

**IN RE SANCHEZ, S.Ct. No. 25,821 (Filed March 14, 2001)**

**IN THE MATTER OF  
JOHN W. "BUDDY" SANCHEZ,  
Magistrate Judge, Valencia County, New Mexico**

NO. 25,821

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

March 14, 2001, Filed

INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE  
NO. 2000-32.

**COUNSEL**

Peg A. Holguin, Chief Counsel, Randall D. Roybal, Chief Staff Attorney, Albuquerque, New Mexico, for Judicial Standards Commission

E. Justin Pennington, Esq., Albuquerque, New Mexico, for Respondent

**FORMAL REPRIMAND**

**Per Curiam.**

{1} This matter came before the Court upon recommendation of the Judicial Standards Commission to approve a plea and stipulation agreement entered into between the commission and Honorable John W. "Buddy" Sanchez that he be formally reprimanded and ordered to participate in a mentorship program.

{2} The commission issued a notice of preliminary investigation to respondent on July 17, 2000. The commission filed a verified petition for temporary suspension of respondent in this Court on July 17, 2000. Respondent filed a response to the notice of preliminary investigation and the suspension petition on August 2, 2000. The same day, this Court heard oral argument and denied the commission's petition. On August 30, 2000, the commission issued a notice of formal proceedings to respondent. Respondent filed his response to the notice of formal proceedings on September 19, 2000. On February 7, 2001, respondent agreed to enter into a plea and stipulation agreement with the commission in which respondent stipulated to the factual and legal conclusions, and agreed to receive discipline from this Court. On February 14, 2001, the commission filed a verified petition for discipline. The stipulated factual and legal conclusions are set forth below.

{3} Respondent involved himself in the pending criminal case of his close friend (Valencia County Magistrate Court Case No. M-60-DR-200000085). Respondent's involvement included the following: (1) speaking with the arresting state police officer by cellular telephone during the traffic stop/arrest; (2) personally going to Valencia County Adult Detention Center and ordering his friend's release, and taking him to respondent's home; and (3) speaking with the registered nurse and asking him to draw an independent blood sample from respondent's friend. Respondent also had an alcoholic drink before going to the jail to release his friend and may have had an odor of alcohol on his breath. Respondent's conduct occurred between 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. on May 12-13, 2000.

{4} Respondent's conduct violated the following Canons of the Code of Judicial Conduct: Canon 21-100 NMRA 1995, a judge shall uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary; Canon 21-200(A) and (B) NMRA 1991, a judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all the judge's activities; Canon 21-300(B)(2), (B)(4), (B)(5), and (B)(7) NMRA 1995, a judge shall perform the duties of office impartially and diligently; Canon 21-400(A)(1) and (A)(5)(d) NMRA 1995, a judge shall recuse from a matter where impartiality might reasonably be questioned; and Canon 21-500(A)(1), (A)(2), (A)(3), and (A)(4) NMRA 1995, a judge shall so conduct extra-judicial activities as to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial obligations. Respondent's conduct constitutes willful misconduct in office.

{5} We hereby find that the recommended disciplinary measures for respondent's violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct are appropriate. Respondent shall comply fully with the requirements of the discipline imposed by this Court and with the Code of Judicial Conduct.

{6} Now, therefore, it is ordered that Honorable John W. "Buddy" Sanchez hereby is disciplined as follows:

- A. Respondent shall be and is hereby formally reprimanded;
- B. Respondent shall participate in a mentorship program; and
- C. The parties shall bear their own costs incurred in this matter to date.

{7} It is further ordered that the Honorable Robert Brack, District Judge of the Ninth Judicial District Court, hereby is appointed to serve as mentor to respondent, and shall report in writing to the commission on respondent's participation in and successful completion of the mentorship program required by this Court's order.

**{8} IT IS SO ORDERED.**

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**Chief Justice Patricio M. Serna**

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**Justice Joseph F. Baca**

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**Justice Gene E. Franchini**

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**Justice Pamela B. Minzner**

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**Justice Petra Jimenez Maes**