



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).