

Colorado Independent Judicial Discipline Adjudicative Board	▲ COURT USE ONLY ▲	
IN RE THE MATTER OF THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF COLORADO, Complainant, vs. SEAN K. MURPHY, a County Court Judge of the 7th Judicial District, Respondent.		
Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline: Jeffrey M. Walsh, esq. Special Counsel Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center 1300 Broadway, Suite 210 Denver, CO 80203 Phone: 303-457-5131 Email: j.walsh@jd.state.co.us Atty. Reg. # 33762	Case Number:	
COMPLAINT		

INTRODUCTION

Judge Sean Murphy is failing to adequately perform his judicial duties by: (1) engaging in a pattern of lengthy and inexcusable delays in issuing orders, sometimes for years, (2) failing to issue orders at all in several cases, (3) beginning hearings substantially late for nearly all court appearances, per witness accounts, (4) conducting court remotely so often that stakeholders question whether he is a resident of his judicial district, and (5) failing at times to act professionally when conducting court.

Pursuant to Rule 14 of the Colorado Rules of Judicial Discipline (“Colo. RJD”), the Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline issued two letters of inquiry to Judge Murphy – one in June of 2025 and the other in September of 2025. Judge Murphy failed to provide a meaningful response to either letter. The Commission’s Executive Director contacted Chief Judge Cory Jackson, who is responsible for supervising Judge Murphy, to determine if circumstances unknown to the Commission might justify Judge Murphy’s silence. No such

circumstances exist. Chief Judge Jackson himself contacted Judge Murphy to ask him to respond to the Commission's inquiries. Yet still, Judge Murphy has not responded.

Judge Murphy's behavior, put simply, is concerning. His refusal to engage with the Commission appears consistent with his apparent indifference to important judicial duties and his responsibilities to the residents of his judicial district. His misconduct poses "a substantial threat of serious harm to the public, to the administration of justice, or to the integrity of the judiciary." Colo. RJD 34(a). Thus, at the Commission's request, the Colorado Supreme Court recently issued an order temporarily suspending Judge Murphy from all judicial duties during the pendency of this case. Exhibit A.

The Commission on Judicial Discipline hereby requests that Judge Murphy be publicly censured for his misconduct and removed from his position as a judge.

THE PARTIES AND JURISDICTION

1. The Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline ("the Commission") is the constitutionally-created entity responsible for investigating and resolving allegations of judicial misconduct. It files this Complaint pursuant to Colo. Const. Art. VI, § 23(3).

2. The Commission's principal street address is 1300 Broadway, Suite 210, Denver, Colorado 80203.

3. Defendant is a part-time San Miguel County Court judge in Colorado's 7th Judicial District. His appointment as a San Miguel County Court judge became effective in 2020.

4. On October 27, 2025, the Colorado Supreme Court issued an order temporarily suspending Judge Murphy and ordering the State Court Administrator's Office to select a three-member panel from Colorado's Independent Judicial Discipline Adjudicative Board ("the Adjudicative Board") to preside over this case. Exhibit A.

5. On October 31, 2025, pursuant to Colo. Const. Art. VI, § 23(3)(c.5)(II), the State Court Administrator randomly selected a three-member panel from the Adjudicative Board to preside over this case.

6. The three randomly selected members of the Adjudicative Board are Judge Eric Elliff, Jeff Chostner (the attorney member), and Leanne Wheeler (the non-attorney member). These three Adjudicative Board members will hereinafter be referred to as "the Adjudicative Panel."

7. Given the above, the Adjudicative Panel has jurisdiction over this case pursuant to Colo. Const. Art. VI, § 23(3)(c.5)(I).

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Failure to Respond to the Commission's First Rule 14 Letter

8. On June 25, 2025, the Commission sent a letter to Judge Murphy notifying him that it had recognized a complaint against him pursuant to Colo. RJD 14 and asking him to respond. That matter related to Judge Murphy's failure to issue a final order/verdict fifteen months after a small claims court trial in San Miguel County Case No. 24S1. The Rule 14 letter identified a potential violation of Canon Rule 2.5, which requires diligence and the avoidance of undue delay.

9. Judge Murphy acknowledged receipt of the Commission's Rule 14 letter. However, he never provided a substantive response, despite repeated requests from the Commission's Executive Director to do so. *See* Exhibit B (Rule 14 Letter); Exhibit C (Email correspondence between Executive Director and Judge Murphy).

10. To date, Judge Murphy still has not responded to the Commission's June 25, 2025 Rule 14 Letter or issued an order/verdict in San Miguel County Case No. 24S1. The order in that case has now been delayed by nineteen months and counting.

11. Given the above, the Commission's Executive Director contacted Chief Judge Cory Jackson to determine if circumstances unknown to the Commission might justify Murphy's silence. No such circumstances exist. Chief Judge Jackson himself contacted Judge Murphy to ask him to respond to the Commission's inquiry. Yet still, Judge Murphy has not responded.

Failure to Respond to the Commission's Second Rule 14 Letter

12. The Commission then learned that Judge Murphy had numerous delayed orders in other cases. Thus, the Commission conducted a broader investigation and discovered a troubling pattern of judicial misconduct. In some cases, Judge Murphy failed to rule on probation violation petitions in a timely manner, causing the court to lose jurisdiction over probationers who had failed to successfully complete probation. In other cases, Judge Murphy failed to rule on case-dispositive suppression issues, forcing the parties to resolve the case without the benefit of a critical ruling from the court. These cases are summarized below and detailed more fully in Exhibit E:

- a. *Pattern of substantially delayed orders:*
 - i. Case No. 15M30: 2-year delayed order (and counting)
 - ii. Case No. 22C30006: 1.5-year delayed order (and counting)
 - iii. Case No. 23C11: 2-year delayed order (and counting)
 - iv. Case No. 24S1: 19-month delayed order (and counting)
 - v. Case No. 24S4: 16-month delayed order (and counting)
 - vi. Case No. 24C30008: 10-month delayed order (and counting)
 - vii. Case No. 23CR23: 2-month delay in issuing probable cause finding

- viii. Case No. 24CR20: 6-week delay in issuing probable cause finding
- ix. Case No. 23CR26: 3-month delay in restarting sex assault case after remand from the Court of Appeals

b. *Failure to issue orders:*

- i. Case No. 21T96: failure to issue order on suppression motion
- ii. Case No. 23T21: failure to issue order on suppression motion
- iii. Case No. 24M22: failure to issue order on alleged discovery violations
- iv. Case No. 23T01: failure to rule on probation violation complaint, thereby losing jurisdiction over noncompliant DUI defendant
- v. Case No. 23T54: failure to rule on probation violation complaint, thereby losing jurisdiction over noncompliant DUI defendant
- vi. Case No. 23M07: failure to rule on probation request to terminate probation early
- vii. Case No. 23M49: failure to rule on probation request to terminate probation early
- viii. Case No. 23M82: failure to rule on probation request to terminate probation early
- ix. Case No. 23M84: failure to rule on probation request to terminate probation early
- x. Case No. 23T31: failure to rule on probation request to terminate probation early

13. The Commission also discovered via witness interviews that Judge Murphy routinely begins hearings substantially late and conducts hearings remotely so often it is speculated he no longer lives in the judicial district.

14. Witness interviews also revealed two instances in which Judge Murphy conducted virtual hearings in an unprofessional manner. In one case, a partially nude male (clothed only with a towel around his waist) walked behind Judge Murphy during a hearing, making himself visible on screen to all parties. In another case, Judge Murphy had a person serve him lunch during a hearing, which he ate during the hearing.

15. On September 18, 2025, the Commission issued a second Rule 14 letter to Judge Murphy detailing the above concerns and asking him to respond. *See* Exhibit D (Letter); Exhibit E (Spreadsheet detailing cases of concern).

16. The Rule 14 letter identified potential violations of Canon Rule 2.1 (giving precedence to the duties of judicial office), Canon Rule 2.5 (requiring competence and diligence and avoiding undue delay), Canon Rule 2.7 (requiring judges to hear and decide matters), and Canon Rule 2.8 (requiring judges to be patient, dignified and courteous).

17. Judge Murphy failed to acknowledge or respond to the Commission's second Rule 14 letter.

Failure to Respond to the Commission's Final Contact Attempt

18. On Friday, October 10, 2025, the Commission voted to initiate a formal disciplinary proceeding against Judge Murphy and to seek his temporary paid suspension pending the outcome of that proceeding.

19. The following Monday – October 13, 2025 – the Commission's Executive Director emailed Judge Murphy notifying him of the above and giving him one week (until Monday, October 20, 2025) to contact the Commission to discuss a possible resolution to his case.

20. The Executive Director also enlisted the help of Chief Judge Cory Jackson to ensure that Judge Murphy would read the Executive Director's email. On Monday, October 13, 2025, Chief Judge Jackson emailed Judge Murphy, asked him to review his email from the Commission, and to respond. Three days later – on Thursday, October 16 – Chief Judge Jackson called Judge Murphy on his personal cell phone and left a voice message asking him to review the Commission's email and to respond. Judge Murphy did not respond to either Judge Jackson's email or his voice message.

21. To date, Judge Murphy has not responded to the Commission's above-described final attempt to contact him.

22. Importantly, before his recent suspension, Judge Murphy has continued to complete some work in his role as a judge. He has recently presided over some cases and issued orders in others. This makes his failure to rule on motions that have been pending for a year or more even more baffling. The fact that he is working, and thus presumably accessing his judicial email etc., also suggests his refusal to engage with the Commission on Judicial Discipline may be willful. This would be a violation of Canon Rule 2.16, which requires that a judge "shall cooperate and be candid and honest with judicial and lawyer disciplinary agencies."

23. Judges who are dealing with significant personal matters or health struggles have tools at their disposal to ensure that they meet their ethical obligations, such as seeking assistance from the Senior Judge program or a temporary reduction in their docket. Upon information and belief, Judge Murphy has never sought to take advantage of these tools or notified Chief Judge Jackson or any 7th Judicial District Court staff that he needed assistance.

FIRST CLAIM

Rule 1.2 (Appearance of Impropriety)

24. The preceding paragraphs are incorporated herein.

25. The Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 1, Rule 1.2 states:

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.

26. Comment 5 to Canon Rule 1.2 states: “Actual improprieties include violations of law, court rules, or provisions of this Code. The test for appearance of impropriety is whether the conduct would create in reasonable minds a perception that the judge violated this Code or engaged in other conduct that reflects adversely on the judge’s honesty, impartiality, temperament, or fitness to serve as a judge.”

27. Judge Murphy violated Canon Rule 1.2 by, inter alia, (a) engaging in a pattern of issuing substantially delayed orders, (b) failing to issue orders, (c) failing to treat parties and their counsel with professionalism and respect on issues of timeliness when conducting hearings, and (d) violating other provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct, as described more fully below.

SECOND CLAIM

Rule 2.1 (Giving Precedence to the Duties of Office)

28. The preceding paragraphs are incorporated herein.

29. The Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2, Rule 2.1 states:

The duties of judicial office, as prescribed by law, shall take precedence over all of a judge’s personal and extrajudicial activities.

30. Judge Murphy violated Canon Rule 2.1 through his conduct, as described in Paragraphs 1-23 of this Complaint.

THIRD CLAIM

Rule 2.5 (Competence)

31. The preceding paragraphs are incorporated herein.

32. The Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2, Rule 2.5(A) states:

A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties, competently and diligently.

33. Comment 3 to Canon Rule 2.5 states: “Prompt disposition of the court’s business requires a judge to devote adequate time to judicial duties, to be punctual in attending court and expeditious in determining matters under submission . . .”

34. Comment 4 to Canon Rule 2.5 states: “In disposing of matters promptly and efficiently, a judge must demonstrate due regard for the rights of parties to be heard and to have

issues resolved without unnecessary cost or delay. A judge should monitor and supervise cases in ways that reduce or eliminate dilatory practices, avoidable delays, and unnecessary costs.”

35. Judge Murphy violated Canon Rule 2.5 through his conduct, as described in Paragraphs 1-23 of this Complaint.

FOURTH CLAIM
Rule 2.7 (Responsibility to Decide)

28. The preceding paragraphs are incorporated herein.

29. The Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2, Rule 2.7 states:

A judge shall hear and decide matters assigned to the judge, except when disqualification is required by Rule 2.11 or other law.

30. Comment 1 to Canon Rule 2.7 states: “Judges must be available to decide the matters that come before the courts.”

31. Judge Murphy violated Canon Rule 2.7 through his conduct, as described in Paragraphs 1-23 of this Complaint.

FIFTH CLAIM
Rule 2.8 (Demeanor)

32. The preceding paragraphs are incorporated herein.

33. The Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2, Rule 2.8(B) states in relevant part:

A judge shall be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, court staff, court officials, and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity . . .

34. Judge Murphy violated Canon Rule 2.8 through his conduct, as described in Paragraphs 1-23 of this Complaint.

SIXTH CLAIM
Rule 2.16 (Cooperation with Disciplinary Authorities)

35. The preceding paragraphs are incorporated herein.

36. The Colorado Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2, Rule 2.16(A) states:

A judge shall cooperate and be candid and honest with judicial and lawyer disciplinary agencies.

37. Comment 1 to Rule 2.16 states: “Cooperation with investigations and proceedings of judicial and lawyer discipline agencies, as required in paragraph (A), instills confidence in judges’ commitment to the integrity of the judicial system and the protection of the public.”

38. Judge Murphy violated Canon Rule 2.16 by failing to provide any meaningful response to inquiries from the Commission, as described in Paragraphs 1-23 of this Complaint.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Litigants before Judge Murphy have suffered from months (and in some cases years) of delayed orders. Others have had to engage in plea negotiations without the benefit of complete case information because of Judge Murphy’s failure to rule on case-dispositive suppression issues. Probationers have been released from probation, without having completed the terms of their probation, because of Judge Murphy’s failure to rule on probation violation petitions. This is to say nothing of Judge Murphy’s persistent tardiness to court, his disrespect for parties and their time, and his general lack of professionalism both on and off the bench, as described in more detail above and in the attached exhibits.

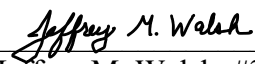
Judge Murphy’s persistent refusal to engage with the Commission on Judicial Discipline, despite repeated efforts by the Commission and Chief Judge Cory Jackson, suggest that Murphy is grossly indifferent to his responsibilities as a judge and to the residents of his judicial district.

For these reasons, the Commission on Judicial Discipline respectfully requests that the Adjudicative Panel impose the following discipline:

- a) Publicly censure Judge Murphy in writing pursuant to Colo. Const. Art. VI, § 23(3)(e)(II) for the above misconduct; and
- b) Remove Judge Murphy from judicial office.

DATED: November 4, 2025

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey M. Walsh, #33762
Special Counsel
Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline

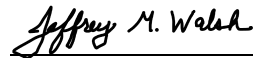
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on November 4, 2025 a true and correct copy of the foregoing **COMPLAINT** was served on Judge Murphy via email at: seankendallmurphy@gmail.com and sent to the Adjudicative Board Panel via email at: j.eric.elliff@judicial.state.co.us; buffhusk@comcast.net; leanne@wheeleradvisorygroup.org.

I further certify that on November 04, 2025 a true and correct copy of the foregoing COMPLAINT was sent by certified mail to the following:

Sean K. Murphy
398 South Davis Street
Telluride, CO 81435

Sean K. Murphy
P.O. Box 2667
Telluride, CO 81435



Jeffrey M. Walsh
Special Counsel
Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline