



STATE OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

February 6, 2024

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FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Judge Bill Anderson, Jr.
Shelby County Justice Center
201 Poplar Ave., LL-56
Memphis, TN 38103

RE: Public Reprimand
File Nos. B23-9529 and B23-9550

Dear Judge Anderson:

This letter shall serve as a public reprimand pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated section 17-5-303(e)(2)(B)(i)(c). This reprimand addresses two separate matters.

1. File No. B23-9529. On March 16, 2023, Memphis Police Sgt. Benjamin O'Brien appeared in court for a bond hearing at your request. During the hearing, you raised your voice at Sgt. O'Brien and became sarcastic about a warrant he had prepared. Sgt. O'Brien left the courtroom feeling embarrassed and harassed.

In a response, you indicated that although you had no personal recollection of your interaction with Sgt. O'Brien, court records reflected a dismissal of the case. You indicated that you likely explained to Sgt. O'Brien that the case was being dismissed because the affidavit of complaint was insufficient and that was, in fact, the reason for the dismissal.

Judges are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct and dignity of judicial office at all times. *See* Preamble, Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10(2). This obligation includes the specific responsibility of being patient, dignified, and courteous to those with whom the judge deals in an official capacity. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 2.8(B). Yelling or making injudicious comments in court is neither dignified nor courteous and sets a poor example for everyone present. In addition, a party who is the subject of overly harsh or intemperate words may reasonably perceive that the judge is biased. Nor do such comments inspire confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 1.2.

2. File No. B23-9550. During a Shelby County Commission meeting on September 18, 2023, you publicly expressed your animosity toward the law governing the bail system. Specifically, you stated that “bail bond companies don’t do anything except collect money from poor people.” You also stated, “I detest the bail bond system in Shelby County. I detest it across the State.”

In a response, you admitted to making the extrajudicial comments at issue and explained that you follow the law regardless of your personal views.

It is one thing for a judge to appear publicly and explain specific problems in an area of the law in which the judge has expertise; it is quite another for a judge to publicly declare that he or she “detests” the law that the judge is charged with applying. Statements of the type in the latter category can undermine public perception and confidence that the judge will approach his or her cases fairly and impartially, as well as undermine public confidence in the judiciary. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 1.2 and 2.2. In addition, extrajudicial comments like those at issue can raise reasonable questions about a judge’s willingness to follow the law. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 1.1. Such comments can also lead to disqualification issues for the judge. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 2.11.

Accordingly, the investigative panel decided to impose a public reprimand, which you have accepted. In imposing this sanction, the panel considered that you have been cooperative and have taken full responsibility.

The Board trusts that this reprimand will result in an elevated consciousness about how to approach similar situations going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Andrew Brigham".

G. Andrew Brigham
Board Chair