

SUPREME COURT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

In the Matter of Former Judge James E. Crook, Spartanburg County
Magistrate Court

Opinion No. 28320; Appellate Case No. 2025-002237 · No. 2025-002237 · Decided March 18, 2026

SUMMARY

The South Carolina Supreme Court accepted an Agreement for Discipline by Consent involving former Spartanburg County Magistrate James E. Crook. The court publicly reprimanded Crook for displaying sexually explicit photographs to a court employee, found violations of Canons 1, 1A, and 2A of the Code of Judicial Conduct, and required him to pay disciplinary costs and refrain from seeking or accepting future judicial office in South Carolina.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of South Carolina
WRITING FOR THE COURT	KITTREDGE, C.J.; FEW, J.; JAMES, J.; HILL, J.; VERDIN, J.
JURISDICTION	South Carolina
DECIDED	March 18, 2026
DOCKET	2025-002237
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Judicial disciplinary proceeding arising from an Agreement for Discipline by Consent under Rule 21 of the Rules for Judicial Disciplinary Enforcement. The respondent admitted misconduct, resigned his judicial position, agreed not to seek or accept future judicial office in South Carolina, and consented to discipline.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion

TOPICS

- administrative law
- agency adjudication
- remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

- judicial discipline
- professional responsibility
- administrative law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Supreme Court should accept the parties' Agreement for Discipline by Consent.
2. Whether Respondent's admitted conduct violated the Code of Judicial Conduct and constituted grounds for discipline.
3. What sanction was appropriate after Respondent resigned and agreed not to seek or accept future judicial office in South Carolina.

HOLDINGS

1. Respondent's conduct violated Canon 1, Canon 1A, and Canon 2A of the Code of Judicial Conduct, and the violation constituted a ground for discipline under Rule 7(a)(1) of the Rules for Judicial Disciplinary Enforcement.
2. The court accepted the Agreement for Discipline by Consent and publicly reprimanded Respondent. Because Respondent no longer held judicial office and agreed not to seek or accept another judicial position in South Carolina, a public reprimand was the most severe available sanction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“This is the strongest punishment we can give Respondent, given the fact that he has already resigned his duties as a judge.”

“A public reprimand is the most severe sanction that can be imposed when the respondent no longer holds judicial office.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On October 14, 2024, Respondent, then a Spartanburg County magistrate, showed a court employee photographs of a woman posing in sexually suggestive attire and positions. The employee reported the incident to her supervisor, who reported it to other judges, and the Chief Magistrate submitted the employee's written statement to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel. Respondent admitted showing the photographs, acknowledged that his conduct was inappropriate, resigned from his position, and agreed never to seek or accept another judicial office in South Carolina.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A court employee reported Respondent's conduct to supervisory judges, and the Chief Magistrate submitted the employee's written statement to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel. Respondent and the Office of Disciplinary Counsel entered into an Agreement for Discipline by Consent. The Supreme Court of South Carolina accepted the Agreement, publicly reprimanded Respondent, and ordered him to pay investigative and prosecutorial costs within thirty days.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- In re Gravely, 321 S.C. 235, 467 S.E.2d 924 (1996)

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