

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE
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FOR RELEASE
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JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION ISSUES DECISION AND ORDER
IMPOSING PUBLIC CENSURE ON JUDGE JEFFREY G. BENNETT
PURSUANT TO STIPULATION

The Commission on Judicial Performance has issued a decision and order imposing a public censure upon Judge Jeffrey G. Bennett of Ventura County Superior Court pursuant to stipulation (Commission Rule 127). Judge Bennett, through his counsel, and the examiner for the commission proposed a Stipulation for Discipline by Consent pursuant to Commission Rule 127(b). The Decision and Order Imposing Public Censure is issued pursuant to that Stipulation, which the commission approved.

The commission determined that it should issue a public censure of Judge Bennett for five acts of prejudicial misconduct and one act of improper action, comprised of 28 different acts of misconduct that violated the Code of Judicial Ethics.

Most of Judge Bennett's misconduct involved comments and remarks that are offensive, undignified, discourteous, dishonest, sexist, and profane, and that created the appearance of bias and retaliation.

Such comments included remarks to an African American criminal defendant about "shucking and jiving," making crude references to his anatomy, commenting about "chicks" liking a car and about not spending so much time with his telescope if he had a "20-year-old smoking hot wife," and using profanity in other remarks.

In another matter, Judge Bennett made statements to an attorney that were false and appeared retaliatory. Judge Bennett also improperly commented about being the subject of peremptory challenges.

Finally, Judge Bennett engaged in a pattern of undignified, discourteous and offensive comments to prosecutors that created an appearance of bias against them.

Judge Bennett's misconduct was aggravated by prior discipline for discourteous and undignified remarks he made to a criminal defendant. Judge Bennett's misconduct was mitigated by acknowledging almost all of the misconduct with which he was charged in, and stipulating to a resolution of, the current matter.

Judge Bennett stipulated to the truth of the facts that formed the basis for the public censure.

The public censure is available on the commission's website at <http://cjp.ca.gov> (under "Pending Cases - Press Releases & Documents" and "Public Discipline & Decisions") and at the commission's office. Judge Bennett is represented by Attorney Heather L. Rosing of San Diego.

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The commission is composed of six public members, three judges and two lawyers. The chairperson is Nanci E. Nishimura, Esq.

For further information about the Commission on Judicial Performance, see the commission's website at <http://cjp.ca.gov>.