



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION  
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

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**CJC No. 21-0360**

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**PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

**HONORABLE GRACE UZOMBA  
COUNTY COURT AT LAW No. 2  
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on December 7-9, 2022, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable Grace Uzomba, County Court at Law No. 2, in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. Judge Uzomba was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided a written response. On June 8, 2023, Judge Uzomba appeared before the Commission and gave testimony regarding this matter.

**BACKGROUND**

The Commission received a complaint from Judge John Longoria, the Local Administrative Judge for Bexar County Courts at Law and the Presiding Judge of Bexar County Court at Law No. 5. Judge Longoria alleged Judge Uzomba failed to respond to his letter dated August 25, 2020, in which he discussed specific concerns he had with how she was performing her duties and in which he stated that she was required to respond to him in writing. The August 25, 2020 letter included the following complaints: (1) her failure or refusal to review and rule on motions to revoke probation and reports of violations that were critical, (2) her failure to timely and efficiently tend to matters regarding the records that she alone must review and sign so that judicial records can be properly kept, and (3) her failure to timely and efficiently perform her duties as a judge, including having an excessive number of cases unscheduled as of the beginning of August, 2020.

In her written responses to the Commission, Judge Uzomba denied she has failed or refused to review and rule on motions and reports as alleged. She also denied she failed to timely and efficiently tend to matters regarding the records that she must review so that judicial records can be properly kept. Regarding the large backlog of unscheduled cases in her court, Judge Uzomba attributed the unscheduled cases to the absence of critical support staff and the fact that she meticulously reviews paperwork because she has found many errors in paperwork submitted by the Community Supervision and Corrections

Department. Judge Uzomba stated, “I hold regular performance review hearings with probationers who are currently being supervised, and who may be in violation of their agreements, to determine what obstacles are keeping them from being fully compliant and successfully completing their probation. ... I take a very active role in supervising probationers who come through my court. ... I am far more proactive and involved than most Judges.” She concludes, “Any mistakes I have made have been honest and in good faith given the circumstances rather than willful or unjustified.”

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 Grace Uzomba, was judge of the County Court at Law No. 2, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.
2. On August 25, 2020, Judge Longoria wrote a letter to Judge Uzomba concerning multiple complaints he had received regarding her court. These complaints included: (1) failure or refusal to review and rule on motions to revoke probation and reports of violations by defendants under her supervision that were critical; and (2) failure to timely and efficiently tend to matters regarding the records that she alone must review and sign so that judicial records can be properly kept.
3. During her appearance, Judge Uzomba testified that she met with Judge Longoria regarding his August 25<sup>th</sup> Letter and told him that she and her court coordinator devised a plan to work through the undocketed cases. And working with the court administration for the county courts at law, Judge Uzomba stated the undocketed cases were being set. She stated she felt the issues were resolved with Judge Longoria after her meeting with him.
4. Judge Uzomba stated the reasons for her backlog was due to an “extended absence of key support personnel”, and she “had to extend a significant amount of time reviewing paperwork submitted” by staff from Bexar County Community Supervision and Corrections Department because she repeatedly found significant mistakes in those documents.
5. Judge Uzomba testified that she has had four different court coordinators and four different court reporters during her four-year term on the bench.
6. On February 10, 2021, Judge Longoria wrote a memo to Judge Uzomba regarding several concerns being raised regarding the manner in which her pretrial compliance hearings were being conducted and her lack of attention to pretrial violation reports, and probation matters which were pending in her court.
7. In the February 2021 Memo, Judge Longoria specified Judge Uzomba: (1) was holding pretrial compliance hearings improperly by not having a record of any proceeding made by the court reporter or the clerk at any time during the proceeding and an absence of defense counsel to represent the defendant; (2) had hearings going beyond 5 p.m. which entitled the clerks and/or pretrial officers to mandatory overtime pay if they were non-exempt employees and (3) had no signed orders indicating what conditions were ordered for the Pre-Trial Service Department to enforce.
8. Judge Uzomba testified that it has always been her practice to ensure an accurate record is kept in compliance hearings which was either by audio recording, saved to the cloud, conducted via Zoom and/or livestreamed on YouTube or recorded by a court reporter.
9. Judge Uzomba stated she advised probationers of their right to counsel and gave them time to hire an attorney or apply for a court-appointed attorney. Also, she requested the Bexar County Public



Defender's office to provide an assistant public defender for her court, but according to the judge, her requests were continually denied. In 2019, Judge Uzomba had three defense attorneys volunteer, at a flat rate, to be available for representation of any probationer who wanted to consult a defense attorney.

10. According to Judge Uzomba, once she was made aware of the overtime issue, she did everything in her power to make sure compliance hearings ended before 5 p.m.
11. On June 9, 2022, Judge Longoria issued a memo to the Bexar County Court Judges advising of them of the concerns raised regarding the manner in which Judge Uzomba was handling her criminal court docket. Judge Longoria redistributed approximately 1700 cases to the other Bexar County Court at Law Courts and took Judge Uzomba's court off the arraignment rotation for criminal courts.
12. The June 9<sup>th</sup> Memo was reported by San Antonio news station, KSAT 12.
13. Judge Uzomba stated that her court was not the only court which had a surplus of undocketed cases in the last two years. According to Judge Uzomba, there was another County Court of Law where cases were redistributed, but Judge Longoria did not take the actions he took against her.
14. Judge Uzomba argued that Judge Longoria did not have the authority to remove cases from her court or stop cases from being assigned to her court.

### RELEVANT STANDARDS

1. 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 upon the judiciary..."

### CONCLUSION

Based on the record before it and the factual findings recited above, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that the Honorable Grace Uzomba, Judge of the County Court at Law No. 2 in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, should be publicly reprimanded for failing to: (1) timely execute the business of the court regarding compliance hearings, (2) tend to records she alone must review and sign in order for the judicial records to be properly kept, and (3) make recording of the compliance hearings. Judge Uzomba's failure in this respect constituted willful and/or persistent failure to timely execute the business of the court that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of her duties and that cast public discredit upon the judiciary or the administration of justice, in violation 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(8) of the Texas Constitution in a continuing effort to protect the public and promote public confidence in the judicial system.

Issued this the 28 day of June, 2023.

  
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Gary L. Steel  
Chairman, State Commission on Judicial Conduct