

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

In re Barbara Ann Balistreri

Balistreri · No. 4:25-bk-2956-MJC · Decided December 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania sanctioned attorney Paige Martineau under Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9011(b)(3) for repeatedly misquoting statements made by the court and using those misquotes to allege judicial bias and impropriety. The court found that Martineau failed to conduct a reasonable investigation and did not correct the misstatements after receiving notice of the accurate statements. The court imposed a \$500 monetary sanction, subject to waiver if Martineau completed three hours of qualifying continuing legal education.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Mark J. Conway
JURISDICTION	United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	December 23, 2025
DOCKET	4:25-bk-2956-MJC
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The Bankruptcy Court issued an order to show cause requiring attorney Paige Martineau to explain why she should not be sanctioned under Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9011(b)(3) for repeatedly misquoting the presiding judge in court filings. After a December 16, 2025 hearing at which Martineau was given an opportunity to be heard, the court issued this memorandum imposing a sanction.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the objective-reasonableness standard for Rule 9011 conduct, asking whether counsel conducted a reasonable factual investigation under the circumstances. A finding of subjective bad faith was not required.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished

TOPICS

sanctions bankruptcy chapter 7 pleadings civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Bankruptcy Professional responsibility Federal civil procedure Sanctions

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether counsel violated Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure 9011(b)(3) by filing pleadings containing materially misquoted statements without conducting a reasonable investigation into their accuracy.
2. Whether counsel's continued repetition of the misquotations after receiving actual notice of their inaccuracy warranted a Rule 9011 sanction.

HOLDINGS

1. An attorney violates Rule 9011(b)(3) when the attorney presents factual contentions in pleadings without evidentiary support after failing to conduct at least some affirmative, reasonable investigation into their accuracy. Martineau violated the rule by attributing materially false quotations to the judge when the official transcript and audio were readily available.
2. Continued use of materially inaccurate quotations after counsel received actual notice of their falsity independently supported a Rule 9011(b)(3) sanction.
3. The Bankruptcy Court retained jurisdiction over the collateral Rule 9011 proceeding after dismissal of the underlying bankruptcy case.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Attorney Paige Martineau is hereby sanctioned in the amount of \$500.00 to be paid to the Clerk of the Court no later than ninety (90) days of the entry of the Order accompanying this Memorandum.” (Conclusion)

“In the alternative, Attorney Paige Martineau may take three (3) hours of CLE on Federal Practice or Professional Responsibility within ninety (90) days of the entry of the Order accompanying this Memorandum and upon providing a certification of completion to this Court, the monetary sanction will be waived.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

During an October 9, 2025 hearing, Judge Conway stated that he remembered trying to resolve an earlier matter because he believed settlement was in the debtor's best interests and that the District Court had affirmed his decision. Attorney Paige Martineau later repeatedly quoted the judge as saying that he had pressured her to settle and that the parties had won or lost an appeal, materially altering the tone and substance of the actual exchange. Martineau used the altered quotations in motions seeking recusal, reconsideration, and preliminary injunctive relief, despite having access to the official transcript and audio and after being placed on notice that the quotations were inaccurate.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Barbara Ann Balistreri first filed a Chapter 7 case on August 26, 2025, which was dismissed after failure to file the required debtor's certificate of credit counseling. During an October 9 hearing in the earlier case, Judge Conway made statements concerning an earlier matter. Martineau later attributed materially different statements to the judge in recusal and reconsideration motions filed in the bankruptcy court and District Court. The court denied the recusal motions, issued an order to show cause, held a hearing on December 16, 2025, and sanctioned Martineau.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Cooter & Gell v. Hartmarx Corp., 496 U.S. 384, 385 (1990)
- In re Thomas, 612 B.R. 46, 62 (Bankr. E.D. Pa. 2020)
- In re Parikh, 508 B.R. 572, 585, 590-594 (Bankr. E.D.N.Y. 2014)
- In re Redante, 579 B.R. 354, 363 (Bankr. E.D. Pa. 2018)
- In re Taylor, 655 F.3d 274, 284 (3d Cir. 2011)
- In re Obasi, 2011 WL 6336153, at *6 (Bankr. S.D.N.Y. 2011)
- In re Ulmer, 363 B.R. 777, 782 (Bankr. D.S.C. 2007)
- In re James Alva McNeal, 4:20-ap-00060-MJC (Bankr. M.D. Pa.)