

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

In re Disciplinary Proceeding Against David Ruzumna

In re Ruzumna · No. 202261-8 · Decided April 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The Washington Supreme Court reviewed de novo a Commission on Judicial Conduct decision concerning Judge Pro Tempore David Ruzumna’s unauthorized use of a judge’s signature stamp and a court seal in an attempt to obtain a discounted parking rate. The court upheld findings that he violated Canons 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct and determined that censure and removal from judicial office were appropriate sanctions.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of the State of Washington
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Johnson, J.
JURISDICTION	Washington Supreme Court
DECIDED	April 9, 2026
DOCKET	202261-8
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	David Ruzumna challenged the Commission on Judicial Conduct's decision finding violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct and recommending censure and removal from judicial office. The Washington Supreme Court conducted a de novo review of the record and the parties' arguments.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The Supreme Court reviews Commission decisions de novo, independently evaluating the record to determine whether the judge violated the Code and the appropriate sanction. The Commission must prove factual findings by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence, and the Supreme Court is not bound by the Commission's findings or conclusions, although it gives considerable weight to findings and credibility determinations based on the Commission's opportunity to observe witnesses.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published precedential opinion
PARTIES	David Ruzumna, Judge Pro Tempore v. Commission on Judicial Conduct

TOPICS

administrative law

agency adjudication

judicial review of agency action

constitutional law

PRACTICE AREAS

judicial discipline

professional responsibility

administrative law

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Ruzumna's unauthorized use of a sitting judge's signature stamp and the official court seal to obtain a personal parking discount violated CJC 1.1 and 1.2.
2. Whether Ruzumna's use of judicial insignia to obtain a personal financial benefit violated CJC 1.3, including whether CJC 1.3 requires proof of knowledge or intent.
3. Whether censure and removal from judicial office were the appropriate sanctions under the Deming factors and CJCRP 6(c).
4. What standard governs the Supreme Court's review of a Commission on Judicial Conduct decision.

HOLDINGS

1. A judge's unauthorized use of another judge's signature stamp and an official court seal to create a false or misleading document for a personal benefit constitutes impropriety and a lack of integrity in violation of CJC 1.2 and therefore violates CJC 1.1's requirement to comply with the Code of Judicial Conduct.
2. CJC 1.3 does not contain an express knowledge requirement, but its prohibition on abusing the prestige of judicial office requires conduct that is unreasonable or wrongful. Unauthorized misappropriation of a judge's signature stamp and a court seal to obtain a personal financial benefit is an abuse of the prestige of judicial office, even if the judge believed he was entitled to the benefit.
3. Removal from judicial office, together with censure, is warranted when the misconduct constitutes a flagrant and intentional violation of the oath of office or misuse of judicial power and the totality of the applicable disciplinary factors supports removal.
4. The Supreme Court reviews Commission on Judicial Conduct decisions de novo, independently evaluating the record and the appropriate sanction while giving considerable weight to the Commission's credibility determinations.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The unauthorized misappropriation of official judicial insignia to achieve a personal benefit—however small—constitutes an ethical violation.” (at 13)

“While no single factor is dispositive or necessarily holds more weight than another, we have recently held removal is limited to flagrant and intentional violations of the oath of office or misuse of power.” (at 16-17)

“Honesty and integrity are among the most critical traits expected of those entrusted with judicial office.” (at 26)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

While serving as a pro tempore judge for the King County District Court, David Ruzumna sought a discounted parking rate available to county employees. He created a document stating that he was employed by the King County District Court and affixed the unauthorized signature stamp of Judge Rebecca Robertson and the King County District Court seal. He presented the document to a parking attendant to obtain the discount, and later offered explanations about additional stamps that the Commission and Supreme Court found not credible.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Commission charged Ruzumna with violating CJC 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3. After a fact-finding hearing before a 10-member panel, the Commission found the violations and recommended censure and removal. Ruzumna argued that his conduct warranted only an admonishment. The Supreme Court adopted the Commission's recommendation and removed him from judicial office.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Buchanan, 100 Wn.2d 396, 399, 669 P.2d 1248 (1983)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Anderson, 138 Wn.2d 830, 843, 981 P.2d 426 (1999)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Turco, 137 Wn.2d 227, 244, 246, 250, 970 P.2d 731 (1999)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Deming, 108 Wn.2d 82, 110, 119-20, 736 P.2d 639 (1987)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Keenan, 199 Wn.2d 87, 101, 502 P.3d 1271 (2022)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Eiler, 169 Wn.2d 340, 353-54, 236 P.3d 873 (2010)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Flood, 5 Wn.3d 673, 684, 686, 580 P.3d 432 (2025)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Ritchie, 123 Wn.2d 725, 735, 870 P.2d 967 (1994)
- In re Disciplinary Proc. Against Hammermaster, 139 Wn.2d 211, 246, 985 P.2d 924 (1999)