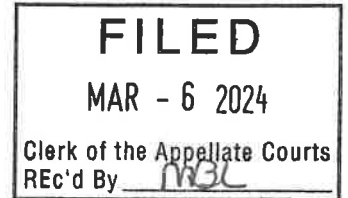


IN THE TENNESSEE BOARD OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

MR2024-00342-BJC-DIS-FC

IN RE: JUDGE WILLIAM K. ROGERS,
CIRCUIT COURT,
SULLIVAN COUNTY

File No. B24-9567



ORDER OF SUSPENSION

This matter is before the Board of Judicial Conduct (“Board”) upon an investigation involving Judge William K. Rogers who has served as a Circuit Court Judge in Sullivan County, Tennessee, since 2017. At all times relevant herein, Judge Rogers was subject to the provisions of Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 10, the Code of Judicial Conduct. As such, Judge Rogers is subject to judicial discipline by the Board pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated section 17-5-102(a)(1).

BACKGROUND

1. On January 2, 2024, Judge Rogers was stopped by the Sullivan County Sheriff’s Department for erratic driving in Sullivan County, Tennessee. He failed a field sobriety test and was arrested for driving under the influence in violation of Tennessee Code Annotated section 55-10-401. Additionally, he was cited for violating the Implied Consent Law in violation of Tennessee Code Annotated section 55-10-406.

2. On January 3, 2024, Judge Rogers self-reported his arrest to the Board.

3. On January 5, 2024, Judge Rogers pled guilty to driving under the influence, first offense, in violation of Tennessee Code Annotated section 55-10-401, and was sentenced accordingly. The implied consent charge was dismissed.

4. Judge Rogers also contacted TLAP and underwent an evaluation for substance abuse. On February 21, 2024, TLAP notified the Board that, based on its evaluation, Judge Rogers did not require treatment for a substance abuse problem.

5. On February 23, 2024, an investigative panel of the Board composed of William C. Koch, Jr., Benjamin S. Purser, Jr., and Daniel Springer, authorized a full investigation of this matter pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated section 17-5-303(c)(3).

6. In a notice dated February 27, 2024, Judge Rogers was advised that his conduct implicated the following: Tenn. Code Ann. § 17-5-301(j)(1)(C) (a judicial offense includes a violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct); Tenn. Code Ann. § 17-5-301(j)(1)(H) (a judicial offense includes conduct calculated to bring the judiciary into public disrepute or to adversely affect the administration of justice); Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10,

RJC 1.1 (“A judge shall comply with the law, including the Code of Judicial Conduct.”); Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 1.2 (“A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.”); Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 3.1(A) (prohibiting personal activities that would interfere with the proper and timely performance of the judge’s duties); and Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 3.1(C) (prohibiting personal activities that would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the judge’s independence, integrity, or impartiality).

ANALYSIS

7. Judges are required to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, must avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, and must comply with the law. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, RJC 1.1 and 1.2. Judges are also expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct and dignity of judicial office in both their professional and personal lives. Preamble, Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10(2).

8. When any judge, but especially a judge who adjudicates substance abuse matters and traffic violations such as Judge Rogers, is convicted of DUI or a related offense, respect for the judiciary and the administration of justice suffers. Clearly, the public is more likely to respect and have confidence in the integrity and quality of justice administered by a judge if the judge has complied with the same standards of conduct he or she is responsible for applying to others. A judge convicted of DUI, or any other crime, does not inspire such confidence.

9. In addition, as the occupant of an honored position of public trust, a judge’s role includes cultivating respect for the law and the administration of justice in both words and deeds. The conduct at issue here did just the opposite.

10. In light of the foregoing, the investigative panel, on March 4, 2024, approved the suspension of Judge Rogers for a period of thirty days. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 17-5-301(f)(1)(A) and Tenn. Code Ann. § 17-5-303(e)(2)(B)(i)(d).

11. Judge Rogers, who has been transparent and cooperative throughout this matter and has accepted full responsibility for his actions, agreed to accept the sanction described herein in lieu of the filing of formal disciplinary charges. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 17-5-303(e)(2)(C).

CONCLUSION

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED that Judge Rogers is suspended for a term of thirty (30) days effective March 13, 2024, through and including March 31, 2024, and April 20, 2024, through and including April 30, 2024. During this term of suspension, Judge Rogers is prohibited from exercising any judicial power or authority including, but not limited to, holding court, issuing subpoenas, setting or resetting cases, issuing

warrants, setting or changing bonds, administering oaths, or issuing oral or written rulings in any matter.

ENTERED this 6th day of March, 2024.



Judge G. Andrew Brigham
Board Chair

FOR THE INVESTIGATIVE PANEL:

William Koch
William C. Koch, Jr. with permission MLD

3/6/2024
Date

Benjamin Purser
Benjamin S. Purser, Jr. with permission MLD

3/6/2024
Date

Daniel Springer
Daniel Springer with permission MLD

3/6/2024
Date

APPROVED FOR ENTRY:

William K. Rogers
Judge William K. Rogers

3/5/2024
Date

R. Wayne Culbertson
R. Wayne Culbertson, Esq.
Attorney for Judge Rogers

3/5/2024
Date

Marshall Davidson
Marshall L. Davidson, III
Disciplinary Counsel

3/6/2024
Date

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and exact copy of the foregoing Order has been mailed to the following:

R. Wayne Culbertson, Esq.
Attorney for Judge William K. Rogers
119 W. Market Street
Kingsport, TN 37660

on this 6th day of March, 2024.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Marsh". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Lisa Marsh
Chief Deputy Clerk