

In the Supreme Court of Indiana

IN THE MATTER OF	)	
	)	
THE HONORABLE	)	
	)	
CHRISTOPHER A. BUCKLEY	)	Case No: 26S-JD-373
	)	
JUDGE OF	)	
	)	
PORTER SUPERIOR COURT 4	)	

NOTICE OF THE INSTITUTION OF FORMAL PROCEEDINGS AND STATEMENT OF CHARGES

The Indiana Commission on Judicial Qualifications (“Commission”), having found probable cause to warrant formal charges of judicial misconduct, now notifies Respondent, the Honorable Christopher A. Buckley (“Respondent”) of the filing of these Charges. These Charges are brought under Admission and Discipline Rule 25 and before the Indiana Supreme Court, which, pursuant to Article 7, § 4 of the Constitution of Indiana, has original jurisdiction over the discipline, suspension, and removal of all judges and judicial officers of this State. The Commission charges that Respondent, while Judge of Porter Superior Court 4, engaged in judicial misconduct as specifically charged below. Pursuant to Admission and Discipline Rule 25VIII(F)(2), Respondent may file a written Answer to these Charges within twenty (20) days of service.

BACKGROUND

1. Respondent was admitted to the Indiana Bar in 2010.
2. From January 2016 to February 2020, Respondent served as Judge of Lowell Town Court.
3. In November 2020, Respondent was elected as judge for Porter Superior Court and began serving as Judge of Porter Superior Court 4 on January 1, 2021.
4. At all times pertinent to these Charges, Respondent presided over Porter Superior Court 4 and had a criminal case docket consisting of misdemeanors, low-level felony cases, and traffic infractions.

Prior Conviction for Operating a Motor Vehicle While Intoxicated

5. On July 7, 2009, while Respondent was in law school, he was charged with Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated as a Class C misdemeanor and Expired Plates as an infraction in Hobart City Court under cause no. 45H05-0907-CM-001011.
6. On August 3, 2009, Respondent was convicted of Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated as a Class C misdemeanor, and the infraction charge was dismissed.
7. At the time, Respondent was not yet an attorney.

Prior Public Commission Admonition

8. Between 2016 and 2020, Respondent modified bonds for several defendants when he presided over the Lowell Town Court. In several instances in which defendants were charged with one offense and given bail, Respondent issued 'no bond' determinations when defendants were subsequently arrested on other offenses, without a motion from the prosecution or notice to defendants.

9. In November 2021, the Commission publicly admonished Respondent for failing to follow statutory guidelines regarding revoking a defendant's bond and for failing to give defendants notice of bond revocations and an opportunity to respond. The Commission admonished Respondent that these failures constituted violations of Rules 1.1, 1.2 and 2.6(A) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Alcohol-Related Domestic Incident

10. On September 5, 2024, Respondent self-reported that there had been a dispute on August 21, 2024, between him and his wife,¹ that resulted in a report to the Valparaiso Police Department ("VPD"). In the report, Respondent's wife alleged that Respondent had engaged in intimidating conduct approximately one week before the incident. On the night Respondent's wife contacted police, Respondent had consumed alcohol, and the couple became involved in a marital dispute.
11. The matter was referred to the Indiana State Police for further investigation. A special prosecutor was appointed to oversee the investigation, and on September 6, 2024, the special prosecutor decided not to file criminal charges.
12. On December 3, 2024, the Commission issued a Notice of Inquiry to Respondent requesting that he provide information about what treatment, if any, he had undergone to deal with issues contributing to the incidents in August 2024.
13. On December 26, 2024, Respondent submitted his response to the Commission's Notice of Inquiry and stated that he was attending two Alcoholics Anonymous ("AA") meetings per week and that he had been referred to an intensive outpatient program

¹ Respondent and his wife are separated, with divorce proceedings currently pending.

consisting of virtual instruction, regular class assignments, and at least two self-help substance meetings per week.

14. In his December 2024 response, Respondent also stated that he maintained sobriety since his wife submitted the report, was attending private individual counseling and counseling through the Veteran's Administration ("VA"), and was attending marriage counseling with his wife.
15. As of March 2025, Respondent had completed the intensive outpatient program and continued to attend therapy with a VA individual therapy counselor once per month and twice per month with a civilian individual therapy counselor. At that time, Respondent also continued to attend AA meetings twice per week.
16. Based on Respondent's cooperation and after careful consideration, the Commission and Respondent entered into a Deferred Resolution Agreement ("Deferred Resolution") on March 31, 2025, which would remain in effect until March 2027, provided Respondent complied with its terms and conditions. Some of the terms included:
 - a. Respondent would continue attending individual therapy through the VA or a private therapist and comply with any recommended treatment;
 - b. Respondent would enter into a Monitoring Agreement with the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program;
 - c. Respondent would refrain from making public statements misrepresenting the status of the Commission's investigation or the terms of the Commission's agreement to close its inquiry;

- d. If Respondent failed to comply with the agreement's terms, the Commission reserved the right to take further action, including initiating formal proceedings against Respondent; and
 - e. The Commission reserved the right to withdraw from the Deferred Resolution if it determined that Respondent committed additional misconduct warranting discipline during the deferral period.
17. Respondent's arrest and subsequent conviction for Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated triggered the Commission's rescission of the Deferred Resolution and its vote to issue a Notice of Investigation.

FACTS GIVING RISE TO MISCONDUCT CHARGES

18. On Saturday, August 15, 2026, at approximately 9:05 p.m., Captain Gregory Jesse ("Cpt. Jesse") with the Michigan City Police Department was working off-duty security at the "Live at the Lakefront" concert in Michigan City, Indiana, when he noticed Respondent drive and park a Black Lincoln Navigator in an area that was closed to the general public.
19. When Cpt. Jesse went over to Respondent's vehicle, the two passengers – a female and another male – were already getting out of the passenger side of the vehicle.
20. Cpt. Jesse asked Respondent, "Can I help you?" Respondent remarked, "Can't you read?" and then gestured toward the side of his vehicle, which had a large decal running along the length of the vehicle that read "KEEP BUCKLEY JUDGE."
21. After that remark, Respondent got out of the vehicle and stumbled while he got out.

22. During this initial encounter with Respondent, Cpt. Jesse observed that Respondent's eyes were glassy, watery, and bloodshot; his speech was slow, thick, and slurred; and the odor of an alcoholic beverage emanated from his mouth as he spoke.
23. In response to a question from Cpt. Jesse about how much alcohol Respondent had been drinking that night, Respondent indicated that he had not been drinking alcohol that night and then pressed his lips tight together to keep his mouth shut.
24. Because he had observed Respondent driving and noticed signs of intoxication from Respondent, Cpt. Jesse requested that Respondent submit to field sobriety tests.
- a. Initially, Respondent refused to submit to field sobriety tests, indicating that the officer was going to ruin his career or life.
 - b. At the time Respondent made that statement, the female passenger had made statements reminding Cpt. Jesse that Respondent is a judge.
 - c. Cpt. Jesse radioed for backup. Once other officers arrived on the scene, Cpt. Jesse again asked whether Respondent would agree to field sobriety testing, and Respondent stated he would perform such tests.
25. Cpt. Jesse asked Respondent to move to a location away from the crowd of the music festival to perform the field sobriety tests. Twice, Respondent walked away from the officer and had to be reminded that he was not free to leave.
26. After Cpt. Jesse attempted to administer the field sobriety tests, Respondent's results were as follows:
- a. On the horizontal gaze nystagmus ("HGN") test, Respondent was unable to follow directions and unable to perform the test as instructed.

- b. Respondent attempted the walk-and-turn test but was unable to complete the test after he stumbled a couple of times and nearly fell.
 - c. Respondent told officers that he was unable to complete both the walk-and-turn test and the one-leg-stand test because he has balance issues and is a disabled veteran.
27. After Respondent reported that he could not complete the tests because he had balance issues, Cpt. Jesse reminded Respondent that he had asked Respondent prior to administering the tests whether Respondent had any leg, knee, or hip problems, and Respondent indicated that he had no such issues.
28. Multiple times during the stop, Respondent referenced his judicial status, how the investigation would affect him, and about the direction the investigation was going.
29. When Cpt. Jesse asked Respondent if he would submit to a portable breath test, Respondent refused.
30. While one of the attending officers was attempting to get the Implied Consent Card to read to Respondent, Respondent tried walking off for a third time.
31. Respondent's action prompted Cpt. Jesse to grab Respondent's arm and remind Respondent again that he was not free to leave. Respondent stated in response, "I'm a Judge."
32. Cpt. Jesse then read to Respondent Indiana's Implied Consent warning, and Respondent indicated that he was refusing to take a chemical breath test.
33. Capt. Jesse then phoned the on-call prosecutor to request a search warrant. Respondent remarked, "I'm a Judge; you've just ruined my career."

34. After obtaining the search warrant, Respondent was transported to Northwest Health - LaPorte Hospital to take a blood sample.
35. Respondent questioned the officer about which judge in the county signed off on the search warrant.
36. During transport and processing, Respondent mentioned that the judge who signed the search warrant was his friend and that the Fraternal Order of Police had endorsed him in his judicial campaign.
37. During the blood draw, Respondent again referred to how the arrest was going to ruin his "career and pension."
38. Testing from the blood draw revealed that Respondent's blood alcohol level was .221% blood alcohol equivalent
39. Respondent was arrested and subsequently charged in LaPorte Superior Court under cause no. 46D04-2608-CM-001900 with Operating Vehicle with Alcohol Concentration Equivalent to .15 or More, a Class A misdemeanor; Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated Endangering a Person, a Class A misdemeanor; and Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor.
40. On August 17, 2026, Respondent pled guilty to Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor. Respondent was sentenced to 60 days in jail, with 58 days suspended, and 180 days of probation. Additionally, Respondent was ordered to complete an alcohol evaluation and treatment program as directed by probation. The two Class A misdemeanor counts were dismissed pursuant to the plea agreement.

41. On September 3, 2026, the Commission issued a Notice of Investigation to Respondent regarding his August 15, 2026 arrest and subsequent conviction for Operating a Motor Vehicle While Intoxicated.
42. During the Commission's investigation, the Commission received information and confirmed that Respondent had a case of Irish Pub Pack beer in his chambers, located under the coat rack where Respondent hung his judicial robe.
43. During the Commission's investigation, the Commission was informed by court staff that on May 6, 2026, Respondent arrived at work "reeking" of alcohol.

APPLICABLE COURT RULES AND INDIANA STATUTES

44. Rule 1.1 of the Indiana Code of Judicial Conduct provides that "A judge shall comply with the law, including the Code of Judicial Conduct."
45. Rule 1.2 of the Indiana Code of Judicial Conduct provides that "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."
46. Rule 1.3 of the Indiana Code of Judicial Conduct provides that "A judge shall not abuse the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the judge or others, or allow others to do so."
47. Comment 1 to Judicial Conduct Rule 1.3 provides, in relevant part:

It is improper for a judge to use or attempt to use his or her position to gain personal advantage or deferential treatment of any kind. For example, it would be improper for a judge to allude to his or her judicial status to gain favorable treatment in encounters with traffic officials....

48. Indiana Code §9-30-5-2(a) provides in part that “Except as provided in subsection (b), a person who operates a vehicle while intoxicated commits a Class C misdemeanor.”

CHARGES

The Commission incorporates the facts set out in ¶¶ 1-43 into the Charges below.

Count 1

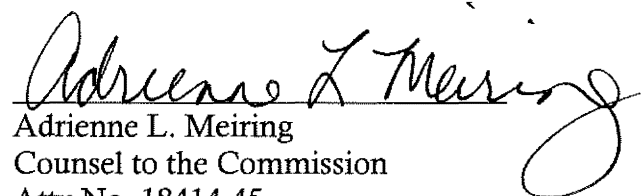
The Commission charges that, on August 15, 2026, Respondent was arrested for and subsequently convicted of Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor. By engaging in this conduct, Respondent violated Rules 1.1 and 1.2 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Count 2

The Commission charges that, on August 15, 2026, in an attempt to obtain leniency from law enforcement officers during their investigation of Respondent for Operating a Motor Vehicle While Intoxicated, Respondent made statements to law enforcement officer(s) referencing his judicial status, his relationship to a police organization and an official involved in the process, and/or about the impact an arrest would have on his career. By engaging in this conduct, Respondent violated Rule 1.3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

WHEREFORE, the Commission respectfully requests that, upon the filing of Respondent’s Answer, the Indiana Supreme Court appoint three Masters to conduct a public hearing on the charges that Respondent committed judicial misconduct as alleged and further prays that the Supreme Court find that Respondent committed misconduct and that it impose upon him the appropriate sanction.

Respectfully submitted,


Adrienne L. Meiring
Counsel to the Commission
Atty No. 18414-45


Stephanie K. Bibbs
Deputy Director of Litigation
Atty No. 25145-49

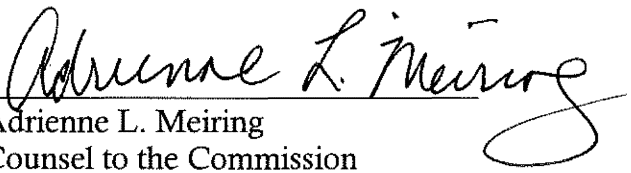

Conner Dickerson
Staff Attorney
Atty No. 36374-49

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that a copy of this "Notice of the Institution of Formal Proceedings and Statement of Charges" was sent by certified mail, postage pre-paid to Respondent, through counsel, and via electronic mail at the following mailing and electronic address:

Christopher Buckley
Porter Superior Court 4
16 E. Lincolnway, #228
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

10/16/26
DATE


Adrienne L. Meiring
Counsel to the Commission
Atty. No. 18414-45


Conner Dickerson
Staff Attorney
Atty. No. 36374-49