



Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct 2025 Annual Report

This is the annual report of the Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct (“Commission”) for calendar year 2025.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION

Judicial conduct commissions exist in every state and serve a vital role in promoting public confidence in the independence, impartiality, integrity, and competence of the judicial branch of government.

The Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct was created in 1970, when voters approved Article 6.1 of the Arizona Constitution. Article 6.1 was amended in 1988, establishing the Commission as an independent state agency responsible for investigating complaints against judicial officers serving on the supreme court, court of appeals, superior courts, justice courts, and municipal courts.

The Commission does not have jurisdiction over federal judges, tribal judges, or administrative law judges. Judicial officers subject to the Commission’s jurisdiction must comply with the Arizona Code of Judicial Conduct (“Code”) adopted by the Arizona Supreme Court.

COMMISSION PROCEDURES

The Commission’s rules, which are promulgated by the Arizona Supreme Court, prescribe the procedures for investigating and resolving complaints of judicial misconduct. The rules are available on the Commission’s website at www.azcourts.gov/azcjc.

Anyone who believes that a judge has violated the Code may submit a complaint to the Commission. The Commission may also open an investigation on its own initiative. Complaint forms are available on the Commission's website, by mail, and at the Commission's office.

Unless a member is unavailable due to a conflict of interest or other commitment, all 11 Commission members review every docketed complaint. If the Commission members conclude there is not clear and convincing evidence of a Code violation, the complaint is dismissed, and the complainant and judge(s) named in the complaint are notified in writing of that decision.

Example: A defendant in an injunction against harassment proceeding alleges that a justice of the peace was rude and condescending. Commission staff obtains the audio/video recording of the proceeding and prepares a written report that all Commission members review, along with the written complaint. The recording establishes that the justice of the peace was not rude, did not raise her voice, and gave both sides an opportunity to be heard. The Commission concludes the complaint has not been substantiated and votes to dismiss it.

If a complaint identifies issues that warrant further investigation, Commission staff will obtain relevant additional information, which may include a response from the judge, court records, recordings and transcripts, and witness interviews. The Commission's staff attorneys then prepare a report for members of the Commission. After reviewing the report, along with the complaint, any response received from the judge, available recordings, court documents and other relevant information, the Commission members determine the appropriate disposition. The Commission may dismiss a complaint, issue a public reprimand, impose terms such as counseling or educational programming, or direct that disciplinary counsel file formal charges.

Example: A litigant alleges that a superior court judge yelled during a hearing, was extremely impatient, and gave her a disproportionately short period of time to present her case in comparison to the time allotted the adverse party. Commission staff obtains the recording of the proceeding, requests a response from the judge, and prepares a written report. After reviewing the report, the complaint, the judge's response, and the recording, the Commission members conclude that the judge did not comply with Arizona Code of Judicial Conduct Rule 2.6 (ensuring the right to be heard) and Rule 2.8(B) (requiring judges to be patient, dignified, and courteous). After considering relevant aggravating and mitigating circumstances, the Commission members vote to publicly reprimand the judge. The reprimand is posted to the Commission's website, where the record in that matter is available for public review.

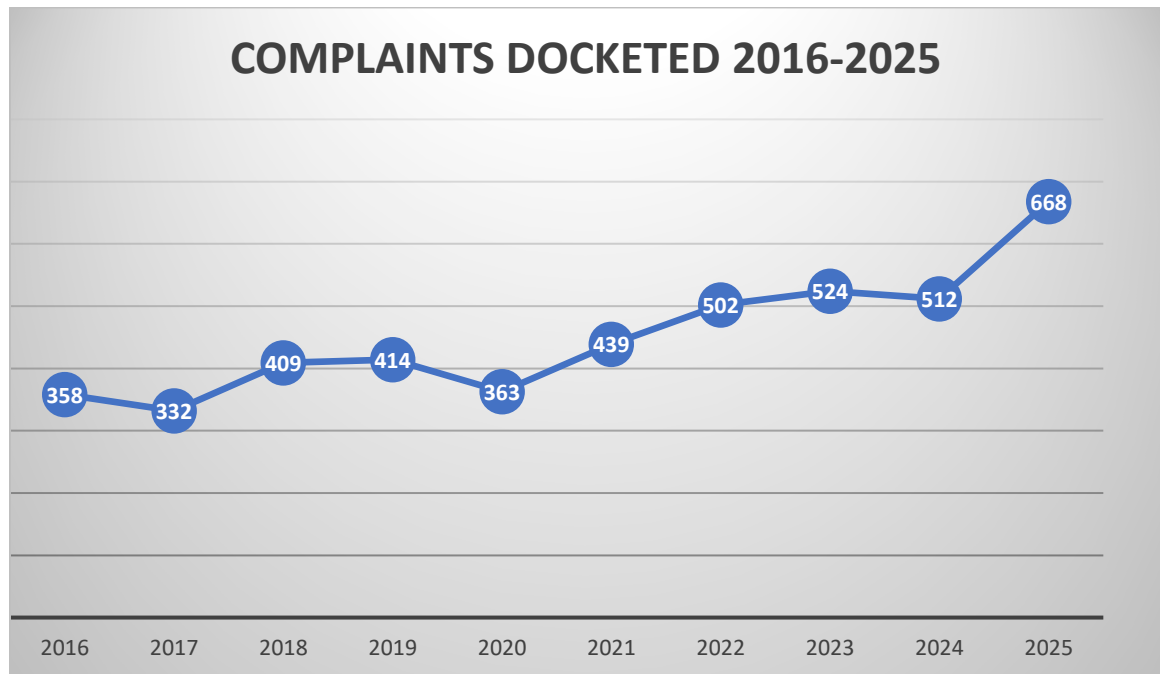
If the investigation of a complaint suggests that a judge's conduct warrants a sanction greater than a public reprimand – i.e., censure, suspension, or removal – the Commission's chairperson may appoint an investigative panel comprised of three Commission members (one judge, one lawyer, and one public member) to determine whether reasonable cause exists to believe the judge has engaged in misconduct. If the investigative panel makes such a finding, disciplinary counsel files formal charges against the judge, and the matter proceeds to an evidentiary hearing. Based on the record developed in the formal proceeding, the hearing panel – comprised of Commission members who did not serve on the investigative panel – issues written findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation regarding the appropriate disposition. The final decision in a formal proceeding rests with the Arizona Supreme Court.

Complainants are not parties to Commission proceedings. Although complainants may be asked to provide information during investigations or to testify at formal hearings, the only parties to the proceedings are the judge and the Commission. The judge may be represented by counsel at his or her own expense. The judge and the Commission may conduct discovery and subpoena witnesses to testify at hearings.

FILING TRENDS

In 2025, the Commission docketed 668 new complaints – approximately a 30% increase from the prior year. Excluding 2020 when fewer court hearings were held due to pandemic restrictions, the number of filings has been steadily increasing since 2017. Staff attributes the increase in complaint filings to more self-represented litigants in the system who lack an attorney to help explain legal procedures and processes, as well as a general decrease by the public in trust and confidence in the judiciary, and government in general.

The following chart depicts new complaint filings over a 10-year period:

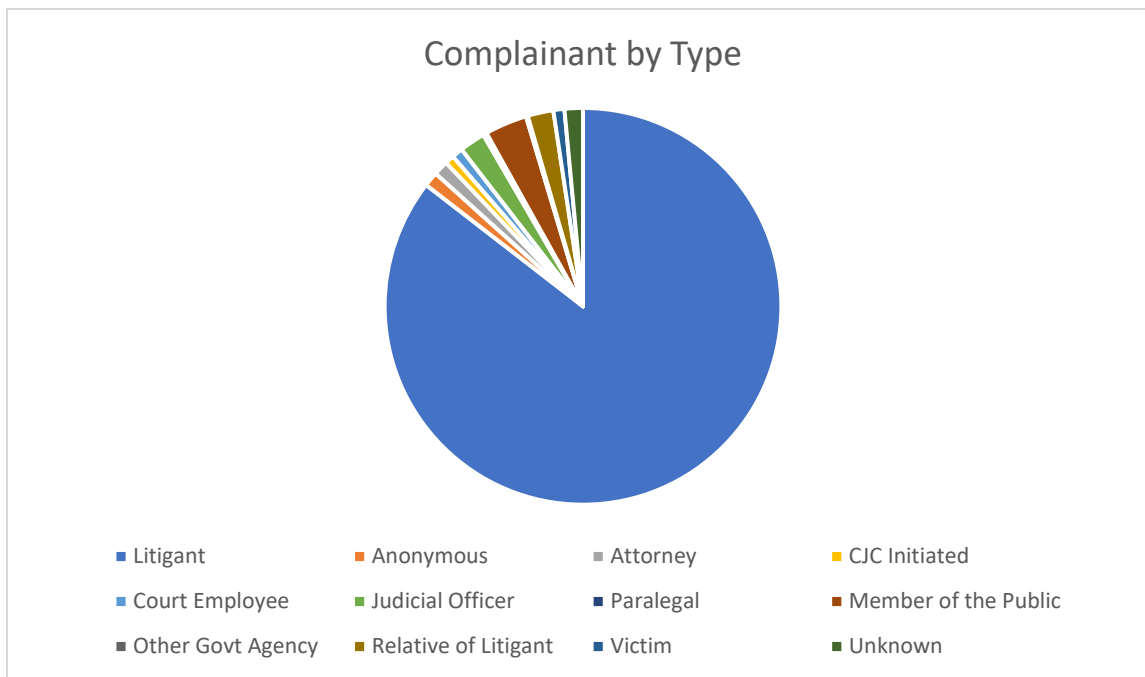


After several years of making requests, the legislature permanently funded a second disciplinary counsel/staff attorney position beginning with FY2026, and the position was filled in August 2025. This additional position assisted in decreasing the backlog and increased processing times for complaints.

In 2025, the Commission entered dispositional orders on 603 complaints and 57 motions for reconsideration. As of the date of this report, only one 2024 matter remained pending the issuance of a disposition – Case No. 24-461 – which was heard by a hearing panel at a formal hearing on January 8, 2026. Also, as of the date of this report, the Commission had resolved approximately 87% of the complaints filed in 2025.

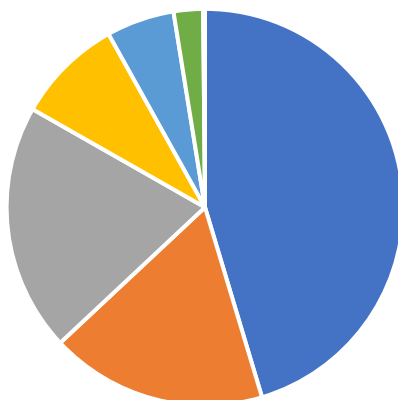
In 2025, the Commission ran a pilot program to determine if certain types of complaints could be disposed of in a more efficient manner. Authorized by Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Order 2025-39, this program was designed to expeditiously resolve non-jurisdictional complaints filed with the Commission, specifically, complaints that solely raised disagreements with legal rulings. The pilot program operated for six months, and the Commission will be presenting the findings, along with a proposed rule change petition, to the Arizona Supreme Court in the near future.

In 2024, the Commission purchased a new case management system, which allowed for the tracking of additional data, which the Commission was unable to provide in prior years' reports.



As noted by the chart above, the vast majority (85%) of the complaints to the Commission in 2025 came from a litigant in the underlying proceedings.

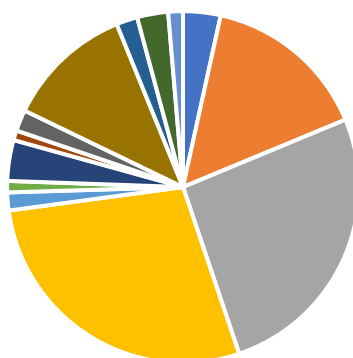
Complaints by Judicial Officer Category



- Superior Court Judge
- Superior Court Commissioner
- Justice of the Peace
- Municipal Court Judge
- Appellate Court Judge
- Ltd Jurisdiction Hearing Officer
- Other

The majority of the complaints (63%) involved a superior court judicial officer. Limited jurisdiction (municipal court and justice of the peace) judicial officers comprised 29% of the complaints filed. Appellate court judges (Court of Appeals and Supreme Court) comprised 6% of the complaints filed.

Complaints by Area of Law



- Administrative
- Civil
- Criminal
- Family
- Off Bench Conduct
- Juvenile
- Eviction
- Mental Health
- Probate
- Protective Orders
- Small Claims
- Traffic
- Other

Family law (28%), criminal (26%), and civil (15%) are the three areas which encompass the most complaints.

Statistics by a particular court or geographic location are not provided to preserve confidentiality of the judicial officers involved in accordance with the Commission's Rules.

2025 DISPOSITIONS

The following are brief summaries of the complaints that resulted in formal sanctions, a public reprimand, or a dismissal with a warning or advisory comment during calendar year 2025.¹ The public record regarding reprimand cases is available on the Commission's website – www.azcourts.gov/azcjc. More limited information is also available on the website regarding dismissed complaints. See Commission Rule 9.

Unless otherwise specified, all rule references in the summaries are to the Arizona Code of Judicial Conduct:

Reprimands (5)

Municipal Court Magistrate Keith D. Barth received a reprimand in Case No. 24-155 for his conduct on a podcast called Law Matters. Judge Barth appeared as a sitting judge, along with a candidate for Santa Cruz County Sheriff Marco Morales. Judge Barth endorsed Mr. Morales' candidacy and announced his intention to serve as chief deputy should Mr. Morales win the Sheriff race. During the podcast, Judge Barth insinuated the incumbent sheriff worked with cartels. Judge Barth did not correct a misstatement by the host regarding his legal training, and he stated that people charged with dog at large typically got "free passes" in his court. As a Part D judge, Judge Barth is not subject to the political restrictions under Rule 4.1 of the Code. However, the Commission found that his conduct violated Rule 1.2 (a judge shall "act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety"), Rule 1.3 ("a judge shall not abuse the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the judge or others, or allow others to do so"), and Rule 3.1(C) (a judge shall not "participate in activities that would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality . . ."). Judge Barth agreed to complete additional training and work with a mentor judge for six months.

¹ As noted on the website, cases are posted to the website under the calendar year in which they were received, not by when a dispositional order was entered. For example, a 2024 case in which the Commission entered a dispositional order in 2025 will be posted with the 2024 cases.

Superior Court Judge Marcus A. Kelley was publicly reprimanded in Case No. 24-366 for intentionally disregarding the law and ordering a defendant to register as a sex offender when he no longer had jurisdiction to issue such an order. Judge Kelley admitted to speaking to two other more experienced judges regarding the registration requirement, and he acknowledged they advised him he lacked jurisdiction to require the registration. However, because they could not precisely cite to the legal authority for this proposition, Judge Kelley disregarded their advice and conducted no legal research on his own. Judge Kelley also made comments that he disagreed with the underlying plea agreement that had been entered and accepted by his predecessor, claiming it was too lenient, and he stated that the public would be far more outraged by the defendant's lenient sentence than by his failure to follow the law. The Commission took the unusual step of requiring Judge Kelley to appear before the full Commission where he maintained that assertion and did not submit any mitigating evidence. The Commission found that Judge Kelley's actions were not a good faith error of law or fact, but rather, an intentional disregard for the law. Judge Kelley's conduct violated Rule 1.2 ("A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety"), Rule 2.2 ("A judge shall uphold and apply the law, and shall perform all duties of judicial office fairly and impartially"), and Rule 2.5(A) ("A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties competently, diligently, and promptly").

Superior Court Judge John F. Kelliher Jr. received a reprimand in Case No. 24-408 for addressing a family law litigant in a condescending manner and offering his own "cowboy wisdom" on the litigant's feelings and frustrations regarding the division of assets. Judge Kelliher's comments were part of a continuing pattern of inappropriate and condescending comments in judicial proceedings which has resulted in prior public discipline. The Commission found that Judge Kelliher's conduct violated the following provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct and Arizona law: Rule 1.2 ("A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety"), Rule 2.3(B) ("A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice, . . . including but not limited to bias, prejudice, or harassment based upon . . . sex, gender . . ."), and Rule 2.8(B) ("A judge shall be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, court staff, court officials, and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity . . .").

Superior Court Judge Bruce R. Cohen was publicly reprimanded in Case No. 24-470 for sending a bench-wide email urging his fellow judges to stand up against those who were accusing minorities of being unworthy of their hire because they were diversity hires. The email referenced then Vice President Kamala Harris as someone accused of being an unworthy diversity hire. At the time he sent the email, Judge Cohen was presiding over the high-profile "fake electors" case. After an

attorney in the case discovered the email, and requested his recusal, he recused from the case. Judge Cohen noted he “inserted [him]self into the discourse, albeit in a private email to my colleagues, I opened myself and the court I represented up to ridicule at a time of great division. Again, I should have known better.” The Commission found that Judge Cohen’s conduct violated the following provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct: Rule 1.2 (“A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety”), Rule 2.3(A) (“A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office, including administrative duties, without bias or prejudice”), Rule 2.11(A)(5) (“A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to the following circumstances: (5) The judge, while a judge or a judicial candidate, has made a public statement, other than in a court proceeding, judicial decision, or opinion, that commits or appears to commit the judge to reach a particular result or rule in a particular way in the proceeding or controversy”), and Rule 4.1(A)(3) (“A judge or a judicial candidate shall not do any of the following: (3) publicly endorse or oppose another candidate for any public office . . .”).

Superior Court Mark W. Reeves was publicly reprimanded in Case No. 24-501 for severely delayed rulings in a civil matter. On November 14, 2024, attorneys filed a petition for special action with the Arizona Supreme Court complaining that Judge Reeves did not issue orders on a motion to dismiss and an application for attorney’s fees within 60 days as required by law. In the petition for special action, the attorneys claimed that the orders were overdue by more than three years, and they avowed they made numerous requests for Judge Reeves to sign the orders. The attorneys further claimed that Judge Reeves had regularly signed and filed monthly payroll certifications avowing that he had no cause submitted to him for decision which remained pending and undetermined for 60 days or more from the date of submission for decision. On November 20, 2024, the Arizona Supreme Court issued an order dismissing the special action and instructing the attorneys to first seek relief from Judge Reeves and from the Arizona Court of Appeals before resorting to a special action before the Supreme Court. Following the dismissal of the Special Action, Judge Reeves issued the two rulings, and he worked with his presiding judge who along with court staff, had potentially identified other delayed rulings. Judge Reeves acknowledged one delayed instance of delayed ruling, but stated there is a generalized issue with their case management system and some issues with his staff. The Commission was concerned that Judge Reeves generally failed to acknowledge that the ultimate responsibility for calendar management rests with the judge. The Commission found that Judge Reeves’ conduct violated the following provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct and Arizona law: Rule 1.1 (“A judge shall comply with the law, including the Code of Judicial Conduct”), Rule 2.5(A) (“A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties competently, diligently, and promptly”), Article 2, Section 11 of the Arizona Constitution, Article 6, Section 21 of the Arizona Constitution, Rule 91(e), Arizona Rules of Supreme Court, and A.R.S. §12-128.01.

Warnings and Advisories

When the Commission dismisses a complaint, it may choose to include warning or advisory language. The Commission may include advisory language when a judge has not technically violated the Code, but members believe the judge could benefit from advice about a particular Code-based issue. Warnings are generally issued when the Commission believes a judge either came close to violating the Code or when an actual violation has occurred, but the members conclude that mitigating circumstances dictate against the issuance of a public sanction.

The Commission issued eight warnings and 16 advisories in 2025, which are summarized as follows:

Warnings

- The Commission issued a warning letter to a superior court judge for improperly expanding the scope of a hearing and using language that could reasonably be perceived as being biased against women. *See* Rules 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, and 2.3.
- A justice of the peace improperly used a disclosure rule to threaten sanctions against an attorney. *See* Rules 1.1, 1.2, and 2.5(A) of the Code.
- A justice of the peace failed to provide proper contact information for a party appearing remotely. *See* Rule 2.6(A).
- The Commission issued a warning letter to an appellate court judge for improperly reposting a social media post that was critical of a political candidate. *See* Rule 4.1.
- A superior court judge was issued a warning for making inappropriate comments regarding a litigant's attire. *See* Rules 1.2 and 2.8(B).
- A justice of the peace received a warning for improperly providing therapeutic advice and strayed from the role of a neutral arbiter. *See* Rules 1.2 and 2.2.
- The Commission issued a warning letter to a justice of the peace who filed a defamation lawsuit against a difficult litigant who appeared before him, reminding the judge not to become overly involved on a personal level. *See* Rule 1.2.
- A city court judge received a warning for engaging in improper ex parte communication with another judge regarding a ruling. *See* Rules 1.3 and 2.9(A).

Advisories

- Nine of the advisories related to delayed rulings by various judicial officers – five superior court judges, three superior court commissioners, and one justice of the peace. Many involved self-reports from the judicial officers. The Commission generally reminded the judicial officers of their obligation to issue rulings in a timely manner. *See generally* Rules 1.1 and 2.5(A), Art. 2, Sec. 11 and Art. 6, Sec. 21 of the Arizona Constitution, and in some instances, A.R.S §12-128.01.
- The Commission issued an advisory to a justice of the peace reminding of the obligation to ensure a party’s right to be heard. *See* Rule 2.6(A).
- A justice of the peace received an advisory letter reminding him to be careful with his choice of words when conducting general advisories, and mindful of the duties to promote confidence in the judiciary. *See* Rule 1.2.
- A pro tem justice of the peace received an advisory letter reminding him to avoid the appearance of impropriety when he had allowed a litigant who had once appeared before him to work at his business and reside at his apartment. *See* Rule 1.2.
- The Commission issued an advisory letter to a pro tem justice of the peace expressing concerns about the pro tem judge’s colleagues from her law office practicing in the same court in which she acts as a pro tem and the appearance of impropriety that could present. *See* Rule 1.2.
- A justice of the peace received an advisory letter to be mindful that she must comply with the law and be cognizant of the state constitutional requirements for victims. *See* Rule 1.1.
- An appellate court judge received an advisory letter to be careful in their choice of words, actions, and inactions in the perilous arena of judicial elections in the future.
- The Commission issued an advisory letter to a pro tem superior court judge to be mindful to not give the appearance that a case was prejudged. *See* Rules 1.2 and 2.2.

Public Dismissal Orders (4)

As the next section of this report explains, most dismissal orders do not make the name of the judge(s) public. On occasion, however, the Commission determines, or the Commission and respondent judge agree, that a dismissal order will be made public. In 2025, such an order was issued in four matters, and to ensure more

transparency, these public dismissals are noted in a separate category on the Commission's website – Other Public Dispositions.

- Case No. 24-215 (Municipal Court Judge Keith D. Barth): The complaint alleged that Judge Barth improperly entered a crime scene and engaged in inappropriate conduct while there. The Commission considered this matter in conjunction with Case No. 25-155, in which Judge Barth was publicly reprimanded, and directed to obtain additional training and mentoring at his own expense. The Commission chose to close the file in this matter in light of the discipline in the other matter.
- Case Nos. 23-510, 24-004, and 24-032 (Municipal Court Judge A. Douglas LaSota). Apache Junction Municipal Court Judge A. Douglas LaSota resigned and agreed not seek judicial office in the future. In reaching the stipulated resolution with the Commission on these three matters, Judge LaSota made no admissions. The complaints alleged Judge LaSota engaged in improper demeanor, improperly found a prosecutor in contempt, improperly filed a bar complaint against the prosecutor, failed to afford the prosecutor the right to be heard, had inappropriate conversations with his staff, proposed the doctoring of timecards, had been rude toward staff, and engaged in a pattern of rejecting certain plea agreements and deciding records requests without notice to the parties in the case.

Dismissals

Most docketed complaints are dismissed because the alleged misconduct cannot be substantiated by clear and convincing evidence or because the conduct at issue is not an ethical violation. Many complainants, for example, assert that a judge ruled against them because the judge was biased, inattentive, or incompetent. But absent a pattern of error or intentional disregard of the law, an erroneous legal ruling is not grounds for judicial discipline. Litigants who are aggrieved by legal rulings must instead pursue their appellate remedies.

Under the Commission's rules, after a complaint is dismissed, the names of the complainant and the judge, as well as other identifying information, are redacted from the public record. The redacted complaint and the dispositional order are available for public review and are posted on the Commission's website.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Arizona Constitution dictates the Commission's membership, which consists of eleven individuals serving six-year terms. Six judges are appointed by the Arizona Supreme Court: two from the court of appeals, two from the superior court, one from a justice court, and one from a municipal court. Two attorney members are appointed by the State Bar of Arizona. Three public members – who cannot be attorneys or active or retired judges – are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate.

Members are not compensated, but receive reimbursement for actual expenses incurred in serving on the Commission. The Commission meets periodically throughout the year and is supported by staff located in the Arizona State Courts Building in Phoenix.

During 2025, the Commission's members were:

Arizona Court of Appeals, Division One

Michael J. Brown is a judge on the Arizona Court of Appeals. He served as the Chief Judge of Division One from 2015 to 2017, after serving the prior two years as the Vice Chief Judge. He has also served on various committees, including the Arizona Judicial Council, Commission on Technology, Judicial Ethics Working Group, Appellate Case Processing Standards, and Connecting with the Community.

Judge Brown graduated from Brigham Young University in 1989 and received his J.D. from Arizona State University in 1992. After working as a law clerk for the Honorable Thomas C. Kleinschmidt, he worked as an attorney with Brown & Brown Law Offices, P.C., in northeastern Arizona, until his judicial appointment in 2006.

Arizona Court of Appeals, Division Two

Christopher P. Staring (Commission Chair) graduated from the University of California at Davis in 1983, with a B.A. He received his law degree from Tulane University Law School in 1986.

Judge Staring practiced from 1986 to 2010 with the law firm of Fennemore Craig, P.C. In 2010, he was appointed to the Pima County Superior Court, where he served in civil, juvenile and probate bench assignments. In 2015, he was appointed to the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division Two.

Judge Staring has served on the Commission since 2019. He served on the Arizona Commission on Judicial Performance Review, 2012-2019. Judge Staring

served on the Arizona Supreme Court Committee on Mental Health and the Justice System, and serves on the Arizona Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Courts.

Arizona Superior Court, Maricopa County

Joseph C. Kreamer (Commission Vice-chair) was appointed to the Maricopa County Superior Court Bench in 2007. He is currently on a civil court assignment. He was previously the court's Associate Presiding Judge, the Presiding Juvenile Department Judge, the Criminal Department's Associate Presiding Judge, the Family Department's Associate Presiding Judge, and the Presiding Judge for the Northeast Courthouse in Phoenix.

Judge Kreamer grew up in Tucson and attended the University of Arizona for both undergraduate and law school. Prior to joining the bench, he was a civil trial lawyer at Snell & Wilmer in Phoenix for seven years, then a partner in the firm of Hopkins & Kreamer for 10 years. His practice concentrated on personal injury and commercial litigation.

Judge Kreamer has been actively involved in numerous boards, committees and task forces, focusing on access to justice issues. He is a member of the Arizona Commission on Access to Justice, chairing the Judicial and Attorney Engagement Workgroup. He is the Vice-chair of the Commission on Judicial Conduct and is a past Chair of the statewide Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee. He is a past member of the Board and President of the Board of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education (the Bar Foundation). He served on the Supreme Court's Juvenile Rules Task Force and on its Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services. He is the former co-chair of the statewide General Jurisdiction New Judge Orientation program. He served on the City of Avondale's Judicial Selection Advisory Committee, and the City of Surprise's Judicial Selection Committee. Judge Kreamer also received the 2021 James A. Walsh Outstanding Jurist Award from the State Bar of Arizona.

Arizona Superior Court, Pinal County

Delia R. Neal currently serves on the civil bench for the Pinal County Superior Court. She previously served as a Court Commissioner from 2012 until 2016 when she was appointed by Gov. Doug Ducey to serve as a divisional judge for Pinal County Superior Court. Judge Neal currently serves as the Specialty Court Judge, presiding over Drug Treatment Court, Veterans' Treatment Court, and Mental Health Treatment Court. She previously served as the Presiding Family Court Judge, Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, and the Chief Pre-trial Judge.

Judge Neal attended Eastern Michigan University for undergraduate studies and later received her JD from the University of Wyoming. A Wyoming native, Judge Neal moved to Arizona in 1996, where she passed the State Bar and began work as a

Deputy County Attorney for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office in 1997. Judge Neal also worked as a prosecutor for the City of Scottsdale and the Pinal County Attorney's Office before starting a solo practice and working as a Judge Pro Tem in Maricopa and Pinal counties. Judge Neal currently serves as the Chief Judicial Education, Training, and Technology Judge for Pinal County, chairs the Pinal County Technology Governance Board, and serves on the Pinal County COJET Committee. She previously served as a member of the Committee on Juvenile Courts, the Pretrial Services Committee and previously served as the President of the Arizona Judges Association.

Chandler City Court

Scott Silva has served as a Magistrate Judge with the Chandler Municipal Court since 2023. Prior to serving as a judge, he was a trial attorney in Arizona for 26 years, practicing criminal and civil litigation. He previously served as Judge Pro Tem in the Mesa Municipal Court and the Maricopa County Superior Court and was a team member of the Phoenix Behavioral Court. He currently serves as a judicial member of the Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct. He has a law degree from the University of Arizona College of Law, 1996, and a BA degree in Public Policy Studies from Duke University, 1994.

Desert Ridge Justice Court

Cathy Riggs, a native of Tucson, was elected as the Desert Ridge Justice of the Peace in November 2016. Judge Riggs has been the Chair of the Pro Tem Hearing Officer and Mediator Committee. In addition, she is a member of the Professional Standards and Legislative Committees. She has taught in the area of Protective Orders for the Internal New Judge Orientation for the Maricopa Bench. Judge Riggs is currently a board member for the Maricopa County Regional Homeless Court. Since 2019, Judge Riggs has served as a mentor for new judges taking the Justice Court bench in Maricopa County.

Judge Riggs obtained a BA degree in Administration of Justice from Golden Gate University in San Francisco in 1986. In 1995, Judge Riggs graduated from Empire Law located in Sonoma County, California with a JD degree.

Lawyer Members

Denise K. Aguilar is an attorney member of the Commission. She has been licensed to practice law in Arizona since 2004. Denise works for the Federal Public Defender as CJA Resource Counsel for the United States District Court for the District of Arizona. She received her BA in Criminal Justice from New Mexico State University and JD degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law.

Regina L. Nassen has been a Principal Assistant City Attorney in the Tucson City Attorney's Office since August 2021, after almost 18 years as a Deputy County Attorney in the Civil Division of the Pima County Attorney's Office ("PCAO"). While at PCAO, Regina also served as the supervising attorney of the Civil Division's Business & Transactions Unit and as PCAO's Chief Ethics Counsel. Prior to becoming a government lawyer, she was in private practice as an Associate with Snell & Wilmer from 1993 to 2000.

Ms. Nassen served on the Arizona Supreme Court's Ethics Advisory Committee for five years, from 2019 through 2023, and is a member of the ABA's Center for Professional Responsibility CLE Committee and a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. She is a member of the governing council of the ABA's Government & Public Sector Lawyers Division and a past Chair of the State Bar of Arizona's Public Lawyers Section. Ms. Nassen has presented or moderated numerous CLE presentations on legal ethics, real estate practice, state constitutional law, and legal writing. She is a recipient of the State Bar of Arizona's Public Lawyers Section Distinguished Public Lawyer Award.

Ms. Nassen graduated summa cum laude from the University of Arizona College of Law in 1992, after which she clerked for Justice Frederick Martone on the Arizona Supreme Court before entering private practice. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Northern Iowa in 1986.

Public Members

Roger Barton is the owner of Badger Roofing, a Prescott-area licensed residential and commercial roofing contractor business. Roger is a native of Arizona, with more than 30 years of experience in sales and marketing of a variety of products and services. Throughout his career, he has sought opportunities to serve within the communities he has resided in and has volunteered on a number of boards of organizations.

Colleen E. Concannon (Commission Secretary), is an Accountant and Project Management Professional with RCSC, LLC. She is a native Tucsonan who received her bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona, a Master of Public Administration from the University of North Texas, and a Master of Science in Accounting/IT from the University of Houston. She has worked in information technology, executive management, finance, and project management in both the public and private sectors throughout her career. She is also a dedicated community volunteer and has served as a board member for numerous public and private organizations within the State of Arizona.

Scott H. O'Connor served as a public member for most of 2025. He retired from a 44-year career in commercial real estate and development in 2023. He now

works with his son and wife in their respective startup businesses. A fourth-generation Arizonan, he comes from a family with a tradition of public service. He gained experience with the judicial system through years of expert witness appearances in Maricopa County Superior Court and federal bankruptcy courts, as well as through plaintiff actions in civil courts on behalf of business entities he managed. A resident of Paradise Valley, he served on several town boards and commissions and was elected to the Town Council for two terms. He has also served on numerous non-profit and cultural institute boards.

Public members are appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Senate Judiciary Committee did not set a hearing during 2025 to consider Mr. O'Connor's confirmation. By operation of law, he could only serve for one year without Senate confirmation. His term expired in November 2025, and the public member position is now vacant.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Members of the Commission, as well as Commission staff, regularly participate in programs designed to educate judges, court staff, and judicial candidates about their ethical obligations and about Commission procedures. A sampling of programs that Commission members and staff participated in during 2025 includes:

- Limited Jurisdiction New Judge Orientation
- General Jurisdiction New Judge Orientation
- Maricopa County Justices of the Peace, Pro Tems, and Hearing Officers Training
- Small Claims Hearing Officer Training
- Civil Hearing Officer Training
- Ethics Presentations at the Arizona Judicial Conference
- Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Judicial Staff Training
- Supreme Court and Court of Appeals Law Clerk Training
- Limited Jurisdiction Judges' Association Conference
- National Association of Judicial Disciplinary Counsel Annual Conference
- National College on Judicial Ethics, sponsored by the National Center for State Courts

COMMISSION FINANCES

The Commission is funded through the legislature's general fund appropriation to the Arizona judicial branch. The Commission's budget totals approximately \$765,800.00. Employee compensation, benefits, and rent account for more than 90% of the Commission's budget.

COMMISSION STAFF

The Commission's permanently funded staff consists of an executive director, two full-time staff attorneys/disciplinary counsel, a commission specialist, and an administrative assistant. The Commission also has an employee who works four hours per week to support its database and related technology.

In addition to the 668 new complaints opened in 2025, Commission staff fielded approximately 1,165 telephone inquiries, handled eight public records requests, and docketed 39 potential cases and general inquiries.

April P. Elliott is Executive Director of the Commission and Staff Director for the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee. She is an active member of the State Bar of Arizona, and she previously served as the Commission's Disciplinary Counsel from 2014-2021. Ms. Elliott was a judge on the Pinal County Superior Court from 2005-2006, and she served as a judge pro tem for both Pinal County Superior Courts and Justice Courts from 2002-2005. Before becoming a judge, Ms. Elliott was in private practice for 10 years in Casa Grande, Arizona, handling a variety of case types. Following her service on the bench, she worked at the Pinal County Public Defender's Office until she joined the Commission in October 2014. She received both her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Arizona, serving as Managing Editor for the *Arizona Law Review* from 1994-95.

Brian Bohan joined the Commission in August 2023 and serves as Disciplinary Counsel/Staff Attorney. Mr. Bohan was most recently in private practice, handling primarily criminal cases. Prior to that, he spent 28 years in the Pinal County Public Defender's Office. While there, he served as a Capital Attorney, as well as helped create and run several of the specialty courts that now handle the bulk of the criminal cases in Pinal county. He also has experience as a solo general practitioner. Mr. Bohan received both his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Arizona.

Tina Mann joined the Commission in August 2025 and serves as Disciplinary Counsel/Staff Attorney. Ms. Mann received her undergraduate degree in Political Science from Indiana State University and her law degree from IU Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1994. Before moving to Arizona with her family in July 2025, Ms. Mann practiced in a variety of legal areas over the course of her career, including estate planning, medical licensing enforcement and criminal appeals with the Indiana Attorney General's Office, Home Owner Association law and debtor defense. Ms. Mann holds active law licenses in Indiana, Oklahoma and Arizona.

David Cunanan serves as Independent Bar Counsel pursuant to Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Order 2018-20. This part-time position is supervised by the Commission's Executive Director and is housed in the Commission's office. Mr. Cunanan investigates and resolves, through the lawyer discipline process, complaints filed against lawyers that, for conflict-of-interest reasons, cannot be handled by the State Bar's lawyer regulation staff. If his schedule permits, he also assists the Commission in investigating and resolving judicial conduct complaints. Mr. Cunanan is a retired Maricopa County Superior Court judge.

Kimberly Welch serves as Commission Specialist – a position she has held since March of 2014. Ms. Welch has worked in the legal field for over 35 years, including positions with large national law firms, where she assisted with complex civil litigation, government contracts, corporate and taxation law, and tort litigation.

She is a certified small business manager.

Dora Ruelas Lucio joined the Commission as an Administrative Assistant in May 2023. Prior to joining the Commission, Ms. Ruelas Rivera worked for a personal injury attorney for eight years, and was previously employed in various call centers. She holds an associate degree in management.