

State of Arizona
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Disposition of Complaint 24-503

Judge:

Complainant:

ORDER

A superior court judge self-reported a delayed ruling in a family law case.

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.

The Commission reviewed all relevant available information and concluded there was not clear and convincing evidence of ethical misconduct in this matter. The Commission approved sending the judicial officer an advisory letter reminding of the duty to issue rulings timely under Rules 1.1 and 2.5(A) of the Code of Judicial Conduct, along with Art. 2, §11, and Art. 6, §21 of the Arizona Constitution. The Commission's file in this matter has been closed, pursuant to Commission Rules 16(b) and 23(a).

Commission members Roger D. Barton and Joseph C. Kreamer did not participate in the consideration of this matter.

Dated: June 9, 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 June 9, 2025.

Attachments: [image001.png](#)

From:

Sent:

To: Commission on Judicial Conduct <CommissionJudicialCo@courts.az.gov>

Subject: Judicial conduct self-report

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

Dear Commission Members,

I apologize for sending this message on Christmas Eve and understand this will not receive immediate attention given the holiday. This message is to self-report a decision I issued after it was pending for more than 60 days. Concurrently with this report, I have reported the same to [redacted] in relation to my judicial certification. On [redacted] I certified effective [redacted] that “No cause has been submitted to me for decision which remains pending and undetermined for sixty days or more since the date of submission for decision.” At that time, I was unaware that I had a ruling that was pending for more than 60 days.

I am currently assigned to the family court bench. On [redacted] I had an evidentiary hearing on a petition to establish parenting time, legal decision-making, and child support, after which the ruling would have been due no later than [redacted].

On [redacted] after a party called my division to inquire about a child support order, I discovered I had not issued a ruling following the [redacted] hearing though it appeared from the minute entry the matter had resolved by agreement. Neither the clerk of court nor I had this case on our respective “under advisement” lists. On [redacted] I reviewed the FTR recording to investigate this further. During the hearing, the parties had reached agreements on paternity, legal decision-making, and parenting time. The issue taken under advisement was child support. In the hearing, I calculated the current child support and informed the parties of the amount but explained that I would issue an order after calculating *past* child support, giving credit to Father based on testimony for past voluntary payments. At the end of the hearing, I did not specifically state I was taking the matter “under advisement.” Unfortunately, the minute entry incorrectly read “all issues have been resolved,” when the past child support issue had not been resolved. The minute entry was not processed with my signature and did not contain 78(c) language. I did not catch these errors in later approving the minute entry.

To further complicate this, the FTR recording did not capture the first 45 minutes of the

hearing. FTR is currently investigating this to determine if the missing portion can be recovered as it looks like a technical issue with uploading.

Due to the passage of time, and missing recording, I set the parties for a continued evidentiary hearing, which was completed on . I notified the parties of the missing recording and confirmed their agreements that were previously reached during the missing portion of the recording. I also received evidence regarding child support to update the past child support calculation. I took personal responsibility for the errors and passage of time, issued the final ruling the same date, and emailed it to the parties.

I maintain an “under advisement” list that is independent from the clerk’s list. It includes the parties’ names, case number, date of hearing, and the deadline for the ruling. I also maintain notes regarding my progress on the ruling, the date the ruling is e-Filed or sent to the clerk of court, then I verify that it appears on docket after I file it. I do not delete matters from my list when they are completed; I move them to a “completed” section in the same document.

I have thought through how this could have occurred and have taken steps to ensure it does not happen again. Since rotating to the family bench in , and even after this hearing, our practices have continued to evolve and improve, such that I believe our current practices will prevent this from happening again. I am more specific with my language in the hearing as to what is resolved and what is not resolved. My “under advisement” list is completely independent from the clerk’s list, and we do not rely on the minute entry to determine whether a matter is resolved or under advisement. All hearings, regardless of agreements, go on my list until I personally move it to the completed list.

Please let me know if there is further action I may take regarding this matter. Please know that I have taken this matter to heart, and I am committed to restoring and maintaining the confidence of all whom I am entrusted to serve.

Thank you, and warmest wishes to all for the holiday season.

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