

State of Arizona
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Disposition of Complaint 26-210

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.

Comp

26-210

From:

Sent:

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

Subject: Re: Formal Complaint Regarding Lenient Sentencing in Felony Animal Cruelty Case

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

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Dear Commission on Judicial Conduct,

I am writing to file a formal complaint regarding the sentencing outcome in an Arizona case involving felony animal cruelty.

Name of Judicial Officer:

Court:

County

Court

Case:

State of Arizona v.

I would like to preface this email by doubling down on my thorough disappointment regarding the outcome of this case, knowing that thousands of animal rights advocates feel the same way.

The case involved the fatal beating of a neighbor's _____ with a shovel in Arizona, on _____ in which the criminal, _____ was sentenced to just _____ days in jail. For a deliberate, sustained act of lethal violence against an innocent animal, this outcome appears grossly disproportionate, especially as the felony conviction carried a potential maximum sentence of 2.5 years in prison.

I am requesting a review of this matter to determine whether the sentencing decision was made in accordance with judicial obligations, including the duty to apply the law

appropriately and uphold public trust in the justice system.

This is not simply disappointing—it raises serious concerns about accountability and the protection of vulnerable beings under the law.

I, once again, urge the Commission to take this matter seriously and review whether this outcome reflects proper judicial conduct.

Sincerely,

On _____ at _____ Commission on Judicial Conduct
<CommissionJudicialCo@courts.az.gov> wrote:

The Commission on Judicial Conduct has received your e-mail correspondence. This office accepts e-mailed complaints that provide the information requested on our complaint form. A copy of that complaint form is attached for your reference. If you do not wish to complete the complaint form and return it by regular mail, you may submit an e-mailed complaint that, at a minimum, must: (1) clearly **state the full name of the judicial officer(s) you are complaining about**; and (2) describe the specific facts and circumstances you believe constitute judicial misconduct. To date, we have received no such submission from you and will not be taking any action regarding your previous e-mail correspondence.

Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct
1501 W. Washington, Suite 229
Phoenix, AZ 85007
602-452-3200

From:

Sent:

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

Subject: Formal Complaint Regarding Lenient Sentencing in Felony Animal Cruelty Case

I am writing to file a formal complaint regarding the sentencing outcome in the Arizona case involving _____, who was convicted of felony animal cruelty after brutally killing his neighbor's _____.

I am beyond outraged by this decision. A man who was found guilty of beating a small, defenseless dog to death with a shovel was sentenced to just _____ days in jail!!! For a deliberate, sustained act of lethal violence against an innocent animal. That is not

justice, it is a disgrace and something you should be **profoundly ashamed** about.

This decision has completely shaken my confidence in the justice system. When a felony conviction for such a horrific act results in barely any meaningful consequence, it raises serious concerns about whether the courts are fulfilling their duty to uphold justice and protect the vulnerable. Animals deserve real protection under the law, not sentences so lenient they border on meaningless.

I am demanding a thorough review of this sentencing decision and whether it aligns with the ethical obligations of the judiciary to promote public trust and reflect the seriousness of criminal conduct.

This is not simply disappointing, it is indefensible. I urge you to take this matter seriously and address the utterly embarrassing failure this outcome represents.

Sincerely,