

MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS

In the Matter of Judge Renee L. Worke

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

File Nos. 25-41, 25-43, 25-46

TO: Judge Worke.

The Board on Judicial Standards (“Board”) received two complaints concerning the conduct of Judge Renee L. Worke. Judge Worke also submitted a self-report. The Board investigated the complaints and report. On February 9, 2026, based upon the Board’s investigation and proceedings, the Board issued a notice of proposed public reprimand to Judge Worke in accordance with Rules 6(f)(5)(iii) and 6(f)(7), Rules of Board on Judicial Standards.

Judge Worke did not demand a formal complaint and public hearing. Consequently, this public reprimand is final.

Based upon the Board’s investigation and proceedings, the Board now makes the following:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Judge Renee L. Worke was appointed to the Third Judicial District bench in 1996 and the Court of Appeals in 2005. She has no disciplinary history with the Board.
2. On November 29, 2025, Judge Worke was arrested for Driving While Impaired. Judge Worke fully cooperated with the arresting officer. She submitted to a breath test within two hours of her arrest, which showed that she had an alcohol concentration of 0.16.
3. On December 1, 2025, Judge Worke contacted the Board to self-report. On December 5, she submitted to the Board a detailed report of the incident, and has since provided updates regarding the corresponding criminal matter.
4. Steele County Attorney Robert J. Jarrett provided a report to the Board, informing the Board that Judge Worke did not make any statement to law enforcement regarding her status as a judicial officer, and that the matter proceeded as a standard DWI investigation.
4. On January 2, 2025, Judge Worke pleaded guilty and was convicted of one count of misdemeanor Driving While Impaired. The District Court stayed imposition of the sentence and placed Judge Worke on one year of supervised probation.
5. Judge Worke has served the State with distinction for 30 years. She has served in leadership and mentoring roles throughout her career. She has recognized the negative impact her conduct has on the judiciary and others. She has fully cooperated with the Board. Nevertheless,

when a judge violates the law and endangers public safety by driving impaired, the judge must be sanctioned. Therefore, the Board authorized the issuance of this Public Reprimand.

6. Judge Worke agrees to refrain from making any public statement that tends to justify, excuse, or contradict the facts, conclusion, or determinations of the Board that relate to this Public Reprimand.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The foregoing conduct of Judge Worke violated the following provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

Rule 1.1 Compliance with the Law: A judge shall comply with the law, including the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Rule 1.2 Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary: 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.

2. The foregoing conduct also violated Rule 4(a)(5), Rules of the Board on Judicial Standards, providing that grounds for discipline include “[c]onduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute,” and Board Rule 4(a)(6), Rules of Board on Judicial Standards, providing that grounds for discipline include “[c]onduct that constitutes a violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct”

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

Based upon the foregoing Findings and Conclusions, the Board hereby publicly reprimands Judge Worke for the foregoing misconduct.

The memorandum below is made a part hereof.

MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS

Dated: February 11, 2026

By: 
Sara P. Boeshans
Executive Secretary

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MEMORANDUM

Given a judge's knowledge of the countless and devastating effects of impaired driving, and their role in adjudicating civil and criminal cases related to impaired driving, there is no excuse for a judge to drive impaired. According to an August 6, 2025, report from the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety, in 2023, there were 26,900 DWI arrests, 3,979 alcohol-related crashes, and 101 alcohol-related fatalities on Minnesota roads. *Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts 2023*, Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety, Department of Public Safety, 28 (Aug. 6, 2025), [2023 Minnesota Crash Facts.pdf](#). The report provides that "Celebrations, additional travel and alcohol consumption during holidays create a dangerous traffic safety environment." *Id.* at 20. Given the knowledge that impaired driving is never a safe choice, a judge's decision to drive impaired is egregious and harms the public's confidence in the integrity of the judiciary.

Judges must be mindful of how much alcohol they consume. At many social functions, a host may keep drinks full, making it difficult for a guest to keep track of how much alcohol they consume. Judges must be hypervigilant of how much alcohol they consume and the risks of consuming alcohol before driving. If a judge chooses to consume alcohol, they must have a plan in place to safely and legally return home.

As the Board has previously stated, Driving While Impaired is a serious offense which affects the safety and welfare of the public. Judge Worke put the public and herself in danger when she drove under the influence of alcohol, and she brought the judicial office into disrepute.

Willful violations of law or other misconduct by a judge, whether or not directly related to judicial duties, brings the judicial office into disrepute and thereby prejudices the administration of justice. A judge's conduct in his or her personal life adversely affects the administration of justice when it diminishes public respect for the judiciary. Our legal system can function only so long as the public, having confidence in the integrity of its judges, accepts and abides by judicial decisions.

In re Winton, 350 N.W.2d 337,340 (1984).

In determining the appropriate sanction, the Board is guided by the principle that the purpose of judicial discipline is not to punish, but "to protect the public by insuring the integrity of the judicial system," *In re Miera*, 426 N.W.2d 850, 858 (Minn. 1988). Accordingly, in *Miera*, the Court stated,

[t]he sanction must be designed to announce our recognition that misconduct has occurred, and our resolve that similar conduct by this or other judges will not be condoned in the future. We act not to punish the wrongdoer but to restore public confidence in the system and its officers.

Id.

Judge Worke's misconduct was serious, violated the law, and caused harm to the public confidence in the judiciary. Therefore, the Board determined that a Public Reprimand must issue to resolve this matter.