



**NCSC**  
National Center for State Courts  
*Center for Judicial Ethics*

## Ethics Awareness Month – March 2022

### Weekly Tip #4

A judge's invocation of their judicial office to escape the consequences of a traffic stop is a classic example of judicial misconduct and an archetype of the abuse of the prestige of office that is expressly called out in [Comment 1, Rule 1.3](#) of the American Bar Association 2007 *Model Code of Judicial Conduct*. Judges must diligently bite their tongue rather than ask "Do you know who I am?" or any subtle or obvious variation on that theme, not only when they have been pulled over by law enforcement officers but whenever a reference to their position might be advantageous but would be unwarranted.

#### Examples of gratuitous references to the judicial office

When asked for his driver's license and credit card to begin running a tab, a judge said to the bar manager: "I'll do whatever I want. Do you know who I am? I can make problems for you." *In the Matter of Sasso*, 970 A.2d 1039 (New Jersey 2009), [adopting findings and recommendation](#).

During an exchange with an umpire after his 12-year-old son's baseball game, a judge shouted, "bring it Angleton, Texas, County Court Number Three!" [Public Warning of Warren and Order of Additional Education](#) (Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct November 10, 2017).

A judge texted her stepsister's ex-husband: "This is Judge Hendricks. Lynn's iPad must be delivered to Kelly Underwood's mailbox by 9:30 a or I will turn matter over to Prosecuting attorney" and "Choose your actions wisely." [Letter of Informal Adjustment \(Hendricks\)](#) (Arkansas Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission September 20, 2013).

In a dispute with a snowmobile dealer, a judge repeatedly referred to his judicial position; stated that he knew how "the system worked;" and left his business card with the court clerk when he filed a small claims action. [In the Matter of the Dumar, Determination](#) (New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct May 18, 2004).

When an officer pulled his car over and requested that he take a preliminary alcohol screening test, a judge responded, "Why don't you run my license and then we can talk?" [Inquiry Concerning Schwartz, Decision and Order](#) (California Commission on Judicial Performance June 9, 2006).