



Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Suspended Indefinitely for Outrageous Behavior

After reviewing Cleveland, Ohio's three-member panel of the Board of Professional Conduct's report on municipal judge Pinkey Suzanne Carr's outrageous conduct in her courtroom over the last two years — including bribery, demanding kickbacks, and issuing illegal arrest warrants — [Ohio's Supreme Court suspended her immediately and indefinitely.](#)

The state's highest court even declared that the 57 letters she submitted in her defense from people attesting to her good character were, in fact, obtained under false pretenses.



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Wrote the court:

And while we acknowledge that Carr submitted letters from 57 people attesting to her good character and reputation, those letters were procured with a false narrative in which Carr characterized her blatant and intentional misconduct as a series of inadvertent mistakes.

The remaining mitigating factors are simply insufficient to overcome the sheer volume of Carr's misconduct, including her disregard for the rule of law, and the harm that her misconduct caused to the litigants in her courtroom and the honor and dignity of the judiciary.

Carr's unprecedented misconduct involved more than 100 stipulated incidents that occurred over a period of approximately two years and encompassed repeated acts of dishonesty; the blatant and systematic disregard of due process, the law, court orders, and local rules; the disrespectful treatment of court staff and litigants; and the abuse of *capias* warrants and the court's contempt power.

That misconduct warrants an indefinite suspension from the practice of law.

The "stipulated incidents" alluded to fell into five general categories:

1. Issuing false arrest warrants and making false statements;
2. Engaging in improper plea bargaining and rendering arbitrary rulings;
3. Turning her courtroom into a "debtors' prison" by issuing arrest warrants in order to compel the payment of fines;
4. Exhibiting outrageous behavior in her court room; and
5. Failing to recuse herself from cases in which she had an interest.

Although the panel's report ran 126 pages reviewing more than 583 "stipulations of fact and misconduct" by Carr, the high court was able to reduce its decision to just 37 pages. Two especially



egregious examples will suffice here:

In March 2020, Judge Michelle Earley, the administrative and presiding judge of the Cleveland Municipal Court, issued an administrative order suspending most courthouse activity in an effort to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Judge Earley ordered that all civil and criminal cases set for hearing between March 16 and April 3, 2020, be rescheduled for three weeks after the originally scheduled date. The order directed the clerk of courts to issue summonses to all of the affected criminal defendants, compelling them to appear on the newly scheduled date, and similarly directed that all parties to the affected civil cases be notified of the postponement.

Despite Judge Earley's order, Carr did not reschedule cases set on her docket.

On Monday, March 16, she presided over her regular docket—including eight criminal cases in which the defendants had not been jailed. In each of those cases, Carr issued *capias* [arrest] warrants for the defendants who did not appear in court.

Her verbal statements on the record and her journal entries noted the defendants' failure to appear [and] she issued *capias* warrants for their arrest and set bonds ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000.

In contrast, Carr waived fines and court costs for defendants who were "brave enough" to appear in court despite the potential for exposure to COVID-19.

The other incident reveals the tone and tenor of the personal language Judge Carr used in her court. When her outrageous behavior was questioned and then reined in by the disciplinary board, she responded (from her court's record):

You notice I'm no longer the bill collector for the Clerk's Office. I'm not your b-i-t-c-h. See, you get it? Collect your own money. There you go, player, mm-hmm. Collect your own money, player, mm-hmm. I'm not your b-i-t-c-h. Run tell that, mm-hmm. Mm- hmm. How you like them apples? Suckas.

One has to ask several questions:

1. Where was that so-called "Board of Professional Conduct" all the years that Carr occupied her "debtors' prison"? Her term began in January 2012, a decade ago.
2. How many other judges in Ohio, or elsewhere for that matter, are allowed to conduct their courtrooms in similar manners without being sanctioned?
3. If courtrooms are allowed to be infested with similar scandalous and corrupt justices and judges across the land, how long will citizens continue to treat them and their rulings and decisions as legitimate?



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