

Nevada Judge Who Handcuffed A Public Defender Now Banned From Ever Having The Job Again

Conrad Hafen admitted to violating state judicial code in four separate cases.

[By Matt Ferner](#)

The Huffington Post



Mari via Getty Images

A former Las Vegas justice of the peace who ordered a public defender to be [handcuffed while arguing in court](#) last year has been banned from ever serving as a judge in Nevada again, according to court documents filed by the state's Commission on Judicial Discipline.

Conrad Hafen agreed to public censure and admitted to violating state judicial code of conduct in four separate cases after complaints were filed against him, according to the judicial discipline committee's [order](#) made public this week.

According to the court record, Hafen admitted that he he did not “act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity and impartiality of the judiciary”; failed to “uphold the law” and perform his duties “fairly and impartially”; and failed to be “patient, dignified and courteous to jurors, witnesses, lawyers, court staff, court officials and others.”

The order cites four incidents wherein Hafen violated judicial code of conduct. The most prominent was when he placed Clark County Deputy Public Defender Zohra Bakhtary in

handcuffs as she defended a client who faced jail for [violating probation](#), a move that was widely condemned.

As Bakhtary tried to speak, Hafen told her to “[be quiet](#)” and then ordered a court marshal to handcuff her and seat her in the jury box next to inmates. Hafen said he did it to teach Bakhtary “[a lesson](#)” about courtroom etiquette. Hafen then sentenced Bakhtary’s client to six months in jail.

Hafen [filed a contempt order](#) against Bakhtary about a week after having her handcuffed, but it was later overturned.

In addition, Hafen failed to file written contempt orders against three different defendants he had ordered to jail on contempt charges between 2014 and 2016.

The discipline committee said Hafen had “abused his judicial authority by engaging in” such actions.

A group of Nevada defense attorneys [called for sanctions](#) against Hafen shortly after the handcuffing incident, saying he has a “complete disregard for the law” and that he “demeaned and humiliated” Bakhtary in court. The Clark County Defenders Union, which represents about 100 public defenders in the county, including Bakhtary, also [denounced](#) Hafen’s actions, calling them “unreasonable and unprecedented.”

Then, just weeks after the handcuffing incident, Hafen ran for re-election and [lost to criminal defense attorney and former prosecutor Amy Chelini](#).