

State of Arizona  
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT  
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# *News Release*

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## **YAVAPAI COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE ACCEPTS JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE**

PHOENIX. The Commission on Judicial Conduct announced today an agreement for resolution of disciplinary proceedings pending against Howard D. Hinson, Jr., a Yavapai County Superior Court judge. The proposed resolution, if accepted by the Arizona Supreme Court, includes the agreement of Judge Hinson to resign from office effective on September 30, 2009, allowing the judge time to address certain matters assigned to his court.

Under Arizona law, judges are required to rule on matters submitted for decision within 60 days. Judges are also required to sign and submit a written certification each month that they have no matters pending beyond the 60-day limit in order to receive compensation.

In his response to the disciplinary charges, Judge Hinson admitted that decisions he issued in 25 cases over a three-year period did not comply with the 60-day time requirement. Judge Hinson also admitted that he submitted inaccurate salary certifications 11 times during the same period. Finally, the judge admitted that his failure to institute a comprehensive administrative case tracking system to ensure proper compliance with the law contributed to his late rulings and inaccurate certifications. A new tracking system is now in place and the judge is current on all matters pending in his court.

Judge Hinson and the commission stipulated that he violated the ethical standards governing judicial behavior and that such conduct might ordinarily result in a suspension without pay. In the agreement, the commission acknowledges Judge Hinson's acceptance of responsibility for his misconduct, his cooperation with the commission, and certain mitigating circumstances. The agreement provides for Judge Hinson's resignation in lieu of suspension and recommends the public sanction for censure for his misconduct in office. A censure does not require a temporary suspension of judicial authority or time off the bench. The commission's recommendation, if approved by the

court, would permit the judge to continue working until his last day in office, allowing an orderly transition for the Yavapai County Superior Court.

The commission is an independent state agency with jurisdiction over all state and local judges. It is composed of six judges, two attorneys, and three public members.

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