

**Philadelphia Inquirer Reporter, William Bender, Provides Inaccurate and Misleading Article, Once Again, Against the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office Days Before the General Election**

We deem it necessary to respond to this misleading article because yet again, it communicates inaccurate information to the public. How does an investigative reporter publish an article meant to inform the public, but fails to gather all the necessary facts? Instead, Bender used vulnerable people's difficult, yet lived experience to target the Sheriff's Office. We take our obligation to the public seriously, so we did our due diligence and researched every case mentioned in Bender's article. We received a list of questions from Bender in reference to his intended article, however, he failed to provide the names of people who were "wronged". Perhaps, he knew the truth would not sway people's votes days before the election.

**Here are the facts:**

To start, Bender's article states, "Under the Pennsylvania Code, Sheriff's are supposed to distribute the proceeds from such sales within forty days." This is completely false. The Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure govern the distribution of excess proceeds, and it does not give a timeline on when the Sheriff's Office has to return them to the homeowner.

During our research, we noticed a commonality among the cases. David Denenberg was the attorney who represented Phyllis West and Nathaniel Terrell. The article states, "Denenberg delve into the issue during the COVID lockdown in 2020 when courts were closed. His office is now full of hundreds of case files from former homeowners who were never paid." It seems that Denenberg chose to tackle this "issue" at a time when the economy was in disarray and people were experiencing financial hardship. Denenberg is no hero. People like him were contacting homeowners, offering representation, and charging upwards of thirty-three percent to assist in claiming excess proceeds. Those same homeowners were persuaded into believing that they had to pay for a service that our Office offers free of charge through our HART program.

Denenberg is no stranger to the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office, and we are very familiar with his unethical practices. To name a few:

On December 10, 2021, Denenberg filed a claim, which was "signed" by the homeowner for excess proceeds. However, our records showed that the homeowner who allegedly signed the 2021 claim, passed away in January of 2013. Further, our records showed that the executrix of the homeowner's estate was paid out in September of 2021.

On January 21, 2021, Denenberg filed a claim, which was again "signed" by the homeowner for excess proceeds. However, our records showed that the homeowner passed away in November of 2013. Also, our records showed that the excess proceeds were paid out to the estate in October of 2017.

Based on these facts, we wonder if William Bender thinks that David Denenberg is a credible source on this “issue” now?

**The three cases mentioned in the article:**

Phyllis West’s (who’s HART claim was filed in 2023) and Nathaniel Terrell’s (who’s HART claim was filed in 2021) homes went up for sale in 2019. Both cases were handled by a title company that the Sheriff’s Office hasn’t used since 2020. For insurance purposes, our Office needs the final distribution policy to process claims and disburse funds. West and Terrell’s process was extended not because our Office did not want to release the funds, but because we were met with challenges when trying to obtain distribution policies from a title company our Office no longer uses.

As for Thomas Morini, the title company informed our Office of outstanding debt, which halted us from releasing the funds to him.

Like his counterparts, William Bender’s article reflects someone who has a hidden agenda against the Sheriff’s Office. Had Bender conducted a thorough investigation, used credible sources, or made the correct inquiries to our Office, maybe his article would have been beneficial to the public instead of misleading. Further, had he questioned our office about the people he interviewed we could have provided him with the facts of each case.

*For more information regarding William Bender’s original questions and the Sheriff’s Office’s entire escheatment/excess proceeds procedure, please visit [phillysheriff.com](http://phillysheriff.com).*