

Published Judicial Disciplinary Cases

In re Kading

70 Wis. 2d 508, 235 N.W.2d 409 (1975), 238 N.W.2d 63 (1976), 239 N.W.2d 297 (1976); 74 Wis. 2d 405, 246 N.W.2d 903 (1976)

Type of Case: Violation of financial disclosure rule; violation of court order.

Results: Order to comply with rule, reprimand, civil contempt finding.

In re Van Susteren

82 Wis. 2d 307, 262 N.W.2d 133 (1978)

Type of Case: Practice of law in violation of rule (other charges dismissed).

Results: Reprimand.

In re Seraphim

97 Wis. 2d 485, 294 N.W.2d 485, *cert. denied*, 449 U.S. 994 (1980)

Type of Case: Acceptance of gift from litigant; failure to report gift on financial disclosure forms; gross personal misconduct (offensive sexual conduct); comments on pending cases; intemperate courtroom conduct; retaliatory use of bail.

Results: Three-year suspension without pay.

In re Guay

101 Wis. 2d 171, 303 N.W.2d 669 (1981)

Type of Case: Violation of financial disclosure rule (other charges dismissed).

Results: Reprimand and order to comply.

In re Raineri

102 Wis. 2d 418, 306 N.W.2d 699 (1981)

Type of Case: Felony convictions (unnecessary to resolve other charges).

Results: Removal.

In re Grady

118 Wis. 2d 762, 348 N.W.2d 559 (1984)

Type of Case: Delay in deciding cases (charge based on § 757.025, Stats., dismissed; statute held unconstitutional).

Results: Reprimand.

In re Van Susteren

118 Wis. 2d 806, 348 N.W.2d 579 (1984)

Type of Case: Gross personal misconduct (misdemeanor convictions for failure to file timely state tax returns, failure to comply with court order, and perform duties as personal representative in estate); failure to issue show cause orders in dormant estates under § 863.35(1), Stats.; delay in deciding cases (charge based on § 757.025, Stats., dismissed under *Grady*).

Results: Two-year suspension without pay.

In re Sterlinske

123 Wis. 2d 245, 365 N.W.2d 876 (1985)

Type of Case: Falsified and back-dated court record with intent to mislead; exerted influence on behalf of daughter; retaliatory use of bail and other judicial powers; intemperate courtroom conduct.

Results: Removal.

In re Presentin

139 Wis. 2d 150, 406 N.W.2d 779 (1987)

Type of Case: Failure to resign judicial office before becoming candidate for non-judicial office.

Results: Six-month suspension without pay.

In re Costello

142 Wis. 2d 926, 419 N.W.2d 706 (1988)

Type of Case: Use of influence held not to be a violation of the Code of Judicial Ethics.

Results: Complaint dismissed.

In re Aulik

146 Wis. 2d 57, 429 N.W.2d 759 (1988)

Type of Case: Oral and written ex parte communications on merits of pending matter.

Results: 90-day suspension without pay.

In re Gorenstein

147 Wis. 2d 861, 434 N.W.2d 603 (1989)

Type of Case: Intemperate and demeaning courtroom conduct (including racist and sexist remarks); prejudgment.

Results: Two-year suspension without pay.

In re Staege

165 Wis. 2d 21, 476 N.W.2d 876 (1991)

Type of Case: Violation of court order resulting in contempt held to be gross personal misconduct in violation of SCR 60.13.

Results: Three-year suspension from eligibility for office of municipal judge.

In re Breitenbach

167 Wis. 2d 102, 482 N.W.2d 52 (1992)

Type of Case: Intemperate, impatient, and demeaning courtroom conduct during the course of 14 judicial proceedings; carrying a concealed and loaded firearm in court; leaving a loaded firearm in courtroom wastebasket.

Results: Two-year suspension from eligibility for office.

In re Dreyfus

182 Wis. 2d 121, 513 N.W.2d 604 (1994)

Type of Case: Delay; filing false pending case status certifications; misleading Commission investigator and court officials.

Results: 15-day suspension without pay.

In re Carver

192 Wis. 2d 136, 531 N.W.2d 62 (1995)

Type of Case: Inappropriate comments on pending case, ex parte communication, appearance of partiality.

Results: 15-day suspension without pay.

In re Crivello

211 Wis. 2d 435, 564 N.W.2d 785 (1997)

Type of Case: Gross personal misconduct; spousal abuse.

Results: Public reprimand (judge defeated for re-election).

In re Tesmer

219 Wis. 2d 708, 580 N.W.2d 307 (1998)

Type of Case: Private interviews and communications designed to influence decisions.

Results: Public reprimand.

In re Stern

224 Wis. 2d 220, 589 N.W.2d 407 (1999)

Type of Case: Service in an office of public trust while also serving as a part-time municipal court judge.

Results: Public reprimand.

In re Michelson

225 Wis. 2d 221, 591 N.W.2d 843 (1999)

Type of Case: Inappropriate comment from the bench in a letter to a relative of a litigant and manifesting bias based upon socioeconomic status.

Results: Public reprimand.

In re Waddick

232 Wis. 2d 733, 605 N.W.2d 861 (2000)

Type of Case: Delay; filing false pending case status certifications; lying to Judicial Commission.

Results: Six-month suspension without pay.

In re Crawford

245 Wis. 2d 373, 629 N.W.2d 1 (2001)

Type of Case: Threatening chief judge to go public with false accusations about the chief judge, the daughter of the chief judge, the district attorney, and others if the chief judge would not rescind a lawfully entered order.

Results: 75-day suspension without pay.

In re Laatsch

299 Wis. 2d 144, 727 N.W.2d 488 (2007)

Type of Case: Presiding over cases involving family members and a client from his private law practice. Misusing the prestige of judicial office to advance his own private financial interests by mentioning current part-time judicial office in advertisement for judge's private law firm.

Results: Public reprimand (judge defeated for re-election).

In re Ziegler

309 Wis. 2d 253, 750 N.W.2d 710 (2008)

Type of Case: Presiding over cases in which a business was a party to the proceeding during the time the judge's spouse served on the board of directors of the business. Judge did not disclose her spouse's relationship with the business or obtain waivers of the conflict.

Results: Public reprimand.

In re Gableman

325 Wis. 2d 579, 784 N.W.2d 605 (2010)

325 Wis. 2d 631, 784 N.W.2d 631 (2010)

Type of Case: Alleged violation of SCR 60.06(3)(c), Wisconsin Code of Judicial Conduct, which, in relevant part, states that a candidate for judicial office shall not knowingly, or with reckless disregard for the statement's truth or falsity, misrepresent the identity, qualifications, present position, or other fact concerning the candidate or an opponent.

Results: The Supreme Court split 3-3 on the merits resulting in conflicting directives. The Judicial Commission filed a Statement of Discontinuance.

In re Zodrow

329 Wis. 2d 53, 787 N.W.2d 815 (2010)

Type of Case: Failure to dispose of judicial matters promptly, efficiently, and fairly. Willful and persistent failure to perform official duties.

Results: Public reprimand (judge defeated for re-election).

In re Calvert

382 Wis. 2d 354, 914 N.W.2d 765 (2018)

Type of Case: Engaged in prohibited ex parte communications with a third party and engaged in an independent fact investigation regarding a matter before him. Made statements during an injunction hearing concerning that matter which violated SCR 60.02 and SCR 60.03(1).

Results: 15-day suspension without pay.

In re Piontek

386 Wis. 2d 703, 927 N.W.2d 552 (2019)

Type of Case: Engaged in prohibited ex parte communications with a prosecutor and engaged in an independent fact investigation regarding a matter before him.

Results: 5-day suspension without pay.

In re Kachinsky

387 Wis. 2d 823, 930 N.W.2d 252 (2019)

Type of Case: Engaged in behavior towards a clerk which violated SCR 60.02 and SCR 60.03(1), including obsessive, intimidating and retaliatory conduct.

Results: 3-year suspension of eligibility for appointment as a reserve municipal court judge; required to file petition with Supreme Court and demonstrate fitness to serve in future judicial office as a reserve municipal court judge in order to be considered for such an office after suspension ends.

In re Gorski

390 Wis. 2d 22, 937 N.W.2d 609 (2020)

Type of Case: Court commissioner presiding over cases in which he was a close personal friend of the attorney for parties to proceedings before him. In addition to having a close personal friendship, the court commissioner and attorney traveled frequently on vacation together. Court commissioner did not disclose his relationship with the attorney or obtain waivers of the conflict. Court commissioner made intemperate and undignified comments during a hearing before him.

Results: Public reprimand.

In re Woldt

398 Wis.2d 482, 961 N.W.2d 854 (2021)

Type of Case: Making crude, sarcastic, and undignified comments in five hearings before him to attorneys, parties, and victims. Uttering intemperate remarks concerning victims in criminal cases. Use of a firearm as a “prop” in the courtroom on two occasions.

Results: 7-day suspension without pay.

