

>> ALL RISE.  
>> SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA'S  
NOW IN SESSION.  
PLEASE BE SEATED.  
>> OUR NEXT CASE FOR THE DAY IS  
THE REPRIMAND OF JUDGE KATHRYN  
NELSON.  
MS. NELSON.  
JUDGE NELSON, YOU STAND BEFORE  
US NOW BECAUSE OF ETHICAL  
MISCONDUCT IN YOUR OFFICIAL ROLE  
AS A JUDGE.  
WE HAVE COMMANDED YOU TO APPEAR  
FOR A PUBLIC REPRIMAND THAT IS  
BEING BROADCAST THROUGHOUT THE  
STATE.  
THIS IS A VERY, VERY SERIOUS  
MATTER.  
OUR COURTS EXIST TO PROTECT  
RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES, UPHOLD AND  
INTERPRET THE LAW AND PROVIDE  
FOR THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF  
DISPUTES.  
THIS MISSION CAN BE CARRIED OUT  
ONLY WITH THE TRUST AND  
CONFIDENCE THAT THE PEOPLE  
CONFER UPON JUDGES.  
BY YOUR ACTIONS YOU HAVE DAMAGED  
THAT TRUST AND CONFIDENCE.  
THIS IS A SAD DAY FOR YOU AND  
FOR US AS WELL, BUT MOST  
IMPORTANTLY, IT IS A SAD DAY FOR  
THE ENTIRE STATE JUDICIARY.  
NONE OF US CAN UNDO WHAT YOU  
HAVE DONE, BUT WE CAN MAKE CLEAR  
THE GRAVITY OF YOUR ETHICAL  
VIOLATIONS.  
IT IS ONE WAY WE CAN ASSURE THE  
PUBLIC THAT WE TAKE MISCONDUCT  
BY A JUDGE VERY SERIOUSLY AND WE  
WILL NOT -- WE WILL NOT HESITATE  
TO PUNISH ERRANT JUDGES IN A  
PUBLIC WAY.  
JUDGE NELSON, YOU ENTERED INTO A  
STIPULATION WITH THE JUDICIAL  
QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION  
ADMITTING TWO VIOLATIONS OF THE  
CODE OF JUDICIAL MISCONDUCT.  
UNDER THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION,  
THIS COURT HAS THE POWER AND  
RESPONSIBILITY TO REVIEW CASES  
OF ALLEGED JUDICIAL MISCONDUCT  
IN THEIR ENTIRETY AND TO ACCEPT,  
REJECT OR MODIFY THE FINDINGS  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF JQC.  
IN CASES WHERE A JUDGE ADMITS TO  
WRONGDOING, AS YOU HAVE, THIS

COURT ORDINARILY WILL CONCLUDE THAT THE JQC FINDINGS ARE SUPPORTED BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE.

WE DID SO IN YOUR CASE AFTER THOROUGHLY CONSIDERING THE DETAILS OF YOUR ADMITTED MISCONDUCT.

SPECIFICALLY, AS WE NOTED IN OUR OPINION ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 25TH IN VERO BEACH, FLORIDA, YOU WERE OBSERVED DRIVING ERRATICALLY, WEAVING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN LANES, STRIKING A GUARDRAIL SEVERAL TIMES AND ULTIMATELY CRASHING ON A BRIDGE.

YOU STIPULATED TO THIS, THE FIRST CHARGE OF DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE.

YOUR STIPULATION WITH THE JQC ALSO NOTED THAT YOU DID NOT CAUSE ANY PERSONAL INJURY OR DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OF OTHERS, THAT YOU ENTERED A GUILTY PLEA TO DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE AND WERE SENTENCED ACCORDINGLY. IN YOUR STIPULATION YOU EXPRESSED REGRET AND APOLOGIZED FOR YOUR ACTIONS.

YOU'VE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT YOUR ACTIONS HAVE THE RESULT OF LESSENING THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY. YOU ACCEPTED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS WHICH CONSTITUTED VIOLATIONS OF TWO CANONS OF THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT, SOUGHT COUNSELING AND HAVE AGREED TO UNDERGO COUNSELING.

YOU DO NOT CONTEST THE FINDINGS OF THE JQC OR ITS RECOMMENDED DISCIPLINE OF A PUBLIC REPRIMAND.

YOU NOTE THAT THE JQC CONCLUDED YOUR CONDUCT WAS AN ISOLATED INCIDENT AND DOES NOT DEMONSTRATE AN UNFITNESS FOR OFFICE.

NONETHELESS, THE JQC FOUND AND WE AGREE THAT YOUR ACTIONS VIOLATE CANON 1 AND 2A OF THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT AND CONSEQUENTLY HARM THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT UNDER LAW.

CANON 1 EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE

OF ETHICAL JUDICIAL CONDUCT BY NOTING AN INDEPENDENT, HONORABLE JUDICIARY IS INDISPENSABLE TO JUSTICE IN OUR SOCIETY.

CANON 1 FURTHER PROVIDES THAT A JUDGE MUST HOLD TO HIGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT SO THAT THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY MAY BE PRESERVED. JUDGE NELSON, THAT IS THE FIRST ETHICAL VIOLATION YOU HAVE ADMITTED TO AND THAT WE FIND YOU GUILTY OF.

THIS IS A SERIOUS MATTER. COMMENTARY ON THIS CANON NOTE, AND AS WE CITED IN OUR OPINION IN YOUR CASE, VIOLATION OF THIS CODE DIMINISHES PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY AND, THEREBY, THE INJURY IS A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT UNDER LAW.

CANON 2A STATES THAT A JUDGE MUST RESPECT AND COMPLY WITH THE LAW AND SHALL ACT AT ALL TIMES IN A MANNER THAT PROMOTES PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE INTEGRITY AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE JUDICIARY. JUDGE NELSON, THAT IS THE SECOND VIOLATION YOU HAVE ADMITTED TO AND THAT WE FIND YOU GUILTY OF. AS WE CITED IN OUR OPINION, COMMENTARY ON THIS CANON EXPLAINS THAT IRRESPONSIBLE OR IMPROPER CONDUCT BY JUDGES ERODES PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY.

A JUDGE MUST AVOID ALL IMPROPRIETY AND APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BEHAVING WITH IMPROPRIETY OR THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY APPLIES TO BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A JUDGE.

JUDGE NELSON, YOU HAVE RECOGNIZED THE IMPROPRIETY OF YOUR BEHAVIOR AND HAVE ACCEPTED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS.

IN LIGHT OF THAT, WE HAVE AGREED WITH THE JQC THAT THE INTEREST OF THE JUDGE AND SOUND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION WILL BE SERVED BY THIS PUBLIC REPRIMAND.

JUDGE NELSON, YOU ARE HEREBY PUBLICLY REPRIMANDED FOR YOUR MISCONDUCT.

YOU'RE FREE TO LEAVE.