

Supreme Court of Florida

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2019

CASE NO.: SC18-674

INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE
NO. 18-63

RE: MARIA ORTIZ

Before the Court is the second revised stipulation (stipulation) of the Judicial Qualifications Commission concerning Judge Maria Ortiz, a county court judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. The Commission and Judge Ortiz agree to the discipline of a ninety-day suspension without pay, a \$5000 fine, a public reprimand, and payment of the Commission's reimbursable costs.

According to the stipulation, Judge Ortiz failed to take reasonable steps to stay apprised of her financial circumstances, including failing to inquire as to who paid for three trips she took with her spouse. The spouse completed Judge Ortiz's financial disclosure forms and failed to report that the accommodations and other benefits received were free. Judge Ortiz testified she was unaware of this fact at the time of the trips, and the spouse provided sworn testimony to this effect as well. Judge Ortiz admits she failed to verify the accuracy of her 2016 and 2017 financial disclosures, despite signing a certification attesting to the veracity of the information contained in those disclosures.¹ Judge Ortiz admits her conduct fell short of the directive in Canon 6 of the Code of Judicial Conduct that "Fiscal Matters of a Judge Shall be Conducted in a Manner That Does Not Give the Appearance of Influence or Impropriety." She has apologized for her misconduct and deeply regrets that her negligence may have damaged the public's perception of the judiciary or impugned the integrity of her colleagues.

After careful consideration, the stipulation is hereby approved. Judge Maria Ortiz is suspended without pay from her duties as a county court judge for ninety days. Judge Ortiz shall pay a \$5000 fine, as well as the costs of these proceedings, in the amount of \$377.45. Finally, Judge Ortiz is ordered to appear before the Court for the administration of a public reprimand at a time to be set by the Clerk of the Court. The effective date of the suspension shall be within fifteen days from

1. Judge Ortiz has since filed amended disclosures.

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the date of this order at the direction of the Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. Once the effective date is determined, the Court Administrator for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit shall submit a personnel action request form to the Personnel Office of the Office of the State Courts Administrator for processing. Absent an order from the Court, a motion for rehearing of this decision will not toll the effective date of the suspension.

NOT FINAL UNTIL TIME EXPIRES TO FILE REHEARING MOTION AND, IF FILED, DETERMINED.

CANADY, C.J., and POLSTON, LABARGA, LAWSON, LAGOA, and LUCK, JJ., concur.

MUÑIZ, J., did not participate.

A True Copy

Test:



John A. Tomasino
Clerk, Supreme Court



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Served:

ALEXANDER J. WILLIAMS
DAVID BILL ROTHMAN
HON. BERTILA ANA SOTO, CHIEF JUDGE