Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct
510 L Street, Suite 585
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 272-1033

IN THE SUPREME COURT FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA

In the matter of the proceeding pursuant to AS 22.30.011(a) in relation to: ROMANO DIBENEDETTO Former Judge of the Superior Court, Second Judicial District at Nome, Alaska	**Supreme Court No. _____** **ACJC File No. 2026-002**

RECOMMENDATION FOR DISCIPLINE

The factual information relevant to this case was first brought to the Commission's attention in February 2026. At a meeting held on April 24, 2026, after initial proceedings required by the Commission's Rules of Procedure, the Commission approved the bringing of formal charges after finding probable cause to believe that Mr. DiBenedetto had engaged in misconduct warranting action more serious than informal counseling or private admonishment.[1] A formal complaint was issued by the Commission on April 27, 2026, and a formal disciplinary hearing was scheduled for December 3, 2026. On September 21, 2026, the Commission voted to amend the complaint, which was finalized on October 15, 2026. The amended complaint, attached here, consists of three counts alleging misconduct in violation of Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct Canons 1, 2A,

[1] Commissioner William Satterberg, and the Commission's current executive director, recused from this matter in its entirety.

4A(1), and 4A(2).

At a special meeting held on October 22, 2026, the Commission unanimously voted to accept Mr. DiBenedetto's admission to violations of Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1) and 4A(2), as charged in the amended complaint. The Stipulation to Admitted Violations is attached.

Once a violation of the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct has been found – either through a formal hearing or by stipulated admission as was the case here – the Commission is required to refer the matter to the Alaska Supreme Court with a recommendation for discipline up to, and including, removal from office.[2] Removal from office may be recommended even if the judge under investigation has already resigned or retired from the bench. The Commission does not have the authority to make any recommendations with respect to a person's license to practice law.

A public meeting was held on November 17, 2026, in accordance with Commission Rule of Procedure 20. At that meeting, the Stipulation to Admitted Violations was presented to the public, and the Commissioners in attendance voted to recommend to the Alaska Supreme Court Mr. DiBenedetto's removal under AS 22.30.011(d)(2).[3] As stated in the motion made by Commissioner Kilbourn and adopted unanimously by the Commission, the recommendation is made in consideration of the Commission's goal to protect the integrity of the Alaska judiciary, ensure accountability

[2] AS 22.30.011(d)(2).

[3] Mr. DiBenedetto waived his right to a formal disciplinary hearing and agreed to accept a recommendation of removal. *See* Stipulation to Admitted Violations, ¶¶ 10 and 11.

and deterrence, and to preclude a return to the bench as a *pro tem* or senior judge.

The Commission submits its recommendation to the Supreme Court in accordance with Appellate Rule of Procedure 406.

Dated at Anchorage, Alaska this 18th day of November, 2026.

ALASKA COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

By: _____
Honorable Amy Mead, Chair
On behalf of the Commission

STATE OF ALASKA
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

In the matter of the proceeding pursuant 22.30.011(a) in relation to: ROMANO DIBENEDETTO Former Judge of the Superior Court, Second Judicial District at Nome, Alaska	**ACJC File No. 2026-002**

To: Romano DiBenedetto
c/o John Cashion
Cashion, Gilmore & Lindemuth
510 L Street, #300
Anchorage, AK 99501

AMENDED COMPLAINT

The Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct, pursuant to Article IV, sec. 10 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska, AS 22.30.011, and Rule 11 of the Rules of the Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct, charges that former judge Romano DiBenedetto engaged in conduct that violates AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C), (D), and (E) and Canons 1, 2A, and 4A(1) and 4A(2) of the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct. This amended complaint replaces the complaint dated April 27, 2026 in its entirety.

GOVERNING LAW

1. AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C), (D), and (E) provides that:

> (a) The commission shall on its own motion or on receipt of a written complaint inquire into an allegation that a judge
>
> . . .
>
> (3) within a period of not more than six years before the filing of the

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complaint or before the beginning of the commission's inquiry based on its own motion, committed an act or acts that constitute

. . .

(C) conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice;
(D) conduct that brings the judicial office into disrepute;
(E) conduct in violation of the code of judicial conduct.

2. Canon 1 requires a judge to uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

3. Canon 2A requires a judge, in all activities, to respect and comply with the law; avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety; and act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

The commentary to Canon 2A explains that the appearance-of-impropriety standard applies to a judge's professional and personal conduct. It asks whether the conduct would create, in reasonable minds, a perception that the judge's ability to perform judicial responsibilities with integrity, impartiality, and competence is impaired.

4. Canon 4A requires a judge to conduct extrajudicial activities in a manner that does not: (1) cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially; or (2) demean the judicial office.

The Commission charges as follows:

Former judge Romano DiBenedetto has engaged in conduct that violates AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C), (D), and (E) and Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1) and 4A(2) of the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct as set forth in the following three counts:

COUNT I

While Mr. DiBenedetto held judicial office, his Facebook account publicly

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identified him as being associated with the Alaska Court System, the Nome courthouse, and judicial chambers. The account's publicly visible presentation reflected apparent associations with adult-oriented, sexually suggestive, and commercial sex-related content. The public presentation of Mr. DiBenedetto's Facebook account while he was a sitting judge created an appearance of impropriety. A reasonable person viewing Mr. DiBenedetto's Facebook account, which clearly identified him as a judicial officer and which presented visible associations with adult-oriented and apparent commercial sex-related content, could reasonably conclude that the account created a serious appearance of impropriety, and could reasonably have substantial grounds to doubt Mr. DiBenedetto's judgment, integrity, impartiality, and fitness to serve as a judge.

The conduct alleged in Count I constitutes violations of Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1), and 4A(2), and constitutes conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, conduct bringing the judicial office into disrepute, and other conduct warranting discipline under AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C),(D), and (E).

COUNT II

While Mr. DiBenedetto was a sitting superior court judge, his personal telephone number placed calls or had communications with two different telephone numbers associated in available records with online commercial sex advertisements. The telephone contact information was identified through separate criminal investigations and related search warrant records. The Commission does not allege that Mr. DiBenedetto was the subject or target of those investigations or warrants, and does not allege that the telephone contact alone establishes criminal conduct. The Commission alleges that, viewed

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objectively and in the context of Mr. DiBenedetto's position as a sitting superior court judge, the contacts created a serious appearance of impropriety, materially undermined public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, and gave reasonable members of the public substantial grounds to doubt Mr. DiBenedetto's judgment, integrity, impartiality, and fitness to serve as a judicial officer.

The conduct alleged in Count II constitutes violations of Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1), and 4A(2), and constitutes conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, conduct bringing judicial office into disrepute, and other conduct warranting discipline under AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C), (D), and (E).

COUNT III

The Commission alleges that Mr. DiBenedetto's response to a 2023 Commission inquiry lacked completeness and candor.

In 2023, Mr. DiBenedetto was the subject of a complaint to the Commission alleging an appearance of impropriety by his use of the social media site known as Facebook. The complaint alleged that Mr. DiBenedetto used his personal Facebook page, which identified him as a sitting judge, in a manner that linked his page with adult-oriented, sexually suggestive, and apparent commercial sex-related content. Mr. DiBenedetto was provided with the underlying complaint in 2023, which specifically identified that the issue the Commission was inquiring about was related to his association with the adult-oriented or apparent commercial sex-related content linked to his Facebook page. When questioned by Commission staff, Mr. DiBenedetto denied knowing about the existence of problematic material linked to his page and agreed to take steps that would address the appearance of

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impropriety. Mr. DiBenedetto committed to working with court staff to ensure his personal Facebook page conformed to expected standards. Based on Mr. DiBenedetto's denial of knowledge and his assurances to address the concerns, the Commission closed its complaint file.

Since that time, and based on new information received by the Commission, the 2023 investigation was revisited. In 2023, Mr. DiBenedetto claimed ignorance and embarrassment about the "pending friend requests" visible on his page, asserting that he was unaware of their existence. His response to the Commission's inquiry was an overt denial of any association with the adult-oriented or apparent commercial sex-related content linked to his Facebook page. Now being aware that Mr. DiBenedetto had engaged in the contacts as alleged in Count 2, the Commission alleges that Mr. DiBenedetto's response to the Commission in 2023 did not fully or candidly address the broader appearance of impropriety concerns associated with his publicly accessible and judicially identified Facebook account in 2023.

Mr. DiBenedetto has informed the Commission that he closed his Facebook account, deleting any record of the account, in May of 2026.

The conduct alleged in COUNT III constitutes violations of Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1), and 4A(2), and constitutes conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, conduct bringing the judicial office into disrepute, and other conduct warranting discipline under AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C), (D), and (E).

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Pursuant to Commission on Judicial Conduct Rule of Procedure 11(b)(4)(B), a response must be filed within twenty days.

Dated at Anchorage, Alaska this 15th day of October, 2026.

ALASKA COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

By: _____
Honorable Amy Mead, Chair
On behalf of the Commission

RETURN

I served the above Amended Complaint constituting a statement of formal charges on Judge Romano DiBenedetto, the person to whom it is addressed, on the 15TH day of October 2026, by hand delivery to his attorney of record, John Cashion.

_____
Aleta Bartimmo
Administrative Assistant

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STATE OF ALASKA

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

In the matter of the proceeding pursuant to AS 22.30.011(a), in relation to ROMANO DIBENEDETTO Former Judge of the Superior Court, SECOND Judicial District at Nome, Alaska	)	ACJC File No. 2026-002

STIPULATION TO ADMITTED VIOLATIONS

The Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct and Romano D. DiBenedetto, former Judge of the Alaska Superior Court, Second Judicial District at Nome, stipulate and agree to the admitted violations described below. Jessica Dillon of Dillon Findley & Simonian, P.C. serves as Special Counsel in these proceedings, and Romano D. DiBenedetto is represented by John P. Cashion of Cashion Gilmore & Lindemuth LLC.

STIPULATION

1. Mr. DiBenedetto was appointed to the Alaska Superior Court by Governor Bill Walker on February 9, 2017. He served as a Superior Court Judge in the Second Judicial District at Nome, Alaska.

2. While Mr. DiBenedetto held judicial office, his personal Facebook account publicly identified associations with the Alaska Court System, the Nome courthouse, and judicial chambers.

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3. While he was a sitting judge, the publicly visible presentation of Mr. DiBenedetto's Facebook account reflected apparent associations with adult-oriented, sexually suggestive, and apparent commercial sex related content.

4. Mr. DiBenedetto acknowledges that the public presentation of an account identifying him as a judicial officer, together with apparent associations of the kind described in paragraph 3, created an appearance of impropriety. A reasonable person could have substantial grounds to question his judgment, integrity, impartiality, or fitness for judicial office.

5. While Mr. DiBenedetto was a sitting Superior Court Judge, his personal telephone number had contacts or communications with two telephone numbers associated in available records with online commercial sex advertisements. The Commission does not allege, and Mr. DiBenedetto does not admit, that he was the subject or target of any criminal investigation or search warrant, or that the telephone contacts establish criminal conduct.

6. Mr. DiBenedetto acknowledges that, viewed objectively and in light of his judicial office, the contacts described in paragraph 5 created an appearance of impropriety and could materially undermine public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

7. During a brief phone call in 2023, the Commission inquired about pending Facebook friend requests and their apparent associations with adult-oriented, sexually suggestive, and apparent commercial sex related content. Mr. DiBenedetto responded that

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he was unaware of the problematic pending friend requests and agreed to take steps to address the appearance concerns. The Commission closed that matter based on his response and assurances.

8. Mr. DiBenedetto acknowledges that his 2023 response did not fully address the broader appearance of impropriety concerns associated with his publicly accessible Facebook account.

9. By this Stipulation, Mr. DiBenedetto acknowledges that the conduct described in paragraphs 2 through 8 violated Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1), and 4A(2) of the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct, and constituted conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, conduct bringing the judicial office into disrepute, and conduct in violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct under AS 22.30.011(a)(3)(C), (D), and (E).

AGREEMENT

10. Mr. DiBenedetto agrees to accept the Commission's recommendation for him to be removed from office under AS 22.30.011(d)(2) for the violations admitted in this Stipulation.

11. Mr. DiBenedetto knowingly and voluntarily waives his right to a formal disciplinary hearing before the Commission concerning the matters resolved by this Stipulation.

12. Except as expressly provided in this Stipulation, the parties agree that this Stipulation resolves the allegations in the Amended Complaint in ACJC File No. 2026-002.

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13. In entering this Stipulation, Mr. DiBenedetto accepts responsibility for the admitted conduct and acknowledges that the conduct alleged in Counts I, II, and III of the October 15, 2026 Amended Complaint violated Canons 1, 2A, 4A(1), and 4A(2) of the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct. He recognizes that this conduct did more than reflect poorly on him personally: it undermined public confidence in the judiciary and in the court's ability to serve the people of the Second Judicial District fairly, impartially, and with sound judgment. The public is entitled to expect more from a judge. Mr. DiBenedetto also recognizes the practical consequences for Nome and the surrounding region. As a result of his conduct and the proceedings that followed, the community went without a resident Superior Court judge for a substantial period, placing added burdens on litigants, attorneys, court staff, visiting judges, and the communities served by the Nome court. This absence disrupted the regular administration of justice in a district where dependable access to the court is especially important. Mr. DiBenedetto regrets the harm his conduct caused to the community, the Alaska Court System, and the judiciary, and he accepts responsibility for that harm.

DATED this 22nd day of October, 2026, at Anchorage, Alaska.

/s/ John P. Cashion
John P. Cashion
Alaska Bar No. 9806025
Attorney for Romano D. DiBenedetto

/s/ Romano D. DiBenedetto
Romano D. DiBenedetto
Former Judge of the Alaska Superior Court

Jessica Dillon
Alaska Bar No. 0811066
Special Counsel for Commission