



Florida Supreme Court in Tallahassee, Florida. (Photo: Shutterstock.com)

NEWS

## Florida Judge Suspended Without Pay, Faces Reprimand Over 'a Failure of Judgment'

"Cancel culture did not prevail," H. Scott Fingerhut, a judicial ethics expert at Florida International University College of Law, said about the Florida Supreme Court disciplinary ruling.

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🕒 3 minute read

Judicial Ethics

[Michael A. Mora](#) ↗

### What You Need to Know

- The Florida Supreme Court disciplined a judge who sits in the Leon Circuit Court.
- The judge will face public reprimand, a 60-day suspension from the bench without pay, shell out a \$30,000 fine and attend an employee management program.

The Florida Supreme Court ruled that Leon Circuit Judge Barbara Hobbs will have to face public reprimand and a 60-day suspension from the bench without pay, pay a \$30,000 fine and must attend an employee-management program.

The ruling is consistent with the punishment a Florida Judicial Qualifications hearing panel called for after Hobbs improperly represented her son, Justin Haynes, following his arrests in Tallahassee on several charges, including attempted second-degree murder.

And H. Scott Fingerhut, an expert on judicial ethics at the Florida International University College of Law who is not involved in the matter, said even though attorneys and judges can make mistakes, the state supreme court chose not to define Hobbs by her improper conduct.

"Cancel culture did not prevail," Fingerhut said in an email. "This seems to be an experienced judge, with a life's worth of good deeds and public service, who made some obvious—if not understandable—mistakes, which she surely understands, and who is being given the chance to rise anew. She deserves this chance. Indeed, she will probably be an even better judge for the journey."

Roosevelt Randolph, the managing shareholder at Knowles & Randolph who represented Hobbs in the disciplinary matter, did not respond to a request seeking comment.

H. Scott Fingerhut, law professor at FIU College of Law and trial lawyer.

Voters elected Hobbs to the Leon Circuit Court bench in 2012. And up until the current matter before the Florida high court, the judge has no history of prior judicial misconduct.

But a series of arrests of her son led Hobbs to the problems she finds herself in before the state supreme court, including when authorities arrested Hobbs' son for misdemeanor DUI, and the circuit judge retained counsel to represent her son.

However, when Hobbs assumed another judge's docket that had two cases in which her son's attorney of record appeared, the jurist did not recuse herself from the matters, or disclose her connection to the lawyer.

When authorities arrested Hobbs' son for allegedly shooting a person at his home, Hobbs went to the police station in which her son was being held. Hobbs expressed concern for potential retribution by inmates who had previously appeared before her in criminal court.

"Is it possible that you can finish your investigation before you charge him?" Hobbs said in a transcribed recording. "When I say my children, I'm not trying to curry favor, I've just got people in the jail that don't like me, and they may find out who he is."

Among the additional findings were that Hobbs' failed to supervise her judicial assistant for appearing at counsel tables during the judge's son's first appearance, and the assistant allowed the son access to restricted areas of the courthouse while he was facing serious criminal charges.

Now, the state supreme court in entering its order ruled that Hobbs' misconduct "goes to the heart of the public's ability to trust Florida judges," but declined one of the most extreme punishments that would have removed her from the bench.

Leon Circuit Judge Barbara K. Hobbs (Credit: Courtesy Photo)

"Although we are not unsympathetic to Judge Hobbs's family situation," the state supreme court justices stated in the order, "her violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct demonstrate a failure of judgment and a lack of appropriate boundaries between her judicial office and her personal life that cannot be tolerated in members of our judiciary."

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