

Foreword to the 2025-2026 Edition

Many aspects of municipal court practice will be fundamentally changed as a result of administrative actions and landmark decisions over the past 12 months. As outlined in these volumes, the Court responded to statutory changes enacted by the Legislature by eliminating the 35-year old, absolute prohibition on plea bargaining in drunk-driving and refusal cases. This sea change came after the Court established the guidelines that must be used by prosecutors in proving that a defendant operated his motor vehicle while under the influence of drugs.¹ Finally, in August of 2024, the Court revised the procedures to be utilized in sentencing second and subsequent offenders in order to assure that questionable prior convictions would not unfairly result in enhanced punishment.²

Beyond action by the Court, the Legislature also contributed to significant changes in municipal court practice over the past twelve months beyond the statutory elimination of the plea bargaining ban. Of particular importance were the new laws that encourage early installation of ignition interlock devices which provide for both the elimination of fines and reduced license suspension.

These issues and many other new developments in the law will be thoroughly reviewed and analyzed in these updated volumes.

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¹ State v. Olenowski, 255 N.J. 529, 304 A.3d 598 (2023).

² State v. Zingis, 259 N.J. 1, 324 A.3d 991 (N.J. 2024).