

State of Arizona
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Disposition of Complaint 24-499

Judge:

Complainant:

ORDER

The Commission initiated an investigation after receiving information that a justice of the peace filed a defamation lawsuit against a citizen journalist who covered a case involving a confrontational defendant.

The role of the Commission on Judicial Conduct is to impartially determine whether a judicial officer has engaged in conduct that violates the Arizona Code of Judicial Conduct or Article 6.1 of the Arizona Constitution. There must be clear and convincing evidence of such a violation in order for the Commission to take disciplinary action against a judicial officer.

After review, the Commission found the judge misguidedly filed a defamation lawsuit against a podcaster who covered a highly contentious hearing that the judge presided over. While this raised an appearance of impropriety under Rule 1.2 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, the Scope Section of the Code provides that not every transgression will result in the imposition of discipline. The Commission decided, after considering all the facts and circumstances, to dismiss the Complaint pursuant to Commission Rules 16(b) and 23(a), but to issue a warning letter to the judicial officer reminding him to not become overly involved in cases like this, as it leads to a blurring of the boundaries between litigant and judicial officer creating potential violations of the Code.

Commission members Roger D. Barton, Colleen E. Concannon, and Regina L. Nassen did not participate in the consideration of this matter.

Dated: July 23, 2025

FOR THE COMMISSION

/s/ Christopher P. Staring

Hon. Christopher P. Staring
Commission Chair

Copies of this order were distributed to all appropriate persons on July 23, 2025.

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IN THE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA

, an individual,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No.: [To Be Assigned]

an individual,

Defendant.

COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action for defamation per se and defamation per quod arising from knowingly false and malicious statements published by Defendant, aka " , " on their a platform with over subscribers.
2. On Defendant published a video entitled, " " The video falsely accuses Plaintiff, a Justice of the Peace in County, of . These statements are patently false, malicious, and defamatory per se.
3. The video garnered significant public attention, accumulating over 10,400 views within 24 hours of publication and eliciting numerous comments disparaging

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Plaintiff's character, professional integrity, and fitness to serve as a judge. Defendant's statements have caused Plaintiff irreparable harm to his reputation and career.

4. Defendant's statements were made with actual malice, intending to harm Plaintiff's professional and personal reputation by inciting public outrage and distrust of his ability to serve in the judiciary.

PARTIES

5. Plaintiff, _____, is a citizen of the State of Arizona and a sitting judicial officer in _____ County, Arizona. Plaintiff has served with integrity throughout his career.
6. Defendant, _____ aka " _____," is a _____ content creator residing in _____ County, Arizona who operates a _____ channel:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

7. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to A.R.S. § 12-123 and other applicable laws because the defamatory statements were published in Arizona, caused harm to Plaintiff in Arizona, and relate to Plaintiff's conduct as a judicial officer in _____ County.
8. Venue is proper in _____ County Superior Court pursuant to A.R.S. § 12-401 because Plaintiff resides in and was harmed in _____ County, Arizona, and the events giving rise to this action occurred in _____ County.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

9. On _____ Plaintiff presided over a status conference in the case of _____. During this hearing, Defendant _____ was found in direct criminal contempt for repeated violations of _____

courtroom decorum, including interrupting proceedings, impeding the administration of justice, and degrading the dignity of the court.

10. Plaintiff's actions in holding [redacted] in contempt and ordering him into custody were lawful, appropriate, and consistent with judicial procedure.

11. On [redacted] Defendant uploaded a video to [redacted] titled, "[redacted]

" The video falsely accused Plaintiff of engaging in criminal behavior, specifically "[redacted]" and attempting to "[redacted]"

12. Defendant's video falsely stated or implied that Plaintiff acted outside the scope of his judicial authority, violated [redacted] legal rights, and engaged in a conspiracy to conceal unlawful actions.

13. The video quickly amassed over 10,400 views within 24 hours and prompted a flood of disparaging comments accusing Plaintiff of corruption, unethical conduct, and incompetence. Examples include:

- "[redacted]

”

- “[redacted]

”

-

”

- “[redacted]

”

- “[redacted]

”

**THE COMMISSION'S POLICY IS
TO POST ONLY THE FIRST FIVE
PAGES OF ANY DISMISSED
COMPLAINT ON ITS WEBSITE.**

**FOR ACCESS TO THE
REMAINDER OF THE
COMPLAINT IN THIS MATTER,
PLEASE MAKE YOUR REQUEST
IN WRITING TO THE
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL
CONDUCT AND REFERENCE
THE COMMISSION CASE
NUMBER IN YOUR REQUEST.**