



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

CJC Nos. 22-0515 & 22-1411

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

**HONORABLE JENNIFER EGGEN
MUNICIPAL COURT
HEREFORD, DEAF SMITH COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on August 6-7, 2025, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable Jennifer Eggen, judge of the Municipal Court, in Hereford, Deaf Smith County, Texas. Judge Eggen was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided a written response.

After considering the evidence before it, the Commission enters the following findings and conclusions:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Honorable Jennifer Eggen, was a judge of the Municipal Court, in Hereford, Deaf Smith County, Texas.
2. When presiding over juvenile dockets, Judge Eggen would berate and demean juveniles and their parents in her court. She regularly yelled at juveniles and their parents so loudly that courthouse staff could clearly hear through the walls of the courtroom.
3. On May 11, 2021, Judge Eggen, per multiple witnesses, told a 15-year-old child, D.R., she "hoped that when he got locked up, he would get a big black man as his cell mate that would make him his bitch" or similar statement. D.R. left the courtroom very upset and crying.
4. During the same hearing, Judge Eggen also told D.R.'s parents they "should've slapped him" and indicated it was their fault "he was like that." When D.R.'s mother attempted to explain he had recently received a psychiatric diagnosis, Judge Eggen would not allow her to do so. D.R. was provided an extended deadline to make a payment due under his probation. However, even after payment was made, Judge Eggen called D.R.'s probation officer, leaving D.R. feeling "like he was now going to be labeled by the judge and the court system and known for being told those words."

5. On a separate occasion, Judge Eggen told another juvenile, “he was nothing but a little bitch that he was so small in stature that he would be an easy target for the bigger men he would encounter in jail” or similar statement.
6. Also, per multiple witnesses, Judge Eggen told a juvenile she “hoped they put him in jail with a big black man that would make him his sex toy.”
7. Judge Eggen regularly displayed favoritism to prominent community members or personal friends regarding various municipal cases before her.
8. Generally, Judge Eggen did not allow her clerk to offer the majority of other defendants the option to remove and/or defer tickets or charges, even when they directly asked about options for keeping a ticket or a charge off their record.
9. In 2020, Mark Collier (“Collier”), a local Commissioner and prominent local businessman, spoke with Judge Eggen regarding an employee, David Zuniga, who was trying to secure his commercial driver’s license. Collier requested Judge Eggen allow Zuniga to defer a ticket so as not to jeopardize securing his license. Judge Eggen granted the request, despite Zuniga having already pled guilty.
10. Donovan Diaz (“Diaz”), a member of Judge Eggen’s church, was charged with assault. Judge Eggen instructed her clerk to offer Diaz deferred as “he does not need an assault on his record.” On January 8, 2020, Diaz was offered deferred adjudication.
11. On December 9, 2021, Scott Ward, a former Deputy Sheriff and longtime friend of Judge Eggen’s, brought a juvenile employee into the courthouse to deal with a traffic ticket despite a policy requiring a parent to be present. Judge Eggen allowed this exception, despite not allowing undocumented juveniles to do the same.
12. Judge Eggen selectively sent reminder letters for tickets not paid by the 14-day deadline. Warrants were automatically issued for everyone else whose tickets were not paid by 4:00 PM on the 14th day.
13. Judge Eggen also engaged in a pattern of conduct biased against Hispanics, undocumented, and low-income individuals, including juveniles.
14. During hearings involving cases of people driving without a license, Judge Eggen could be heard by courthouse staff telling defendants they were “too stupid to be driving,” and on at least one occasion, berated parents by telling them they “are not good parents because they don’t keep a better eye on their kids.”
15. Judge Eggen would not allow Hispanic, undocumented, or low-income juveniles to come during school hours to deal with tickets, telling them, “they were too stupid to be missing any school” and forcing them to return after school.
16. Judge Eggen would berate undocumented individuals, asking them, via a clerk providing translation services, if they knew they needed a driver’s license “when they crossed into her country” and that “the first phone call the jail makes is to immigration,” as well as implying Child Protective Services would pick up their children.
17. Judge Eggen would not allow defendants who did not speak English into her courtroom, unless they had secured an interpreter privately.

18. Further, Judge Eggen did not hold hearings to determine undue hardship, nor did she provide indigency forms, even after notification by defendants of an inability/difficulty to pay a fine, or direct requests for alternative/extended payment arrangements.
19. A defendant, Aurelio Ferrer (“Ferrer”), requested an extended payment plan, explaining he was living in a hotel with his wife and five children after being fired. Ferrer attempted to provide proof of his hotel living arrangements, but Judge Eggen told Ferrer to “get out of here, just go.”
20. A defendant, Agustin Moreno (“Moreno”), indicated he was not able to pay his tickets. Judge Eggen did not provide an indigency form and stated “if [Moreno] has money to buy drugs, then he has money to pay his warrants” to her clerk. Judge Eggen’s clerk provide Moreno with an indigency form despite Judge Eggen.
21. On August 22, 2024, Bianca Castillo (“Castillo”) was transported to the courthouse on a warrant, whereupon Castillo requested a payment plan as she had only just gotten a job. Judge Eggen did not offer her an indigency form nor did she hold a hearing to determine undue hardship.
22. On the same day, Sonya Uvalle (“Uvalle”) requested an extension beyond thirty days to finish paying all costs related to her ticket. Again, Judge Eggen did not offer Uvalle an indigency form nor did she hold a hearing to determine undue hardship.
23. On September 4, 2024, Maria Guadalupe Ramos (“Ramos”) alerted Judge Eggen she could not pay a ticket due to an injury. Judge Eggen did not offer Ramos the indigency form, and was upset with her clerk who indicated she would discuss the option with Ramos later.
24. Even after receiving educational training regarding undue hardship, Judge Eggen continued to not hold undue hardship hearings or provide indigency forms, having only ever provided an indigency form on a single occasion when directly asked.
25. Additionally, Judge Eggen engaged in problematic conduct to pressure defendants to pay unpaid fines. This included taking car keys away from drivers and not returning them until another driver or proof of insurance was provided, and following individuals, including juveniles, outside the courthouse and taking pictures of their license plates.
26. On May 24, 2022, Judge Eggen had Matthew Torres (“Torres”) brought in on warrants related to unpaid tickets. Upon arrival, the deputies uncuffed Torres and told Judge Eggen he would not be arrested.¹ Judge Eggen still told Torres he could not leave until payment was made.
27. When Judge Eggen found out Torres’ family was on food stamps, she stated, per multiple witnesses, “Oh, I feed that baby,” referring to Torres’ infant daughter. When Torres attempted to defend himself and explain, Judge Eggen told Torres, “He was skating on thin ice and to be quiet.” Judge Eggen did not let Torres leave until his grandmother was able to secure funds to pay his tickets in full. At no point did Judge Eggen offer Torres an indigency form, alternate method of payment, or an undue hardship hearing.
28. In May 2022, as part of a yearly practice, Judge Eggen attempted to order the police dispatcher to send officers to the houses or stadiums of graduating high school seniors with unpaid tickets. When asked what would be done when the jail would not accept these warrants, Judge Eggen stated to her clerk the embarrassment of not graduating “would be [the students] fault.”

¹ At this time, the Hereford Police Department had a policy that warrants for Class C Misdemeanors and below would not be accepted to the jail.

29. On at least one occasion, Judge Eggen bragged about how much money she secured from defendants before COVID.
30. During a training on judicial ethics, Judge Eggen stated to her clerk that the complaint process “just gives [citizens] more reason to bitch.”
31. On October 7, 2015, BuzzFeedNews published an article entitled “*In Texas It’s a Crime to be Poor*” which discussed the practice of defendants being jailed for inability to pay tickets, despite Texas and federal law prohibitions. In the article, Judge Eggen is quoted as saying “in her nine years as a judge, she has never given anyone an alternative to incarceration other than paying up.”
32. In her written response to the Commission, Judge Eggen only stated: “I am no longer employed by the City of Hereford Municipal Court having retired after 19 years of service.” Judge Eggen later provided a supplemental response denying any misconduct.

RELEVANT STANDARDS AND AUTHORITIES

1. Canon 2A of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, “A judge shall comply with the law ...”
2. Canon 2B of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall not allow any relationship to influence judicial conduct or judgment. A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance the private interests of the judge or others; ...”
3. Canon 3B(2) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge ... shall maintain professional competence in [the law].”
4. Canon 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity ...”
5. Canon 3B(5) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, “A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice.”
6. Canon 3B(6) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct, manifest bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status ...”
7. Canon 3B(8) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding ... the right to be heard according to law.”
8. Article 45A.104(e) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure provides, in relevant part, “A justice or judge may not issue an arrest warrant for the defendant’s failure to appear at the initial court setting, including failure to appear as required by a citation issued under Article 14.06(b), unless: (1) the justice or judge provides by telephone or regular mail to the defendant notice that includes: ... (C) information regarding alternatives to the full payment of any fines or costs owed by the defendant, if the defendant is unable to pay that amount ...”
9. Article 45A.252 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure provides, “(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, Article 45A.251, or Article 45A.253, during or immediately after imposing a sentence in a case in which the defendant entered a plea in open court as provided by Article 27.14(a) or 27.16(a), the justice or judge shall inquire whether the defendant has sufficient resources or income to immediately pay all or part of the fine and costs.

(b) If the justice or judge determines that the defendant does not have sufficient resources or incomes to immediately pay all or part of the fine and costs, the justice or judge shall determine whether the fine and costs should be: (1) subject to Article 45A.253(a), required to be paid at a later date or in a specified portion at designated intervals; (2) discharged by performing community service under, as applicable, Article 45A.254, 45A.259, or 45A.40; (3) waived in full or in part under Article 45A.257; or satisfied through any combination of methods under Subdivision (1), (2), or (3).”

10. Article 45A.253(a) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure provides, “In imposing a fine and costs, the justice or judge shall allow the defendant to pay the fine and costs in specified portions at designated intervals if the justice or judge determines that the defendant is unable to immediately pay the fine and costs.”

11. Article 45A.258 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure provides, “(a) If the defendant notifies the justice or judge that the defendant has difficulty paying the fine and costs in compliance with the judgment, the justice or judge shall hold a hearing to determine whether the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant.

(b) For purposes of Subsection (a), a defendant may notify the justice or judge by: (1) voluntarily appearing and informing the justice or judge or the clerk of the court in the manner established by the justice or judge for that purpose; (2) filing a motion with the justice or judge; (3) mailing a letter to the justice or judge; or (4) any other method established by the justice or judge for that purpose.

(c) If the justice or judge determines at a hearing under Subsection (a) that the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant, the justice or judge shall consider whether to allow the defendant to satisfy the fine and costs through one or more methods listed under Article 45A.252.

(d) The justice or judge may decline to hold a hearing under Subsection (a) if the justice or judge: (1) previously held a hearing under that subsection with respect to the case and is able to determine without holding a hearing that the judgment does not impose an undue hardship on the defendant; or (2) is able to determine without holding a hearing that: (A) the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant; and (B) the fine and costs should be satisfied through one or more methods listed under Article 45A.252. (e) The justice or judge retains jurisdiction for the purpose of making a determination under this article.

12. Article 45A.261(a) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure states, “If a judgment and sentence have been entered against a defendant and the defendant defaults in the discharge of the judgment, the judge may order the defendant confined in jail until discharged by law if the judge at a hearing makes a written determination that: (1) the defendant is not indigent and has failed to make a good faith effort to discharge the fines or costs; or (2) the defendant is indigent and: (A) has failed to make a good faith effort to discharge the fines or costs under Article 45A.254; and (B) could have discharged the fines or costs under Article 45A.254 without experiencing any undue hardship.”

13. Article I, Section 19 of the Texas Constitution provides, “No citizen of this State shall be deprived of life, liberty, property, privileges or immunities, or in any manner disfranchised, except by the due course of the law of the land.”

14. Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution provides, in relevant part, that a judge shall not engage in “willful or persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of his duties or casts public discredit on the judiciary or on the administration of justice.”

CONCLUSION

Based on the record before it and the factual findings recited above, the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that the Honorable Jennifer Eggen, judge of the Municipal Court, in Hereford, Deaf Smith County, Texas, should be publicly admonished for: (1) failing to comply with the law and maintain professional competence in the law when she: (a) failed to make indigency or undue hardship determinations regarding defendants especially those that stated they were not able to pay their fines and costs, and (b) held Torres in the courthouse after he was released from officer's custody in order to receive payment of his outstanding tickets; (2) allowing her relationships with influential community members and/or friends to influence her judicial conduct or judgment when she granted ticket removals or deferred adjudication, but would not grant such relief to other defendants; (3) lending the prestige of her judicial office to advance the private interest of herself or others when she provided favors for influential community members and/or friends, including but not limited to, granting ticket removals or deferred adjudication when she would not grant such relief to other defendants; (4) failing to be patient, dignified and courteous towards defendants in her court, including but not limited to, Hispanic, juveniles and their parents, low income, and undocumented individuals; (5) failing to perform her judicial duties without bias or prejudice and, through words or conduct, manifested bias or prejudice, including, but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon race, national origin and socioeconomic status when she: (a) required Hispanic juveniles to return after the school day to clear their tickets, but would allow non-Hispanic juveniles to clear their tickets during the school day; and (b) mistreated Hispanics, low-income and undocumented defendants appearing in her court; and (6) failing to accord every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding the right to be heard by: (a) failing to allow Ferrer to present evidence relating to his financial status when he asked for more time to pay his fines, and (b) failing to hold undue hardship hearings. Judge Eggen's failures in the forgoing respects constituted willful and persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of a judge's duties and cast public discredit upon the judiciary and the administration of justice, in violation of Canons 2A, 2B, 3B(2), 3B(4), 3B(5), 3B(6) and 3B(8) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct and Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

The Commission has taken this action pursuant to the authority conferred it in Article V, Section 1-a of the Texas Constitution in a continuing effort to protect the public and promote public confidence in the judicial system.

Issued this the 20th day of October, 2025.

Ken Wise

Ken Wise
Vice-Chair, State Commission on Judicial Conduct