2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

My name is Calla Harbin. I
am 12 years old and I
have Down Syndrome.
I have known for
Mayor Joe Stahura
my life the whole life.
I am so happy to
meet Joe for
Whiting a nice place to
live. He built the

mascothall of frame
for kids like me and
for all people. I love
going to the mascothall
of frame. it is my favorite
place to go.
I am so happy to go.
Mayor Joe gave my
Dad new job at the mas
cothall of frame. Mayor
Joe sent flowers to my
when I had 4 teeth
pulled. He is so nice.
place it was a few

Reminds my birthday
 and holidays. I love
 that does at Christmas
 Easter; the fourth of
 July; and Halloween.
 My favorite part of
 the party is waving
 to Mary Joe and see
 Disney princesses and
 Super Heroes like
 Wonder Woman and
 Black Widow. seeing
 Disney princesses and

Black widow. I like
to visit Mayor Joe
at whitling city hall. he
always talk to me and
made me feel special.
thank you for reading
my letter.

Sincerely,
Callahan bin

Callahan bin

Calla Harbin
1649 Sheridan Ave.
Whiting, IN 46394

10/19/2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

My name is Calla Harbin. I am 12 years old and I have Down Syndrome. I have known former Mayor Joe Stahura my whole life.

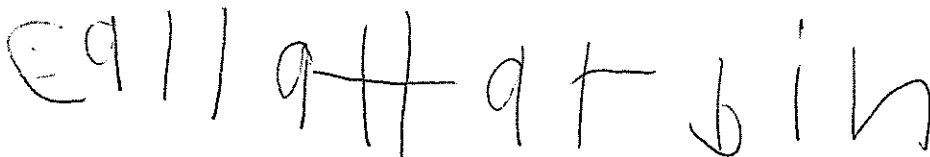
I am so thankful to Mayor Joe for making Whiting a nice place to live. He built the Mascot Hall of Fame for kids like me and for all people. I love going to the Mascot Hall of Fame. It is my favorite place to go. I am so happy that Mayor Joe gave my Dad a job at the Mascot Hall of Fame.

Mayor Joe sent flowers to me when I had 4 teeth pulled. He is so nice. He always remembers my birthday and Holidays. I love to see the parades at Christmas; Easter; the Fourth of July; and Halloween. My favorite part of the parades is waving to Mayor Joe and seeing the Disney Princesses and Super Heroes, like Wonder Woman and Black Widow.

I liked to visit Mayor Joe at Whiting City Hall. He always talked to me and made me feel special.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Calla Harbin". The letters are written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The "C" is large and loops around the "a". The "H" is formed by two vertical strokes connected at the top. The "a" is a simple loop. The "r" is a vertical stroke with a small hook. The "b" is a vertical stroke with a large loop at the bottom. The "i" is a vertical stroke with a dot above it. The "n" is a vertical stroke with a large loop at the bottom.

Calla Harbin



Calla throws out the first pitch at Oil City Stadium

Ethan Harbin
420 W. Stadium Ave. Apt 1
West Lafayette, IN 47906

October 4, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Mayor Joseph Stahura. I am currently a second-year engineering student at Purdue University and many of the key memories in my life have been influenced by Mayor Stahura. He has been the mayor of Whiting since I was born. As a youngster growing up in Whiting, I was always impressed with the beauty of the city from the amazing lake front to the parks, roadways and well-maintained streets and facilities along 119th St. Mayor Stahura was essential to the building of these features and the forward and creative thinking that led to their existence.

Mayor Stahura's commitment to Whiting and programs for youth drove him to build a little league facility with a softball and baseball field, a park, batting cages and concession stands. I spent summers playing and then umpiring at those fields and every opening day, Mr. Stahura participated in the festivities and was an active part of keeping kids involved and providing them a safe and beautiful place to play. As a teen I had the pleasure of playing many games at the Oil City Stadium, another dream realized with the foresight of Mayor Stahura and his continual betterment of the city. He came to cheer on the high school teams year after year.

Mayor Stahura's dedication to developing youth leadership inspired him to create the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council on which I had the honor of serving the community during my high school years. I was able to participate, organize and donate my time and energy to community events including toy drives for the holidays, landscaping projects, recycling public service campaigns, and safe walk to school events. Mayor Joe was instrumental in making these things part of the lives of young people in Whiting ever since I can remember. His commitment to serving and inspiring youth to be community activists and participants always came to the forefront. One of the highlights of my high school graduation was shaking the Mayor's hand after walking across the stage. During my valedictorian address, I personally thanked Mayor Stahura for making the city a wonderful place to grow

up. For him to be present at the graduation event and personally congratulate each student really meant a lot. I was also honored to receive the City of Whiting Scholarship which was created by Mayor Stahura to support higher education for Whiting residents. The effects of that scholarship have helped me as I strive to earn a college degree. The ongoing support will continue through my undergraduate years providing security in knowing that I will have the funds to continue my education thanks to the generous scholarship set up by Mayor Stahura.

He even helped to bring the White Sox World Series trophy to City Hall. Mayor Joe truly dedicated his time and energy to making growing up in Whiting an exceptional experience.

Respectfully and Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ethan Harbin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ethan Harbin

Robert A. Spajer
645 E. 113th PL
Crown Point, Indiana 46307

October 16, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, Indiana 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you, Judge Moody, for the opportunity to write this letter to the court on behalf of Joe Stahura. I understand that you will be taking into consideration what Mr. Stahura has acknowledged in his plea agreement as well as his years as a public servant. I am humbled and appreciative for the opportunity to speak on our family's experiences with Mayor Joe.

I am an accounting professional who has worked in the steel industry for 16 years and this past year for an engineering service company. My wife is also an accounting professional in the steel industry and together we are raising our two boys here in Northwest Indiana. We have known Mayor Joe over the last seven years through my father who is the Executive Director of the Mascot Hall of Fame.

I cannot begin to imagine what it takes to be a mayor and run a city, let alone one with so many community activities like Whiting, IN. No doubt there is considerable sacrifice in time and energy to make a commitment like that. And yet with all that comes with those responsibilities and developing a multi-million dollar project like the Mascot Hall of Fame, Mayor Joe never once failed to treat my wife and I like we were his own niece and nephew and more importantly, treat our boys as if they were royalty. Through all the previews, soft openings, grand openings, induction ceremonies, and countless other visits and interactions, he always took time to converse with our boys about their favorite class in school, anything about the Cubs, when the Blackhawks will win a Stanley Cup again or actually engage them in whatever activity they might be in the midst of. When Mayor Joe could have been meeting with the media, he was playing with our boys in the T-Shirt Shooter Stadium. When Mayor Joe could have been speaking to a new sponsor, he was challenging our boys' geography skills and playing them in a game of Where Are They From? When Mayor Joe could have been interacting with representatives from the professional sports teams that traveled across the country to Whiting, IN, he was in front of the hockey net playing goalie for them in the Sport Court. Somehow in a sport coat no less.

There were probably a million different things Mayor Joe could have, or even should have, been doing with his time between running a city and a multi million dollar children's museum. And when many other adults wouldn't give someone else's kids the time of day, every time there was an opportunity, Mayor Joe treated our boys with value and dignity. While our boys may be too young to have picked up on the significance of that, I can assure you, Your Honor, that it was not lost on us as their parents. Our hope is, as they grow older, they pay that same generosity forward because the world can use a lot more of it these days.

We all make mistakes, Your Honor. Some are big mistakes and some are small mistakes. Mayor Joe has certainly touched our lives in a positive way. I have no doubt that he has done the same for so many other families either directly, like us, or indirectly through his service as mayor for the City of Whiting by bringing them together through the various activities and festivals, or safe places to have fun like the beach or the Hall of Fame. Experiences like those bring families closer together and provide lasting memories for them. If you could please take into consideration the good that has come from his work as a public servant as you are considering what justice to impose, my family and many others like mine would be appreciative of it. Please have mercy on him in your sentencing.

Thank you, Your Honor

Robert A. Spajer

Gayle Faulkner Kosalko
1840 Pennsylvania Avenue
Whiting, IN 46394

September 29, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am writing on behalf of Joseph Stahura. I have known Joe for over 30 years. As Executive Director of the Whiting Robertsdale Chamber of Commerce, I often worked with Joe not only for Chamber/City events but for Pierogi Fest as well. Pierogi Fest would not have become what it is, if it wasn't for not only his suggestions but his willingness to help the Chamber by supplying help from the Streets and Sanitation Departments, city electricians as well as other departments that kept Pierogi Fest a "safe" event. He was there all three days, greeting out of towners and helping to create that hometown atmosphere that he was so proud of. Joe was also the "opening act" of each Pierogi Fest Parade. Whatever bizarre thing that was asked of him, he did it because he wanted that feel of pride and participation, no matter what your status in town.

Joe and his wife Diane were also big supporters of our Chamber Silent Auction fundraiser. Each year they donated "sports" memorabilia which brought in the most money. They always donated the most even before he was Mayor and every year, since I hate sports and know nothing about them, Joe would stop in, explain to me who each of the players were, their team, and why this gift would be popular. Then for the next 20 years, he teased me about my high sports I.Q.

And although we would go back and forth on sports vs. the arts, one of the most important things he did was take that old building, redo it and open it as Studio 659, home of the Whiting Arts where classes were held, exhibits shown, and open mic nights. As schools get rid of art and music programs, Mayor Joe made it possible for them to exist in the city itself!

Since my retirement, I am now the Museum Coordinator for the Whiting Robertsdale Historical Society, and Joe loves the city history and wanted it preserved. Joe was determined to build us a museum. Finally he found us a building and an architect and it was just about to get rolling. Needless to say, it's not happening yet. Joe told us after he resigned that it was one of his biggest regrets he couldn't do for us.

When the Society lost our home at the library, Joe offered his brand new Mascot Museum (for free) for meetings where he'd have his staff set up audio and video equipment (which we older members didn't know how to do...) Every April our traditional guest would be Mayor Joe who would come in, no matter how busy he was, to explain to us what was happening in the city and answer ALL questions he was asked. It was always our largest attended meeting each year.

Earlier when we wanted to do an Identify These Photos event, and had no place to hold it, he opened up an empty storefront, fixed it so we could have lights. On that day alone, thanks to Joe, the museum had over 300 unknown photos identified by people who came in. Naturally Joe stopped in too and within 5 minutes found his Aunt in one of the pictures from the 1940's.

Joe has provided space for us to store our overflow of items in the basement of City Hall where he himself has stored anything that he could find such as the old Star that lit up at the Police Station and a 1920 Petro wagon he got Standard Oil to donate. When Phil Smidt's closed, he sent over people to buy as much of the famous restaurant's wares because he felt the museum should have these items. He paid for them too.

About 10 years ago, I saw Joe across the street standing outside City Hall talking to my parents. He had had my dad as a teacher. This was during a time when there was a rash of men robbing old ladies on their way home from the banks in town. I went out to say hello and found out my parents had just come from the bank. Both Joe and I warned them to be very careful. Within 20 minutes I received a phone call from the Police. My parents had been cornered in the alley; the assailant broke my mother's wrist, and threw her to the ground as he grabbed her purse and took off. Naturally, she went to the hospital and within 45 minutes, in walked Mayor Joe. He felt so bad and the minute he heard about it from the Police, he came to see how she was. That is who Joe is. He goes out of his way to help people, to console people, and try to support those events he thinks help bring out community together. And he really has a deep respect for senior citizens. This is just an example of his innate kindness.

My husband just retired from heading up the Whiting Food Pantry for the last decade. Mayor Joe chose to hold it at City Hall and help support it because he was aware of people who truly needed help. When Covid hit and the number of patrons shot up 25% overnight, Joe donated personally and made sure whatever the Pantry needed would be there.

If one had an idea about creating an event, if I needed something for the museum, if you had questions about anything, you went to see Joe. As busy as he was, he saw you. Joe and I didn't always agree on what actions to take, but I did know he would be there to listen and take the TIME to explain his view.

He gave the Chamber, our merchants, the Historical Society and all of us that live here, not only his creativity, his discipline, follow-through, and his vision, but more importantly, he gave us his time, the most important gift one person can give to another.

Sincerely,



Gayle Faulkner Kosalko



Whiting Lions Club

P.O. Box 349 Whiting, IN 46394

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

Re: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Joseph Stahura. I have known Mr. Stahura most of my 62 years. Joe played youth baseball with my older brother and was well known to my family. As Mayor of Whiting, Joe's presence at my Mother's funeral meant a great deal to my siblings and me.

I was pleased when Joe became Mayor of Whiting. I knew he loved the Community and he would do a good job to improve the quality of life in Whiting, Indiana. As Treasurer of Whiting Lions Club for the past 19 years, I have interacted with Mayor Stahura often. My Club is quite active and Mayor Stahura never hesitated to offer his support and City services to our endeavors. He often made a personal appearance at our events when I am sure he would have rather been at home. Whiting Lions Club could not have asked for a better City partner to interact with in order to accomplish our service project goals.

Outside of his Mayoral duties, in 2018, at his recommendation, members of his family made unsolicited year-end personal donations to our Organization. Joe had told his siblings that Whiting Lions Club was a quality charitable organization and that the Club would use their personal donations for the good of the Community. The gesture was something he did not have to do, but he did, and shows he appreciated Whiting Lions Club and cared for the Community beyond the Office of Mayor.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lion Andy Dybel
Treasurer – Whiting Lions Club
219-659-1658



American Legion Post 80
Department of Indiana
2003 Indianapolis Blvd
Whiting, IN 46394

October 14, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Our organization has been active in Whiting since 1919. We support American Legion programs throughout the state and in our community. We have been allowed to lead the City's Veterans Day Program and Memorial Day programs for a long time. We have been privileged to provide the Color Guard for the Fourth of July parades. We donate to the Whiting Food Pantry. We support Whiting's special activities. We promote development of citizenship through our Flag Etiquette and Education school programs.

Stahura's leadership has improved Whiting's infrastructure and attracted new businesses. Joe did an excellent job of informing us and the citizens of the Whiting-Robertsdale area of Whiting progress in developing the 119th street area and the facilities in Whiting. The articles he submitted to the W-Rite Stuff (publication of the Hammond-Robertsdale Chamber of Commerce) detailed progress in providing the Whiting Sports Complex, Oil City Stadium, Mascot Hall of Fame, revision of the Whiting Lakefront Park, re-paving 119th street including sidewalks. He also explained efforts to bring new business to Whiting. Examples include Whiting Community Health Center, Beggars Pizza, Ace Hardware, & The Taco Dive.

Our rooftop air conditioner had to be replaced in 2018. To remove the old unit and install a new unit, we needed a large crane. The street on the north side of the post, Community CT, would have to be closed for most of a day. Joe Stahura assured us there would not be any difficulty. There were no problems with getting barricades or getting the barricades removed.

We have been helped by Joe during the COVID-19 difficulty. We were ordered to remain closed for 3½ months (no gatherings, no fund raisers, no hall rentals, and no bar operation). Without any income, paying the utilities, building insurance, and maintenance put us at risk of being forced to sell our building. Joe found some COVID-19 relief funds that he could allocate to us to prevent us losing our facility. We received three relief

payments of \$1,000 and one relief payment of \$5,000. These relief payments totaling \$8,000 truly helped us remain a viable organization to help our community.

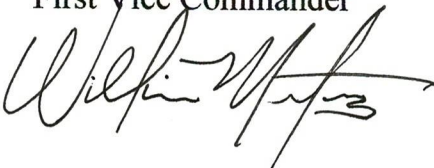
In view of his help for his community and for his help to our organization, we request leniency for his crimes related to misuse of campaign funds. This letter was approved at a regular Post meeting held on October 14, 2020 as is attested by the undersigned officers of the post.

Sincerely,

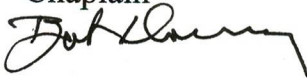
Harry P Triplett
Commander



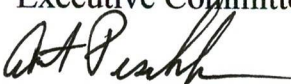
William Montanez
First Vice Commander



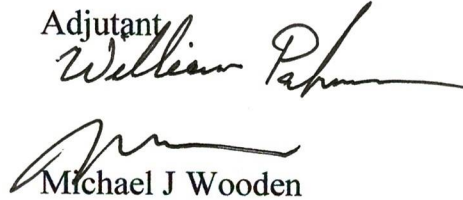
Bob Downey
Chaplain



Art Peschke
Executive Committee



William Palmer
Adjutant

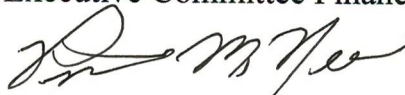


Michael J Wooden
Judge Advocate

Brian Humenik
Service Officer



Patrick Nee
Executive Committee Finance





Whiting Lodge No. 1273

BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS

1521 119th Street, P.O. Box 668
Whiting, Indiana 46394

Edward Boyle
1710 Cleveland Ave
Whiting IN. 46394

October 5, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am writing to you about Joe Stahura and what he has done in the service of the people of Whiting, his hometown. Joe has been dedicated in keeping Whiting a great place to live, a caring place where people support and help their neighbors. Joe has helped to foster a strong sense of community through his support of organizations like the Elks.

Over many years, I as well as many other Elks at the Whiting Lodge can tell you firsthand how he has worked with us to improve the quality of life for many people in Whiting. He has actively played a part from youth programs such as Halloween Parade, Little League, and the Safe Prom program to helping the Whiting Elks host two busloads of sailor recruits from Great Lakes each Christmas day for well over a decade.

Joe would always take time out from his family on Christmas Day, come to our Lodge, and visit with the young men and woman serving in the Navy. For many of these young people, it was their first Christmas away from home. He helped us make Whiting their home for the day as he and other volunteers let the Sailors use their cell phones to call home.

Joe has always had a strong sense of caring for the people of Whiting whom he served. Joe has been generous donating his time to assist us in serving our community. When the Whiting Elks would do community based programs he was often the person we would contact for help and support in getting the program going. When a fire destroyed an apartment building in town leaving many families homeless, the Elks Lodge served as a base for donations of clothing, supplies, and money, Joe played an important role of helping to equitably distribute those donations. For Veterans Day and Memorial Day every year, Joe would march along with the American Legion, Amvets, Elks, and the Legion's auxiliary organizations to honor those who have served our nation.

Developing a strong sense of community and making Whiting a great place to live and raise a family has always been evident in Joe's actions. His support of our Lodge and other civic organizations in Whiting has helped in this effort.

Personally, I have known Joe since grade school. He is a good man who loves his hometown and its people. He has made Whiting a safe and great place to live. Joe has helped put the home in Whiting our hometown.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. Boyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" at the end.

Edward J Boyle
Secretary
Whiting Elks #1273

Lisa M. Daugherty
Lake Area United Way
221 W. Ridge Rd
Griffith, IN 46319

October 7, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Mr. Joe Stahura for a number of years, working with him most recently in my role as CEO of Lake Area United Way. I have been in this role for almost six years now and in that time, Mr. Stahura has not only demonstrated sincere interest in the needs of residents in Whiting and Lake County, but has partnered with us on a number of initiatives to raise awareness of those needs, and ultimately raise funding to provide support to local agencies on the front line serving those individuals.

A few years ago, Mr. Stahura partnered with us on an event that convened young leaders in the community. The purpose was to raise awareness of the one in four families in Lake County who are working, often multiple jobs, but still can not afford basic necessities. We also connected with those young leaders to offer a boot camp training that would prepare them to serve on the boards of directors of many local agencies.

Additionally, Mr. Stahura partnered with us for a couple of years in a special rappel event that raised tens of thousands of dollars to benefit those low-income working families and to be used to build the capacity of several other organizations such as Meals on Wheels, Boys & Girls Clubs, Tradewinds, the Food bank of NWI and Mental Health America. His team's participation made a significant impact on the dollars that were raised for those organizations.

Lastly, Mr. Stahura and the Mascot Hall of Fame, partnered with Lake Area United Way last year on the annual community campaign to again raise awareness of our new work and to raise funding that is directly benefitting the community through us. It required a commitment of time and appearances that many community leaders are not willing to give quite frankly.

I hope you will take Mr. Stahura's commitment to helping the community through United Way into consideration as you consider his character.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Daugherty". The signature is stylized with a large "L" and "D" and a smaller "M" in the middle.

Lisa M. Daugherty
President & CEO
Lake Area United Way



David Raymond
5 Jamison Circle
West Grove PA 19390
9-30-20

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am so appreciative for the opportunity to write this letter to you regarding my support of Joe Stahura. Like many of Joe's friends, constituents and partners I was surprised to hear the news about his misuse of his campaign funds. What didn't surprise me was his ability to claim responsibility and take ownership of his mistakes. That honorable trait has been rare in our world today and is one of the reasons I am reaching out to you.

I first met Mayor Stahura when I visited the City of Whiting to discuss the potential of making Whiting the home for the Mascot Hall of Fame early in 2013. My company, Raymond Entertainment, had created a virtual Mascot Hall of Fame in 2005. The city was a beautiful reflection of small-town USA. Mayor Joe took me on a tour and I was so impressed with the beautiful waterfront development and his plans to make Whiting a destination place for affordable family fun. The Mascot Hall of Fame was to be a signature piece of that development plan. For the next 6 years I worked closely with Mayor Joe and his staff to design, develop and create one of the best children's museums in the country. It was proudly and successfully opened in December of 2018 to rave reviews from the residents of Whiting, the Region, and the Chicagoland area. During numerous meetings, leading up to that day, Mayor Joe always communicated to us that this was for the residents of Whiting and at no time did I ever hear anything from Mayor Joe about his needs or what would be good for him. It was always about the City of Whiting and the benefits we could produce for the residents.

Mayor Joe was beloved and respected by his town. I remember one particular incident that I wanted you to know I witnessed. It was during the preparation for the annual Pierogi Fest. Mayor Joe and I were walking down from City Hall to see the recent progress on the Mascot Hall of Fame building site. There were many folks and their families milling around and getting ready for the events of the day. Mayor Joe was greeted warmly along the way. As we passed by a family...mom, dad and two young sons...Mayor Joe said hello and the parents smiled warmly and waved. But, as we passed them, I heard the father turn to his sons and say, "That is Mayor Stahura and he is responsible for making our town a beautiful place to live." As time went on, I



found this type of testimony not to be rare but commonplace. Over and over again, as I got to know Whiting and its residents and business owners, I heard that sentiment and respect for Mayor Joe.

Joe Stahura's mistake is not the complete measure of his character or of the contribution he has made to his community and constituents. He has demonstrated the ability to do great things in his life and continue to give to others. What he has done for Whiting Indiana is an incredible feat that required a unique ability to see a bright future for an area that most would not see. My hope is you can see a sentence where Joe Stahura pays for his mistakes but can still be free to continue to be a visionary and a productive part of his community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Joe Stahura.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David G. Raymond". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "D" at the beginning.

David G. Raymond
Raymond Entertainment Group
302-229-2687 (cell)

DENISE L. SEJNA
1413 STANTON AVENUE
WHITING, INDIANA 46394
dsejna@gmail.com

October 16, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, Indiana 46320

IN RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

My name is Denise Sejna. I am a licensed attorney who has practiced municipal law for the last 28+ years for both democrats and republicans. For the past 16½ years, I have had the honor and privilege to work as City Attorney for Joseph Stahura and the City of Whiting. While I readily admit I never thought I would need to write a letter such as this, I have no qualms or hesitation about respectfully requesting that you take into account the entirety of Joe Stahura's life and not just the significant matter before you. And in doing so, I hope you can consider leniency in your sentencing order.

When I first started working for Joe in November 2004, I had known of him but did not know him personally. After a few months, I discovered that his dedication and loyalty to his employees, residents, City, and the quality of life in Whiting surpassed that of any previous elected official for whom I had worked.

I feel I had a front row seat in witnessing the compassion and empathy Mayor Joe had for everyone. I would like to share some of those facts and examples with you.

When it came to the employees, Joe was reasonable, generous and patient. When we first had an employee diagnosed with terminal cancer, Joe created a program which allowed all employees to donate unused sick days to the employee in need of additional days in order to stay on the health insurance. He created this and unfortunately it has been used multiple times for people who were terminal, or who had strokes and needed to bridge to disability benefits or were ill with heart issues and needed time for recovery.

Mayor Joe also had a soft spot in his heart for those individuals in the community who were inflicted with mental or physical disabilities. He hired mentally disabled men to work maintenance or to provide street and sidewalk clean up in the business district. He hired someone who was missing a limb and needed part-time work. He provided them an opportunity to live with dignity and respect and to contribute to their community.

When the City tore down the water filtration plant and again when it transferred the operation of the Whiting Community Center to the YMCA, Joe made sure people either had the opportunity to retire with additional benefits or he found them employment with another department. Many became CLD drivers and increased their salaries while other eventually moved on to become firemen in Whiting. He provided employees with an opportunity to advance and make a better life for themselves.

Joe also tried to find a solution to every problem. At one time, the City was receiving numerous complaints regarding an individual who was sleeping and living in his car. He would park overnight in various spots at the Whiting Lakefront Park. Each time the officers would advise him to leave, he would cooperate and then come back the next night and park in a different spot. Mayor Joe decided to go and try to speak with the gentleman. He discovered an individual that had a college degree and had simply fallen on hard times. So of course, he was offered employment with the City in order to help him get his life back on track. Joe has an innate belief in the good of people and did all he could to bring out the best in them.

There are also many residents who can speak to the true goodness of Joe Stahura. He loaned people money to pay their water bills. He loaned money to a woman that NIPSCO had shut off for nonpayment. She had a son in high school who would either shower at school or at the Whiting Community Center because they did not have hot water. Joe personally made many phone calls to social service agencies to try to obtain financial assistance for her with the past due bill. When none could be found, he loaned the woman over \$1,600 dollars. To this day she has paid back \$10 and he has never said a word.

Within the City itself, he tried to include all residents in the city's programs and opportunities. He created a grant reimbursement program to help people improve facades of their homes. When he realized that many seniors did not have the funds to pay up front for the repairs and then wait to get reimbursed, he created a special program for those with a over 65 property tax exemption that paid for the limited work outright. There was even one woman who needed a roof repair that exceeded the grant benefit. So, Mayor Joe paid for the project labor out of his own pocket. This is just who he is – his priorities have always been people and their quality of life.

As an attorney and an officer of the court, I understand that people need to be held accountable for their actions. Mayor Joe has owned his mistakes and accepted responsibility.

He has forfeited the thing he loved best in life other than his family – his position as Mayor of the City of Whiting. I cannot tell you how many times I went to conferences throughout the state and was met with the comment “you are so lucky. You work for the best Mayor in the state.” And indeed, he was. He was always willing to help train new mayors, to advocate for innovative local government legislation and to share his wealth of knowledge and experience.

When this case first went public, I told my coworkers that it felt like a Shakespeare Julius Caesar moment – “The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.” Please do not let it be so with Joseph Stahura. I respectfully request that Your Honor consider the totality of this man’s life and that you choose to graciously exercise your discretion and show leniency on a good man who has already lost so much.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Denise Sejna

Brian Rancich

1737 Stanton Ave. Whiting In, 46394

The Honorable James T. Moody

United States District Court

5400 Federal Plaza

Hammond, In 46320

Dear Judge Moody, I am currently a firefighter/EMT in the great City of Whiting. A little backstory of myself may help with understanding the reason I find writing this letter so important to me. At the age of 15 years old, I moved back to Whiting from Florida after my grandparents were granted custody of me. I was coming from a home filled with violence, drug abuse and an absent father. As excited as I was to be with my grandparents who loved me dearly, I was also a very lost and unstructured teenager. My transition was a struggle. I made some poor decisions during my first two years back in Whiting, which impacted my grandparents in a negative way and painted a picture of me I was not proud of. I knew I needed to start becoming the man my grandparents deserved for all the hard work and time they had invested in me. As many young individuals in similar situations as mine, the most difficult part in turning my life around was not the hard work I knew that was ahead of me or the determination I had towards bettering myself. I hardest part was finding an individual who was willing to see my potential and believe in my abilities. And begins my 14-year journey of employment with the City of Whiting. I have held multiple jobs from a part-time parks department employee moving up to a Code enforcement officer and now to my true passion as a firefighter. This was all possible due to an individual who was willing to help pave a path for a young man who if not given an opportunity could have ended up where he came from. That individual was Mr. Stahura. I remember a specific moment while I was Code enforcement officer which has brought myself and my 2 children to where we are today in our lives. Mr. Stahura called me into his office for a meeting. He was somewhat disappointed to hear I had not applied to fill an opening at the Whiting Fire Department. This caught me off guard being that this man has given me numerous opportunities already for many years. Mr. Stahura encouraged me to apply for position not to only continue to better myself but explained the importance of time this position would have for my children. And today I understand the conversation we had 7 years ago better than ever. The extra time being a firefighter gives me with my children is the greatest gift I have. Time is important to so many young children and grandchildren and please believe me the time my grandparents gave me was cherished and is missed dearly now that they are gone. This incident has made me think of how important Mr. Stahura must be to his children and grandchildren. If a man who is not family could impact my life and my children's lives so greatly, I could only imagine the love his young grandchildren have for him. It makes me wonder what path my life would have taken if I didn't have my grandparents, what path I might have taken if Mr. Stahura didn't take the time and effort on me. Now being 31 years old, I cherish the opportunities I was given. I am grateful for the time Mr. Stahura has invested in me as a young man and the structure he has projected into my life which continues today. I can only hope Mr. Stahura, his children, and grandchildren are given the importance of time together.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Prevatte
1645 LaPorte Ave., Whiting, IN 46394

October 18, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you for taking the time for my letter in reference to Joseph Stahura. Let me start by giving you a little information about myself.

I was raised in the City of Whiting and attended the Whiting School System until my high school graduation in 2004. I was hired by the City of Whiting and appointed by Mayor Joseph Stahura, on October 4, 2011. I am currently a Police Officer for the City of Whiting, have served proudly for (9) years, and hold the rank of Patrol Sergeant.

Growing up in the City of Whiting was not easy for me. I come from a very troubled household that my mother fought hard to keep together and semi-normal for us kids. I'm the second of three children between my parents. My mother is a very determined/hard-working woman and my father, unfortunately, has a very troubled criminal past. I'm not ashamed or embarrassed to share the truth about my family history because I feel it'll prove important in reference to Mr. Stahura's character.

As a child, I was introduced to Law Enforcement at a very early age due to the criminal actions of my father. I've witnessed many things that children/family should not EVER have to witness/experience. Having gone through these experiences, I can tell you, it's not easy moving forward after the court process is over. Being from such a small community, I know, again, from experience, that people talk about the current gossip and become so blinded by the story that they forget about the true character of the one/the family that they're discussing.

I do NOT condone any criminal action nor do I make ANY excuse for any criminal action. I enforce the laws of the City of Whiting and the State of Indiana. I take pride in my career, I took an oath to serve and protect, and I'll never betray my badge.

Having said this, I MUST say that I am forever grateful for Joseph Stahura. He gave a (25) year old kid from a broken home, a local Whiting home, with a very troubled family past, and to be very honest, not a very good family name, and made him a Police Officer within his City. Mr. Stahura saw passed my negative surroundings and did NOT hold any prejudice against me. His decision to appoint me as a Police Officer has brought so many blessings to my life that I never thought possible prior. He truly saw me for who I was and gave me the chance to show who I really was. He gave the opportunity

for me to make my OWN name. The actions and results of the events, of my father, that I had to live with for the (20) years prior to my appointment weighed heavily on my family and myself.

I hope I have made Mr. Stahura and the City of Whiting proud. Despite Mr. Stahura's current circumstances, I'm still proud to have worked under his leadership and I'm very proud of what he has done, not only for myself, but also for the City of Whiting and its residents.

Lastly, I want everyone to know that I did NOT know anything about nor have any prior relationship with Mr. Stahura prior to my hiring in 2011. Since then, I can tell you, Your Honor, and the Court, that he has been a great supporter and has NEVER done anything that ever made me question his leadership. I ask that the Court please keep his character in mind and all the good that he has done, not only for myself, the City of Whiting and its residents, but for everyone who he has positively affected.

Sincerely,

Christopher S. Prevatte

Steve Spebar
Mayor of the City of Whiting
2029 Schrage Avenue

October 7, 2020

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Joseph Stahura for over forty years and witnessed many acts of kindness he initiated with individuals. I would like to share one of those with you today.

There was an elderly gentlemen who resided in Whiting that was down on his luck financially. He had worked at many different places, but never long enough to secure a decent pension. Recently laid off from his last job, he was struggling to make ends meet. Mr. Stahura went out of his way to find the gentlemen odd jobs and give him money to help out. Eventually, through Mr. Stahura's good reference, the man was able to get a job and stabilize his finances. The gentlemen would have been in dire straits without Mr. Stahura's help.

The gentlemen passed away a few years ago. I never heard Mr. Stahura once mention that he had helped the man or taking credit for the financial stabilization. I knew the elderly gentlemen personally and knew what was done to assist him. In conclusion, it must be said that all of these events happened before Mr. Stahura was Mayor of the City of Whiting. Your Honor, thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,


Steve Spebar

Mayor of the City of Whiting

October 14, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura

Dear Judge Moody:


Please let me introduce myself. My name is Jennifer Giancola and I have been employed by the City of Whiting's Clerk Treasurer's office for the past twenty-eight years. I have applied for retirement but continue to work part time for the Clerk-Treasurer.

I was introduced to Joe as he served as a Councilman from January 1984 through January 2004. During his sixteen-year term as Mayor I worked closely with Joe at the Whiting City Hall. He worked tirelessly with a vision of continual progress for our little city. Joe always had the upmost respect for all his city workers, and he encouraged them to continue their education and pursue higher goals. He offered my eldest son Robert an internship during his senior at Valparaiso University. This internship was required for the completion of his bachelor's degree in finance.

Joe was also a great help to my husband and I as we struggled with our youngest son Andrew's opiate addiction. Andrew was sporadically employed at the City of Whiting's Public works facility as a part time worker. Joe was aware of Andrew's sickness and he called me into his office to arrange a meeting with my son. He offered my son a more permanent part-time position with the City if he went in for treatment. This meant the world to our family because this offer of help came from his heart and it was totally unexpected. Andrew lost his struggle a year ago this April but, I will forever be grateful for Joe's concern.

Judge Moody, I still believe Joe is a valuable member of our community and a good human being.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Giancola

Mary C. Lowry
1635 N. McKinley Ave.
North Residence Hall Room 468
Muncie, IN 47306
19 October 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States vs. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

My name is Mary Lowry, and I am writing to you on behalf of Mr. Joseph Stahura. I have known Mr. Stahura for as long as I can remember--he served as the mayor of Whiting for most of my life. Over the years, I have held various positions: first as a community member in Whiting, then later on as a City of Whiting scholarship recipient, and finally, as a city employee in the Department of Parks and Recreation, all of which have presented me with the opportunity to know Mr. Stahura in a myriad of capacities. In all these different realms, it has always been a pleasure to know him.

Mr. Stahura's focus has always been on helping the community develop into something better. As a child, I remember the awe I held watching the transformation of our city. The various projects he took on to improve our parks, sidewalks, and city as a whole made Whiting a wonderful place to grow up. The changes he pioneered allowed my brothers and me to grow up in an area that made us feel safe. We had beautiful parks to play in, smooth sidewalks to learn to ride our bicycles on, and a charming downtown to spend time in and explore. His leadership helped to create a place that has come to mean so much to me, my family, and many others.

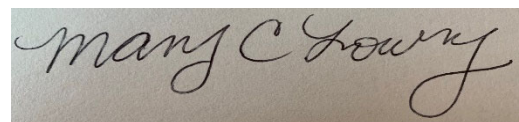
His care for the community continued over the years, as he developed more ways to aid the people of Whiting. In 2017, as a senior at Bishop Noll Institute, I was concerned about the financial consequences that came with pursuing a higher education. Mr. Stahura's previous creation of the City of Whiting Scholarship provided an unparalleled opportunity for me. The former mayor's dedication to helping community members in the form of scholarships played a significant role in my being able to go away to college. It continues to play a huge role in my education, and as I graduate from Ball State University in May of 2021, I am thankful for the aid that Mr. Stahura's program provided.

The last capacity in which I have known Mr. Stahura is working as an employee in City Hall. In May of 2019, he offered me a position as an office assistant for the Department of Parks

and Recreation. I worked for the Parks Department in the summer of 2019 and returned to work for them in the summer of 2020. This job not only gave me wonderful professional experience that was not available at my previous places of employment, but it gave me a more in-depth look at what life was like as a leader and public servant. One of the most impactful moments in that position occurred over the summer, in the wake of George Floyd's death. Mr. Stahura came down to the Parks Department's office and asked me what I thought about him posting on social media in support of those protesting. After taking a few moments to think it over, I shared my thoughts with Mr. Stahura, and he listened attentively. It meant so much to me that he would come, as the mayor, to me, a temporary summer employee, to gain a different perspective and pay attention to my answers. He was exhibiting true leadership; he was looking to listen, learn, and try to support the community in the best way that he could. This leadership was further exemplified when he attended a protest. He stood towards the back and listened to community members share their experiences, then marched in solidarity with those gathered. At his direction, department heads attended the protest to hand out water to participants. It sent a message to all those present that the City supported the protestors, and it spoke to a deeper hope of growing and improving our community together. Mr. Stahura was not afraid to confront the issues people in Whiting were facing, and his presence at the protest showed a want to make the community more inclusive for those of all races, religions, and statuses. It was not just a political move for him, like it was for so many politicians; it was an opportunity to stand up for what he believed in, and it showed the community what kind of a leader he was.

While Mr. Stahura's recent behavior is not the type we should expect from a leader, and it is disappointing to hear of his actions, I remain firm in my belief that Mr. Stahura is a man of upstanding character. His tenure as the mayor of Whiting impacted my life, and the lives of so many others, in such positive ways. He has always looked to serve the public and improve our community. This dedication to public service has served as an inspiration for me; I am currently awaiting LSAT results, with a goal of attending law school. I want to be able to serve my community like Mr. Stahura did for so many years. I hope that this letter and these examples have shown you the admirable man that I and so many others know Mr. Stahura to be. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary C. Lowry". The ink is dark and the signature is written on a light-colored, slightly textured surface.

Mary C. Lowry

Donald Greer
2646 White Oak Ave.
Whiting, IN 46394

October 18, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

Dear Judge Moody

I am taking this opportunity to address you in reference to Joseph Stahura. I will try to be brief. It is my intention to express to you what kind of a man Mr. Stahura is. For the sake of disclosure, I proudly served as the Chief of Police for the City of Whiting during the last year of Mr. Stahura's time in office as Mayor of the City of Whiting. I have known Mr. Stahura since I was a young boy. I have been a police officer with the Whiting Police Department for 25 years.

For the time I have known Mr. Stahura it is my regret that I cannot call him a deep personal friend. It is no fault of his. I have always held a deep sense of admiration for him, but have only been near him on social occasions in a limited manner. It is my hope that it is more attributed to our difference in age (15 years) as opposed to any personal ill will he may have towards me.

During the first 8 years of my law enforcement career with the Whiting Police Department, under the previous administration, I witnessed the routine poisonous political environment that existed. Officers were not rewarded with promotions or advancement based on merit, but were rewarded for political support instead. Often officers were pressured to purchase tickets to political fundraisers or suffer punishment. During the 17 years Mr. Stahura served as mayor I never witnessed any such environment. To the contrary Mr. Stahura routinely promoted officers who neither previously nor later supported Mr. Stahura. Mr. Stahura never tried to force anyone to purchase tickets to their fundraisers.

I have been a lifelong resident of Whiting. As a homeowner, I can honestly say that I would have probably fallen behind on my property taxes and would have lost my house if not for the able leadership that Mr. Stahura supplied to our city during such trying times as the property tax crisis we experienced in 2005. I was a new homeowner and was severely at risk. I thank God we had Mr. Stahura when we did.

In closing, there is a profound act that Mr. Stahura did that I believe reflects his character that I must share with you. On the eve of the announced indictment of Mr. Stahura, he texted me to check on the

health of one of my officers. That officer had previously contracted COVID-19, along with his girlfriend. That officer actually had a history of not politically supporting Mr. Stahura. Mr. Stahura was not concerned with the officer missing work time, but was genuinely concerned for his wellbeing. I did not have any prior knowledge about the indictment announcement and now when I think back, it sticks in my mind that Mr. Stahura had so many things going on around him, but still took the time to check on the officer. He was less concerned with his plight, but more with that officer's. He genuinely has a benevolent heart.

I implore the Court to be as lenient as possible in judging Mr. Stahura for any transgressions he may have committed. He has given much to make this world a better place and I am confident that he will continue to make this a better world if given another chance. I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to communicate with you today.

Sincerely,

Donald Greer

Daniel A. Macon
2622 White Oak Ave. Whiting, IN 46394

October 18,2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody,

I would first like to thank you for your time and consideration in reading my letter in reference of Joseph Stahura. I would like to start my letter out by telling you a little bit about myself.

My name is Daniel Macon and I am currently a Police Officer for the City of Whiting, Indiana. I have proudly been employed as a Police Officer in Whiting for a little over 5 years now. I am assigned to the Patrol division in the Whiting Police Department and I hold the rank of Corporal.

I have been a Whiting resident from the age of 6 years old until now. I have lived in Whiting for the majority of my life and I attended the Whiting School system. I am a proud graduate of Whiting High School, graduating in the class of 2009. After high school, I moved to Westville Indiana where I attended Purdue North Central. I then moved back home to Whiting where I was able to gain employment with the City of Whiting working for the Parks Department.

My first interaction with Joseph Stahura came at a young age. My father was President of Whiting Little League and the Little League was seeking to gain a bullpen area for pitchers to warm up and prepare for the game. My father was able to speak with Joseph Stahura about the Little League attempting to obtain the new bullpens. After speaking with Joseph Stahura, the

Little League was able to acquire the new bullpens. I, at the time, did not know Joseph Stahura, but I immediately was able to appreciate the effort that he put in to help the Whiting Little League system. The acquisition of the new bullpens was due, largely in part, to the help of Joseph Stahura.

My tenure as a City of Whiting employee started in the summer of 2009, after I had graduated from high school. I was offered a seasonal position in the Whiting Parks Department. I worked for the Parks Department for the summer until I left for college. Every summer after 2009, I was offered a position as a City of Whiting employee.

I then made my decision to pursue a career in Law Enforcement. I attended and graduated from the Northwest Indiana Law Enforcement Academy in 2014. I was very proud to become a certified Law Enforcement officer in the State of Indiana.

After graduating from the Northwest Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, I applied for and was offered a conditional offer of employment for the City of Whiting. I took my oath and became a sworn member of the Whiting Police Department in April of 2015.

I remember Joseph Stahura coming up to me after taking my oath and telling me that he was proud of me. Joseph Stahura told me that he was proud of how far I had come and that he was excited to have me as a member of the Whiting Police Department.

During my tenure as a Whiting Police Officer, I became the President of the Whiting Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #68. As President of the Whiting FOP, I had a good relationship with Joseph Stahura. I had a meeting with Joseph Stahura after I became President and he again told me how proud he was of me. Joseph Stahura told me that he was excited that I stepped into the role of President and that if I needed anything on behalf of the Police Department, to please, come and see him.

After becoming President of the FOP, there were a few equipment upgrades that I believed would be beneficial to the department. I took these ideas to Joseph Stahura and explained how the new equipment could benefit the department as well as the citizens of Whiting. Joseph Stahura was openminded to working with the Police Department and was supportive in attempting to figure out better solutions for policing and providing the updated equipment. These pieces of equipment have helped tremendously for our department to solve crimes and to help with traffic control.

I have been proud to work underneath the leadership of Joseph Stahura. At no time during my tenure as a Police officer or as a City employee, did I question the leadership of Joseph Stahura. I always believed that Joseph Stahura was a great supporter of our Police Department and that he wanted the best for the officers, as well as, the citizens of Whiting.

I would like to say that I do NOT condone criminal activity, nor do I make excuses for it. I am proud to be a Law Enforcement officer and I stand by my oath. I will never betray my oath or my badge.

Having said that, I am grateful to Joseph Stahura for giving me the opportunity to serve and protect the community that I love. I cannot thank Joseph Stahura enough for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime by appointing me as a member of the Whiting Police Department.

I ask you, Your Honor, and the Court, to please keep Joseph Stahura's character in mind for all that he has done for the citizens of Whiting. I am appreciative of the many great thing he has done for the City of Whiting and myself. I always looked at Joseph Stahura as a man who put others before himself and I, again, am forever grateful to him for the opportunity that he has given me.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Daniel A. Macon

Michael J. Mantich
1506 Center Street - Whiting IN, 46394

September 25, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I have known Joe Stahura off and on for over 45 years. I have lived in the City of Whiting for 61 years. I served as his Fire Chief for 6 years between 2002 and 2008.

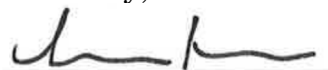
Joe had a positive impact on me personally as he was one of the finest people I had the opportunity to work for. He was supportive of my decisions in the department and made me feel as part of a team. With his help we were able to create a more professional department and reduce our city insurance rating therefore saving citizens of Whiting in insurance premium.

One of the hardest decisions I made was to retire from the fire service and tell Joe of my decision. When I made him aware of my retirement, he made me feel comfortable and was welcoming of my decision.

Additionally, Joe improved the quality of life of my family and the citizens of Whiting by improving our infrastructure, lakefront park area, and downtown business section. He always had best intentions for our city.

Joe was one of the hardest working mayors in Whiting that I have ever known. I can attest to that because I would see that he was at City Hall working on Saturdays and Sundays and while visiting him in his office for over 16 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael J. Mantich', written over a horizontal line.

Michael J. Mantich

Stephen Miller
1635 Atchison Avenue
Whiting, Indiana 46394

October 12, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I am writing this character reference letter to express my support for former Whiting Mayor Joseph Stahura, who recently plead guilty to crimes involving the misuse of his campaign funds.

I have known Joe and his wife Diane since our high school days. We all graduated in 1974; Joe from Whiting, Diane and I from the rival high school, Clark. Although we didn't run in the same social circle during our younger years, Joe was an athlete and I was more interested in race cars, we became close friends during our professional careers.

I retired from the Whiting Police Department in November of 2019 after having served in law enforcement for forty years. When Joe started his first term as mayor in 2004, he appointed me as chief of police and I held the position for the last sixteen years of my career. It was an honor and privilege to serve in that capacity and I am forever grateful to Joe for giving me the opportunity.

I worked closely with Joe on many issues during my time as chief. He introduced me to the business side of running a police department and I, in turn, helped him gain more knowledge about the challenges facing law enforcement. We made a good team; he looked to me for my expertise on policing, and I certainly looked to him to manage the complexities of the budget process. He was an exceptional mayor and fully supported me as a department head, I remain thankful for his patience and leadership.

Joe understood the needs of the police department and while I didn't always get everything I asked for, he did his best to support my expenditure requests; for example, he implemented an annual purchasing plan to replace an aging fleet of police vehicles, upgraded computer and communication systems, and made sure officers were appropriately equipped to perform their duties, both safely and effectively.

In addition, he was the driving force behind a complete re-write of the police department's policy and procedure manual; worked with me to promote officers based on merit, and supported the hiring of new police officers to ensure the department was adequately staffed to serve and protect our community.

Joe discussed his situation with me almost immediately after he became aware of the criminal investigation and expressed great remorse. The news was devastating, Joe is a loving husband, father and grandfather who absolutely adores his grandchildren and I believe his actions are completely out of character for the man I know him to be. As Joe supported me during my tenure as chief of police, I am fully committed to supporting him through this most difficult period in his life.

I most respectfully plead for leniency and sincerely hope that you take my thoughts into consideration as you deliberate on sentencing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Miller', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Miller

Ryan P Eder
3004 97th Place
Highland, IN 46322

10-16-2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

I would first like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide you with a glimpse into the impact my friend, Joseph Stahura, has had on myself and family. My name is Ryan Eder, and I am writing this in collaboration with the entire Eder family. We own and operate three successful Beggars Pizza Franchises in Dyer, Whiting and Valparaiso. Our second location is in Whiting and we opened the doors on February 12th, 2013. When we first began to look for a second location, we narrowed it down to two areas. Whiting and Valparaiso. In the late summer 2011, we decided Whiting as the first area to scope out possible locations and get a feel for the city.

Within the first block of walking down 119th Street we were encountered by multiple representatives of Mayor Joe's administration. Once we identified our reason for being in town, they all began touting the growth and potential for a Beggars Pizza location in Whiting. This to us showed the leadership and dedication Joseph Stahura has displayed to his town and the trickle-down effect it has had on his staff. They set up a meeting for us with Mayor Joe the following week. This meeting was our first encounter with Mayor Joe and his excitement to us potentially bringing a new business to the city made us feel like this was the area to invest our hard-earned money.

It was easy to identify his passion for the future and presented us with his plans for growth within the city. With the revitalization of the lake front already under construction and the recent completion of Oil City Stadium showcased his ability to turn big ideas into progress. We were immediately sold on his view of the future and wanted to be apart of that growth. Our family's decision to invest 1.6 million into a vacant building, built in 1926, which required a complete renovation was entirely based on the potential growth of the city under Joseph Stahura's leadership.

Ever since our first meeting he would always have a line open to us with any issues we were having and would direct us to the representatives in his

administration to best answer our questions. As the years went on that line of communication and passion never wavered. An example of this was in 2015 during the employee strike at BP. We had an order for over \$10,000 to the BP Refinery while the strike was still going on. When asking the BP Rep for a deposit I remember he stated, "Were BP we don't give deposits."

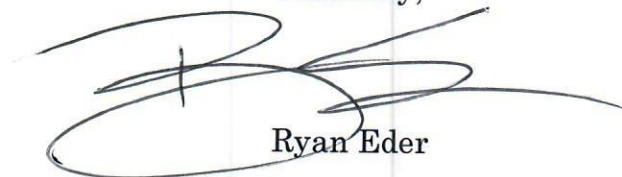
This order took over 2 weeks of preparation and we had to utilize both locations to complete in the timeframe we had for that day. We had employees working overtime the days leading up to and had staff come in at 7 AM the morning of the order. On that day about 9:15AM, well into the process of completing this order, I received a call on my cell from the BP Rep. He told me they had to cancel the order because his boss received an email from an anonymous source stating we were going to taint all the food that day to get everyone sick due to the strike.

As you can imagine, this made me sick to my stomach. We worked so hard on this order and had so much time and money already invested just to have it cancelled that day. My first call after hanging up with the BP Rep was to Mayor Joe's cellphone. He was unaware of this big order and I was able to explain the situation to him. He told me that he will do what he can. Within 15 minutes I received a call on my cellphone from the BP Whiting Refinery spokesman, Tom Keilman, regarding the cancelled order. The Reps came in about an hour later and paid in full without receiving any product. This speaks to a man who cares about his people and will drop everything to help support his community any way he can.

The best characterization of Joseph Stahura I can tell is one that does not have anything to do with business but only his friendship. My father has been in remission for prostate cancer since 2011 but in June of 2019 it started to show up again. He was faced with many options to combat it but chose to go to Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for an experimental procedure. This process required daily visits to the clinic for about 10 weeks which required him to stay in Minnesota for that period. The only friend to come visit my father in Minnesota was Mayor Joe and his wife Diane along with Al and Debbie Spajer. He brought a huge card signed by city staff that stated "Every PIZZA our hearts... Begs you to get well soon." With a big heart shaped pizza in the background.

He did not have to go out to see my father but because of the man he is he did. He even texted my brother Jon and I while he was out there to tell us about the visit. This example of Joe Stahura's Character is only one of many. He has a special place in my heart, and I know for many others as well. I hope you can find it in your heart to have some compassion for a man that has always dedicated himself for the good of the people around him. Again, thank you for your time your Honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Ryan Eder", with a large, stylized "R" and "E".

Ryan Eder

Thomas P. Keilman
1760 Greenwood Dr.
Crown Point, IN
46307

October 14, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Based upon news media accounts, it is my understanding that Joseph Stahura has admitted to wire fraud and tax offenses. I am writing this letter to you on Mr. Stahura's behalf. While Mr. Stahura has admitted to these offenses, prior to issuing a judgment, I believe it is important for the court to take into consideration elements of Mr. Stahura's overall character and his public service to the City of Whiting and the community of Northwest Indiana.

As a means of introduction, I have previously worked in the public sector as the Town Manager of the Town of Merrillville and I have recently retired after 22 years of service from BP America, serving as Director of Government and Public Affairs. It is through these positions and many interactions that I have gotten to know Mr. Stahura.

Before the court passes final judgement, I would request that you take into consideration other aspects of his character and life in public service. I have personally witnessed his interaction with residents of the community and other elected officials throughout the State of Indiana. Seldom has he ever had negative or derogatory comments about local community people or elected officials, regardless of political party. Mr. Stahura in his public and private life was always known to be a kind person and a consensus builder. That is why he was able to accomplish profoundly good things for the City of Whiting and the Community of Northwest Indiana.

I have witnessed his personal commitment to public service and to the community. I personally worked with him on behalf of BP America to build consensus with local community leaders, the Indiana Legislature, and the Governor's Office on the Establishment of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority. The establishment of this governing body has led to the creation of many jobs and the redevelopment of much of the Lake Michigan Lakeshore specifically Whiting Park.

It has also contributed to the future extension of the South Shore Rail line, and other redevelopment projects throughout Northwest Indiana. Under his leadership, the City of Whiting invested in major local infrastructure that assisted the BP refinery on the investment of multiple billions of dollars to modernize and secure the future of the refinery. This occurred during the period of the Great Recession - one of the worst economic downturns of modern history. The refinery modernization project brought much needed construction employment and tax dollars into the Northwest Indiana economy and the overall economy of Indiana during exceedingly difficult economic times.

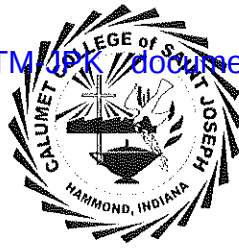
These are just a few examples of the many positive contributions that Mr. Stahura has made through his actions as a leader in our community. I could point to many other examples. I would like to conclude, that Mr. Stahura has done wrong in the eyes of justice. Justice should never turn a blind eye. However, a man must be judged in the eyes of the law also by his commitment to family, his community, and his friendships in life. I therefore request that the judge take all of these factors into account when you pass judgment and sentencing on Mr. Stahura's wrongdoing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. Keilman". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Thomas P. Keilman
Lifetime resident, Lake County, Indiana

Calumet College



of Saint Joseph

You Belong!
ccsj.edu

Dr. Amy McCormack
Calumet College of St. Joseph
2400 New York Avenue
Whiting, IN 46394

October 7, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46394

RE: United States v. Joseph Stahura
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Calumet College of St. Joseph (CCSJ) is located on the border of Whiting and Hammond. I became president of the College in 2017 at which time I was introduced to Joseph Stahura. At that time he welcomed me to the College and to the city and I have been blessed to be able to work with him ever since. His vision extended beyond strictly city entities and he has always embraced the College with open arms and enabled us to work with the city to better our students and the citizens of Whiting.

Mayor Stahura has made the city of Whiting not only a great place to visit, but an excellent place to live and play. His accomplishments are too many to list, so I will address those of which have directly included Calumet College of St. Joseph.

In 2011 the city completed the Oil City Stadium project. This \$8.5 million structure is home to the Northwest Indiana Oilmen (Midwest Collegiate League), the Whiting High School Oilers, and CCSJ. Stahura intentionally build this stadium to house both the local high school and college, and added the NWI Oilmen to the community. The College has been able to play in this amazing stadium rent-free. When the softball fields were constructed, CCSJ's softball team moved into those as well. These stadiums are quite a draw to baseball and softball recruits.

In July of 2020, the Illiana Apartments in downtown Whiting were opened. It is a 5-story mixed-use building with 32 two-bedroom apartments. CCSJ was invited to be a part of the planning process for this project, and a master lease was completed for 14 of the apartments to be used by CCSJ students. This housing is a first in the College's history and a tremendous step forward for us. It adds so much value not only to the College, but to the community as well.

As the Mascot Hall of Fame was being planned, he reached out to the College to assist with planning STEM activities for visitors to the museum. This enriched our Education students who had this amazing opportunity to work closely with the planners to create programs that were both educational and fun for young visitors. They could see the results of their labors and hone their talents to be used in their future as teaching professionals. This experience was invaluable to them.

Since at the time, Calumet College did not have a mascot, Mayor Joe connected us with the founder of the Mascot Hall of Fame, David Raymond (the original Philly Fanatic), who helped us design our mascot, Crimson Joe. Stahura also assisted with finding funding to finance the creation of Crimson Joe. This has elevated school spirit and the awareness of CCSJ within the community and the Calumet Region. We could never have accomplished this without his guidance.

Since its inception, our media students have been able to create public service announcements for Whiting's Halloween event, Wickedly Whiting. The mayor has always been a willing participant in these PSA's and was a great sport about it. Students also participate in all of the City's events and find the joy of community service.

As a small college, examples such as these of "community as campus" help to enrich our students' college experiences not only by the ability to use the facilities, but to be drawn into the life of the Whiting community.

As mayor, Joseph Stahura was a strong supporter of higher education. In 2011, the City of Whiting offered a 4 year scholarship of \$10,000 (\$2,000 per year) to four students whose parents owned homes in the city. Since then, the scholarship has increased to \$25,000 (\$6,250 per year). Being a proponent of community service, that is one of three categories of the application.

This support has always extended to Calumet College of St. Joseph and it has greatly enhanced the College's standing in the community, the Calumet Region, and beyond.

Mayor Stahura focused on making Whiting a draw for new residents from Illinois with lakefront improvements, downtown enhancements, bike trails and new housing stock. His energy, improvements such as these, and vision for Whiting were among the reasons I relocated from Oak Park, IL to Whiting, IN.

These are just a few examples, and I hope you will take the good he has done into account at this time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy McGormack", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Amy McGormack
President

Amy and Joel Bender
1307 Davis Avenue
Whiting, IN 46394

October 1, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

Re: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you in advance for taking the time and consideration to read this letter.

Please allow me to introduce myself as Amy Bender, along with my husband Joel Bender. We write this letter in support of who we have always known as Mayor Joe Stahura, now who we will refer to as our friend Joe.

Joel and I came to know Joe on a personal level during 2016, when our thoughts and determination to open our very own business came to life; a puzzle, toy and game store right in the heart of Downtown Whiting.

We immediately felt to be an asset and had a very strong sense of pride in sharing with everyone that we were a part of the Whiting community, as both business owners and local residents. A community that everyone seemed to identify with Joe. It was his vision and devotion to his City that drew us in. Through his extreme generosity of the Economic Development Program, we, along with others, were afforded the opportunity of a grant toward our start up business. This was just one way that Joe encouraged valuable growth in the Whiting community, thus creating and fostering the local quality of life that we have been grateful for every day.

Joe has put others first, spending countless hours bringing to life his vision to revitalize what was a mature and wearing community. Under his leadership came the addition of a unique waterpark attraction on the lake, the Mascot Children's Museum, and multiple free shows, concerts and events around town, all to bring families together. The revitalization of the lakefront park, tennis courts, baseball fields, the 119th Streetscape, the various grants made available to attract new business and to maintain the appearance of the storefronts in the downtown business district. And then, during the recent most trying times Joe once again went above and beyond, putting others first, to find resources for all community businesses, in an effort to support their continuity.

Joe took time. Joe often stopped in our business, and with his family, and would treat his grandkids. You

could really see how much he loves his family. Joe often checked in on us to see that we were doing ok, especially during the onset of the Covid related shutdowns. We know he genuinely cared and worried about us, and the community which he represented with great pride. In the midst of the chaos, a local shirt shop created a booster t-shirt that read 'Shop Eat Play Local- Whiting'. Joe purchased and often proudly wore this shirt in support of his business community. Joe was always there. He held regular forums for the public and others, and we watched as he patiently listened to feedback by residents and businesses alike. It was always about what everyone else needed. At a time when some business owners weren't seeing eye to eye, Joe jumped in the lion's den by hosting a merchant's meeting to open up the lines of communication and to provide support.

Other's needs were always Joe's focus, seeking to please and keeping the people happy; and they were not always the easiest crowd to work with. Joe listened, took serious everyone's concerns and worked hard to execute changes for a solution.

Joe's leadership was strong. He is dearly admired. It has been often that residents who were once a part of the Whiting and surrounding communities, and have since relocated South, have commented on the work Mayor Joe has done and what a nice community Whiting is. Joe's hard work and dedication to the Whiting community will forever have a positive impact on the quality of thousands of people's lives. Joe grew up in the Whiting community, he believed in it's potential, and he truly invested all of himself and the majority of his time there; many evenings, weekends and holidays. Joe's pride in Whiting is his life.

Understanding there is consequence as the result of certain actions, we know he is already paying a severe price. He is being served public shame, embarrassment, humiliation, cruel verbal attacks by those in media and on social media by those who do not know Joe, and ultimately the forfeiture of his identity as Mayor, and quite possible a relocation from the City he has loved loyally during his lifetime.

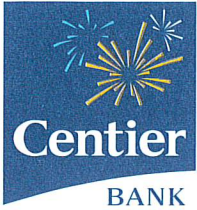
Joe has sacrificed much of his own personal time with his family; his wife, children and grandchildren. Time is most precious. We are people of faith in God and we pray that Joe be allowed this next phase of his life spent with his family. Joe and his family have selflessly given so much of their time to others.

We are indebted with gratitude to Joe Stahura for the significant impact he has directly made to our lives and so many others. We could not possibly compete to give back to him what he has given to us. Joe is a good human and we are grateful to have come to know him as we have.

Judge Moody, once again, we sincerely thank you for your time and consideration for our friend Joe.

Amy Bender

Joel Bender



600 East 84th Avenue
Merrillville, IN 46410-6366
219.755.4741

Michael E. Schrage
CEO and
Chairman of the Board

October 13, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, Indiana 46320

Re: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Joe Stahura and I have professionally known each other for over 25 years. He has dedicated his life to the redevelopment of the City of Whiting. Like many of us, he is not perfect, and his errors of judgement have rightly cost him his position of Mayor. The City, the people, businesses, and community organizations will always be indebted to Joe for his commitment to their betterment.

On numerous occasions, I invited Joe to be the Bank's guest at Blackhawks hockey games, which he declined based on the banking relationship the City held with Centier.

I admire Joe for what he has accomplished in the City and hope we all realize the amount of good he has done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael E. Schrage", written over a horizontal line.

Michael E. Schrage
President and Chief Executive Officer

/dh

David A. Wood
3421 Wild Cherry Ridge West
Mishawaka, Indiana 46544

October 15, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my letter on behalf of Joe Stahura. I do not take writing this letter lightly. I believe in the justice system and trust in the outcomes that occur within. Therefore, I have never written a letter of this nature despite occasional requests. I write this one only because of my friendship and appreciation of Mayor Joe and what he has meant to me, my peers and thousands of people around the State of Indiana.

I met Mayor Joe shortly after I was first elected as Mayor of the City of Mishawaka in 2010. As a new mayor, abruptly taking over the term of my predecessor, and never expecting to be the Mayor of my hometown, I was pretty intimidated to say the least. Mayor Joe was among the first to reach out to me and offer help, encouragement and wisdom. Despite being from different parties and from two different worlds geographically and politically, Mayor Joe went out of his way to make me feel welcome and to let me know he was always available should I have any questions about my new job. That was of great comfort to me and we struck up a fast friendship. Now that I am over ten years into my job, I strive to follow Mayor Joe's example when new mayors assume office.

As I got acclimated in my new role and as I got to know Mayor Joe, I found that he was extremely knowledgeable about the job of mayor; the quintessential hometown mayor and a great example for which to follow. Upon visiting Whiting for the first time, I was greeted by the message on the entry gate of the downtown that simply says "Experience Whiting". Whiting is a unique city that stands for all the values that are good in this country with a unique ability to poke fun at itself. I was blown away by the creative events, projects and partnerships that Mayor Joe was responsible for.

It was clear that he had a tremendous impact on his community and that Whiting benefitted greatly from his leadership. It was also clear that leaders from all around the State were taking notice. Now mayors are known for bouncing ideas off each other; if they see a good project or program, no matter the town, they will "copy and paste" it in their town. I can tell you that when you travel around the State of Indiana, you will notice that there is a little bit of Whiting (and by extension, Mayor Joe) in many communities around the State and certainly here in Mishawaka. I believe that the quality of the lives of thousands of people have been made better because of Mayor Joe's vision and leadership that have transcended Whiting.

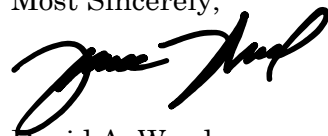
I admire Joe's leadership characteristics and family values but he also processed what I believe to be the most important requirement for the job of Mayor, an unwavering love and passion for the people and the City that he represented. As I said, that was on display for all to see and a simple drive through Whiting will reveal that. The true measure of a good mayor is how much his or her citizens love them back. This is a tough business where difficult decisions have to be made. To survive, indeed to thrive for four terms is very rare. Experiencing Whiting is also to see a community that loves there Mayor. I have witnessed and admired on many occasions the love and affection that the citizens of Whiting had for Mayor Joe.

Mayor Joe could have been content to sit back and run my second favorite city in the State for as long as he liked but he believed that he had a greater obligation to promote local government and educate others about the vital services that they provide. Mayor Joe conceived of, began and led the "Trust Local" campaign through our Indiana association of local municipalities, Accelerate Indiana Municipalities [AIM] several years ago. This initiative, and Mayor Joe's leadership of it, was instrumental in educating State legislators and influencing legislation in importance of local government. This initiative has successfully raised awareness about the benefits of local decision making and it continues to grow to this day.

In short, I admire Mayor Joe's leadership and all the great work he has accomplished in the City of Whiting. Joe not only has done an effective job in his role as Mayor by making Whiting a model for others to follow but has also taken on a leadership role in the State of Indiana on our efforts to promote local control and efficient, effective local government. Mayor Joe also loves, protects and defends his family and the citizens he represents without exception. You see, Mayor Joe has made a far more positive impact than he has had negative in my opinion. Please don't underestimate his contribution not only to his hometown but to the State of Indiana as a whole. I, and most mayors, are in the impact business. That is what we love about this job. Mayors can uniquely make an impact like few other levels of politics can.

Mayor Joe is a good man that has made mistakes. He has freely admitted that. This has come as a shock to me and to many. It is hard to accept and to witness a circumstance such as this befall a person you greatly admire. Having had an opportunity to reflect on this situation and visit with Mayor Joe, my love and admiration of him has never been greater. I know that this is also the case with many of his colleagues, peers and citizens. I feel compelled to write this difficult letter to kindly appeal for leniency in his case. Joe Stahura has made a far more positive impact on the lives of thousands of Hoosiers than most people I know. I urge you to investigate my observations of Mayor Joe for yourself and to please consider that as you reflect on sentencing Joe Stahura.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Wood", written in a cursive style.

David A. Wood

HARLEY SNYDER CO, LLC

4601 Thornbury Drive, West - Valparaiso, IN 46383

V: 219-477-8821- F: 219-465-7685

e-mail: hws@hsc-inc.net

October 18, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

As one of two gubernatorial appointees, commencing in 2005, to the founding Regional Development Authority Board (RDA), I had the privilege and opportunity to become acquainted with most if not all of the Mayors and City Managers in Lake and Porter counties encompassing the RDA. Joe Stahura stood out among those individuals. We are fortunate in Northwest Indiana to have and to have had some foresighted, innovative, responsible elected officials. Notwithstanding his current circumstances, I consider Joe Stahura to be among those individuals.

His work for the City of Whiting including lakefront development, rebirth of downtown, and a sense of community were all engineered by Mayor Stahura. During his tenure, these and his many other accomplishments set the City of Whiting apart from it's competing communities. All stand as long-term assets to not only the City of Whiting but to Northwest Indiana as well.

A couple of years following my departure from the RDA, Mayor Stahura and I began conversations about his desire to enhance some redevelopment of vacant and/or abandoned sites within the City of Whiting. I entered into a service agreement with the City of Whiting to bring new development to the city which spanned a period of approximately two years. Simultaneously with that effort, the city, under the direction of the Mayor, created opportunities for smaller redevelopment projects. During that same period, the Mayor, through his own creativity began the project known as The Mascot Hall of Fame. While somewhat dampened by the Pandemic, the success of this project is expected to be a long term visitor asset to the City of Whiting and Northwest Indiana. The recent completion of the redevelopment of the Iliana Hotel property will be a long-term commercial asset to the community. Other

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development opportunities continue with ongoing discussions that a more stabilized economy will bring to the City of Whiting.

Joe Stahura is and has been a huge asset to the history of the City of Whiting and Northwest Indiana. I make no personal comment nor excuses for whatever the truth and facts may be about his current set of circumstances. Only to suggest that his efforts and contributions to and for the City of Whiting and Northwest Indiana will live on for the benefit of all of their residents and occupants.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harley W. Snyder', with a stylized, flowing script.

Harley W. Snyder

Matthew Greller
4487 Diamond Ridg
Greenwood, IN 46143

October 16, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody:

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts concerning Joe Stahura. I serve as the CEO of Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim). Aim was formed in the 1890s as an advocate for Indiana municipalities. The Aim membership includes most of the state's 569 cities and towns. I have known and worked with Joe for nearly 20 years.

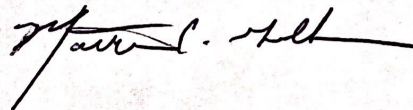
I understand Joe has admitted to wire fraud and tax offenses. In speaking with Joe, I know he deeply regrets these actions. I was shocked to learn of his legal issues because of the profound positive impact Joe has had on me, Aim and many municipal officials throughout the state. Joe is widely respected for his sharp mind and willingness to assist other mayors. As mayor, Joe had a keen understanding of municipal finance and economic development. He worked tirelessly to bring new development to the City of Whiting. Projects such as the Mascot Hall of Fame, BP Oil Refinery, the lakefront park and countless neighborhood improvement efforts are just a small sampling of the lasting impacts Joe's work will have in the city.

Joe's work for the City of Whiting is well documented. His impact on municipal leaders statewide is probably less known. Joe has been a leader within Aim for nearly 20 years. Joe served as president of our organization in the early 2010s and has been active throughout his time in public office. He was always willing to be an expert speaker at Aim workshops and conferences, testify before the Indiana General Assembly and serve on various Aim committees. From my standpoint, his most meaningful contribution to Aim was his mentorship of other mayors. Over the years, I have suggested that dozens of new and veteran mayors take the time to sit down with Joe. Joe always welcomed discussions and visits with other mayors. He would take hours out of his day to show mayors projects he was working on, explain the complicated nuances of municipal finance, brainstorm creative ways to get a project done, offer advice on how to structure and manage city departments or how to build public consensus.

I have met and served hundreds of mayors in my career at Aim. Joe is among a small handful of the very best I've known. I am certain that once these current legal issues are in the rearview mirror, he will continue giving back to Indiana's cities and towns. I will not hesitate to call on him for advice and counsel on municipal issues.

As I mentioned above, the legal matters Joe is facing are serious, and I am not trying to diminish their importance. It is my hope that you will consider my high opinion of Joe's character and contributions to Indiana municipal officials when deciding on a path forward. Ultimately, I hope Joe is given leniency to learn from this experience that lets him continue giving back to his community and the state of Indiana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew C. Greller", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew C. Greller

Matthew A Brase
7961 Ferrell Lane
Indianapolis, IN 46260

OCTOBER 16, 2020

The Honorable James T. Moody
United States District Court
5400 Federal Plaza
Hammond, IN 46320

RE: *United States v. Joseph Stahura*
Cause No. 2:20 CR 118

Dear Judge Moody,

I've had the privilege of knowing Mayor Joe Stahura since 2004 when I was on staff with the governmental affairs team at the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns (IACT), now known as AIM.

During my time with IACT I made an error in judgment and as a result, found myself unemployed. I was fortunate to quickly land on my feet as a lobbyist (and now partner) with LegisGroup Public Affairs thanks in part due to the kindness and generosity of spirit of Joe Stahura. Joe recognized that my mistake, while unfortunate, was not one that should end my career and helped steer me in the right direction.

As a lobbyist with LegisGroup, one of my first clients was the City of Whiting and I represented their interests before the General Assembly. Mayor Joe's generosity towards me in hiring me while I was crawling out from under a rock gave me the boost I needed at that time. Since lobbying on behalf of Whiting since 2013, I've become all too aware of Joe's heart and soul. I was able to personally witness the continued transformation of Whiting thanks to Joe's vision, dogged persistence, and ability to win over legislators with his belief in Whiting's future success. When I first met Joe, I didn't know him from the other 120 mayors across the state. But his pride in Whiting and sincere and persistent motivation to improve his city made me a big fan of his and I soon found myself visiting on a regular basis and in the middle of pierogis, splash parks, baseball, parades, festivals, the Mascot Hall of Fame and many other celebrations of Whiting and its successes.

Mayor Joe took a chance on me and together we accomplished some great things for the city he loves, and that I have fallen in love with as well.

We all know that he was a great Mayor and remains a loving husband and devoted to his children and grandchildren. Most know him to have a heart of gold and to be a man who would take his shirt off his back if you needed it.

We all make mistakes; it's what we do after the mistake that really defines who we are. Mayor Joe and I have, in our own times, owned up to our mistakes. I can honestly say that without the counsel and guidance from Mayor Joe, I would not be who and where I am today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Brase', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Matthew A Brase