

State of Arizona
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Disposition of Complaint 26-161

Judge:

Complainant:

ORDER

May 28, 2026

The Complainant alleged a superior court commissioner failed to follow the law in a criminal case by issuing a lenient sentence and was biased.

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. In this instance, the Commission found no evidence of any violation.

The Commission received multiple complaints regarding the sentence issued by the judicial officer in an animal abuse/cruelty case. Additionally, an animal rights website urged individuals who disagreed with the decision to file complaints with the Commission. Due to the volume of complaints and the web criticism, the Commission has chosen to issue this explanatory statement.

The sentence issued by the commissioner was within the lawful sentencing range for the crime of which the defendant was convicted, a class 5 felony. The commissioner's sentence exceeded the recommended sentence requested by the State. The defendant has appealed his conviction, and it will be up to an appellate court to determine if the conviction/sentence in this matter should be affirmed or reversed.

The complainants generally expressed that they felt the sentence in the defendant's case was too lenient. The Commission is not a reviewing or appellate court. It is a regulatory body. The Commission has no power to reverse judicial decisions or to direct any court to do so.

After reviewing all relevant evidence available, the Commission concluded that there was no evidence of any Code violation. The complaint is therefore dismissed pursuant to Commission Rules 16(a) and 23(a).

Dated: May 28, 2026

FOR THE COMMISSION

/s/ Christopher P. Staring

Hon. Christopher P. Staring
Commission Chair

Copies of this order were distributed to all
appropriate persons on May 28, 2026.

CONFIDENTIAL

Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct
1501 W. Washington Street, Suite 229
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**2026-161****COMPLAINT AGAINST A JUDGE****Name:****Judge's Name:**

Instructions: Use this form or plain paper of the same size to file a complaint. Describe in your own words what you believe the judge did that constitutes judicial misconduct. Be specific and list all of the names, dates, times, and places that will help the commission understand your concerns. Additional pages may be attached along with copies (not originals) of relevant court documents. Please complete one side of the paper only, and keep a copy of the complaint for your records.

A man who beat his neighbor's _____ to death with a shovel will spend just _____ days in jail. Despite a jury finding _____ guilty of felony animal cruelty for the brutal killing of _____, the court imposed a sentence that many believe fails to reflect the severity of the crime.

On _____ County _____ Court Commissioner _____ sentenced _____ to just _____ days in jail and _____ years of probation, despite a jury finding him guilty of felony animal cruelty after trial.

The punishment falls far short of the consequences allowed under Arizona law for such a brutal crime.

Although only one felony count was filed, _____ struck the terrified dog multiple times with a shovel, leaving _____ so gravely injured that he had to be euthanized. Under Arizona law, this offense qualifies as a Class 5 felony, which carries a potential sentence of up to 2.5 years in prison and fines of up to \$150,000.

_____ urged prosecutors to pursue the strongest penalties available under the law. We also called for a permanent prohibition on _____ having contact with animals, along with a court-ordered psychological evaluation and any necessary treatment before his release. Anything less fails to reflect the severity of this deliberate act of cruelty.

Commissioner _____ sentence of _____ does not take seriously the violence of his act or the potential of future animal cruelty by this defendant. It encourages other potential animal abusers to believe that their behavior will be considered acceptable.