

*The following is a real-time transcript taken as closed captioning during the oral argument proceedings, and as such, may contain errors. This service is provided solely for the purpose of assisting those with disabilities and should be used for no other purpose. These are not legal documents, and may not be used as legal authority. This transcript is not an official document of the Florida Supreme Court.*

GOOD MORNING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. WELCOME TO THE FLORIDA SUPREME COURT. THE FIRST CASE ON OUR CALENDAR THIS MORNING IS THE INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE, BRENDA C. WILSON, AND JUDGE WILSON IS HERE FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING A PUBLIC REPRIMAND, IF YOU WOULD BE KIND ENOUGH, JUDGE WILSON, TO TAKE YOUR PLACE AT THE PODIUM. JUDGE WILSON, THANKFULLY THE COURT IS NOT CALLED UPON OFTEN TO ADMINISTER A REPRIMAND, AND OF THOSE, IT IS UNUSUAL FOR THE COURT TO REQUIRE A JUDGE TO PERSONALLY APPEAR BEFORE THE COURT, IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THAT REPRIMAND. WE SAY THIS PROCEDURE IS SAVED FOR THE MOST SERIOUS OF CASES, AND YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE YOUR CONDUCT FALLS IN THAT CATEGORY. THUS WE CALLED YOU HERE TO PERSONALLY RECEIVE THIS PUBLIC REPRIMAND. ON DECEMBER 28 OF 1998, THE INVESTIGATIVE PANEL OF THE JQC FILED A NOTICE OF FORMAL CHARGES IN THIS COURT, CHARGING YOU WITH VARIOUS VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT. THESE CHARGES AROSE FROM AN INCIDENT ON MAY 2 OF 1998, AT DENNY'S RESTAURANT, WHERE, AFTER HAVING CONSUMED ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, YOU JOINED A GROUP OF INTOXICATED PEOPLE AND WITNESS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE HANDLE A VIDEO SURVEILLANCE CAMERA THAT BELONGED TO THE RESTAURANT. YOU, THEN, ACCOMPANIED THE GROUP TO THE RESIDENCE OF ONE OF THE GROUP'S MEMBERS, WHERE YOU SAW THAT ONE PERSON, FROM THIS GROUP, HAD POSSESSION OF THE CAMERA AND WAS TOLD THAT IT HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM DENNY'S. YOU DID NOT REPORT THE THEFT OF THE CAMERA. YOU, AGAIN, RETURNED TO DENY'S RESTAURANT WHILE INTOXICATED, APPROXIMATELY TWO WEEKS LATER, AND WHEN QUESTIONED BY DENNY'S EMPLOYEES, YOU CLAIMED TO HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE THEFT. WHEN YOU DISCOVERED THE EMPLOYEES KNEW YOUR IDENTITY, YOU ASKED YOUR NAME TO BE KEPT OUT OF THE MATTER, AND ONLY AFTER LEARNING THE THEFT HAD BEEN REPORTED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, DID YOU TELL THE TRUTH TO EMPLOYEES CONCERNING WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE CAMERA. DEPUTY SHERIFFS INTERVIEWED YOU CONCERNING THE THEFT OF THE CAMERA AND YOU, AGAIN, CONCEALED THE TRUTH. YOU INITIALLY TOLD THE DETECTIVES THAT YOU WENT HOME AFTER LEAVING DENNY'S, CONCEALING YOUR KNOWLEDGE THAT A CRIME HAD TAKEN PLACE. YOU FINALLY ADMITTED TO WHAT HAD HAPPENED, AFTER BEING INFORMED BY THE DEPUTIES THAT OTHER WITNESSES HAD TOLD THEM YOU HAD ACCOMPANIED THE GROUP TO THE RESIDENCE. JUDGE WILSON, YOUR CONDUCT WAS NOT WHAT THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE, YOUR COLLEAGUES, WHO SERVE AS JUDGES, AND THIS COURT REQUIRE AND RIGHTFULLY EXPECT OF JUDGES, BEGINNING WITH YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SERIES OF OCCURRENCES WHILE INTOXICATED. FURTHER, YOU OBSTRUCTED LAW ENFORCEMENT, BY ASKING THE EMPLOYEES OF DENNY'S NOT TO IDENTIFY YOU AS A WITNESS TO A CRIME AND FURTHER SHOWED YOUR DISREGARD TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AND YOUR HIGH POSITION BY INITIALLY LYING TO TWO DEPUTY SHERIFFS, CONCERNING YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THAT CRIME. AND THAT IT HAD TAKEN PLACE. THIS CONDUCT BY A JUDGE IS A SERIOUS VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT. AND THE PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY, AND IT IS NOT TOLERATED BY THIS COURT. THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT CONTAINS THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES BY WHICH OUR JUDICIARY IS GOVERNED AND MUST BE ADHERED TO BY YOU AND BY ALL JUDGES IN THIS STATE. CANON ONE OF THE CODE WHICH YOU VIOLATED IN THIS CASE, STATES THAT A JUDGE SHALL PARTICIPATION PATE IN ESTABLISH -- SHALL PARTICIPATE IN ESTABLISHING AND PERFORMING AND MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND SHALL PRESERVE THOSE STANDARDS, SO THAT THE INTEGRITY AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY MAY BE PRESERVED. THESE CONCEPTS OF INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE ARE THE CORNERSTONES UPON WHICH OUR LEGAL SYSTEM STANDS, AND BY DAILY CONDUCT, JUDGES MUST DEMONSTRATE TO THOSE CITIZENS THE JUDICIARY SERVES, THAT THE LEGAL SYSTEM IS ENTITLED TO THEIR RESPECT. CANON 2 A, WHICH YOU, ALSO, VIOLATED IN THIS CASE, STATES THAT A JUDGE SHALL RESPECT AND COMPLY WITH THE LAW AND SHALL ACT AT ALL TIMES IN A MANNER THAT PROMOTES PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE INTEGRITY AND THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE JUDICIARY. AND AS I JUST STATED, CONDUCT

SUCH AS THAT IN WHICH YOU ENGAGED GOES TO THE VERY CORE OF PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN OUR LEGAL SYSTEM. THIS COURT AND I, AS CHIEF JUSTICE, ARE STEADFASTLY COMMITTED TO BUILDING A PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY AND CERTAINLY MUST GUARD AGAINST ITS EROSION. FINALLY, CANON 5 A 2 STATES THAT A JUDGE SHALL CONDUCT ALL OF THAT JUDGE'S EXTRA JUDICIAL ACTIVITY, SO THAT THEY DO NOT Demean JUDICIAL OFFICE. YOUR CONDUCT NOT ONLY DemeanED YOUR JUDICIAL OFFICE BUT, ALSO, THE JUDICIARY AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION. JUDGE WILSON, THIS COURT CONCLUDES THAT YOUR ACTIONS SEVERELY VIOLATED THE STANDARDS SET FORTH IN THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT. OF PARTICULAR CONCERN IS THAT, IN ADDITION TO YOUR GENERAL PARTICIPATION IN THESE OCCURRENCES, WHEN BEING QUESTIONED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, YOU PERSONALLY FAILED TO TELL THE TRUTH. IN COURTS OF LAW, WE RELY ON ALL WHO PARTICIPATE TO TELL THE TRUTH. JUDGES HAVE A STRICT OBLIGATION TO LEAD IN THIS BY EXAMPLE. YOU DID NOT CONTEST THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST YOU, AND YOU WAIVED YOUR RIGHT TO A TRIAL BY HEARING PANEL, OF THE COMMISSION, AND IF NOT FOR YOUR AGREEMENT, INCLUDING YOUR VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION TO COUNSELING AND YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE 12-STEP SELF-HELP PROGRAM AND THE CONCURRENCE OF THE JUDICIAL KFTIONS COMMISSION, WE WOULD IMPOSE A MUCH MORE SEVERE SANCTION THAN THAT WHICH WAS RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMISSION. THIS COURT DOES RETAIN JURISDICTION IN YOUR CASE UNTIL THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE CONDITIONS OF THIS AGREEMENT. IT IS OUR HOPE, JUDGE WILSON, THAT YOU WILL LEAVE HERE WITH A PROFOUND SENSE OF SADNESS AND REGRET FOR THE CONDUCT THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE AND AN INTENSE COMMITMENT TO REHABILITATION, NOT ONLY OF YOUR NAME BUT TO THE SYSTEM OF JUSTICE, YOUR CONDUCT HAS HARMED. JUDGE WILSON, YOUR PUBLIC REPRIMAND IS NOW CONCLUDED. THANK YOU. THE NEXT CASE ON THE COURT'S