

MN BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS

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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC REPRIMAND ISSUED TO SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT JUDGE DALE A. WOLF

The Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards has imposed a public reprimand on Sixth Judicial District Judge Dale A. Wolf. The discipline was administered after the Board determined there was sufficient cause to conclude that Judge Wolf acted improperly in the case of *State v. Donald Blom* by (1) failing to maintain an impartial demeanor, (2) making undignified and discourteous public references to lawyers serving as public defenders and in other capacities, and (3) publicly commenting on the pending matter.

These actions were contrary to the *Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, Canons 1, 2A, 3A(2), 3A(4), 3A(8)* and *Rule 4(a)(6), Rules of the Board on Judicial Standards*, providing in pertinent part as follows:

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Canon 1

A Judge Should Uphold the Integrity and Independence of the Judiciary

An independent and honorable judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society. A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining and enforcing standards of conduct, and personally observe those standards in order to preserve the integrity and independence of the judiciary. The provisions of this Code should be construed and applied to further that objective.

Canon 2

A Judge Shall Avoid Impropriety and the Appearance of Impropriety in All of the Judge's Activities

- A. A judge shall respect and comply with the law and act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.*
- B. A judge shall not allow family, social, political or other relationships to influence official conduct or judgment. A judge shall not lend the prestige of the office to advance the private interests of the judge or others . . .*

Canon 3

A Judge Should Perform the Duties of the Office Impartially and Diligently

A. Adjudicative Responsibilities

- (2) A judge shall be faithful to the law and maintain a professional competence in it. He or she shall be unswayed by partisan interests, public clamor or fear of criticism.*
- (4) A judge should be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others dealt with in a official capacity . . .*

- (8) *A judge shall abstain from public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in any court . . .*

***Rule 4, Rules of the Board on Judicial Standards
Grounds for Discipline***

(a) Grounds for Discipline Shall Include:

- (6) Conduct that constitutes a violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct or Professional Responsibility.*

The Board has specifically determined that Judge Wolf's judicial conduct in the matter of *State v. Donald Blom* was egregious and unacceptable. In the usual case, the judicial misconduct engaged in by Judge Wolf would result in more severe discipline than is herein imposed. The Board has further determined that a form of reduced discipline is appropriate in this case because the improper actions were caused, in part, by an illness known as "bipolar disorder." Reduced discipline is also appropriate because Judge Wolf has acknowledged and agreed to the following:

1. He is currently undergoing treatment for bipolar illness and will continue treatment for this illness on an ongoing basis.
2. In a public written statement approved by the Board, Judge Wolf will apologize to the people of the Sixth Judicial District for his improper behavior as set forth in this public reprimand. Judge Wolf will submit the written statement to the Board within (7) days after the distribution of the press release and he authorizes the Board to thereafter distribute his written statement to the media.
3. Within twenty (20) days after the distribution of the press release, in individual letters approved by the Board, Judge Wolf will apologize to each attorney about whom he made inappropriate remarks, including, but not limited to, John Stuart, Fred Friedman, Rodney Brodin, Joanna Piper-Maurer, Steve Meshbesh and Scott Swanson. Judge Wolf will provide copies of these letters to the Board when they are mailed to the appropriate persons.

4. Judge Wolf will refrain from retaliating, either directly or indirectly, against any person cooperating with the Board's investigation, including any county or state employee.
5. The final resolution of this matter was delayed by the necessity for a complete and expert evaluation of Judge Wolf's bipolar illness, as well as the receipt of medical confirmation concluding his bipolar illness is no longer acute and is currently satisfactorily managed.
6. For a period of one year after release of this document, the medical service provider(s) treating Judge Wolf's bipolar illness will, at his written instruction, provide the Board with quarterly updates as to his condition and prognosis. Judge Wolf shall also authorize the Board to provide copies of each such report to the Supreme Court.
7. All conditions and duties required of Judge Wolf by the Supreme Court shall, without further notice to him, also be considered requirements of the Board.