

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE**

**IN THE MATTER CONCERNING
FORMER JUDGE ISRAEL CLAUSTRO**

**DECISION AND ORDER IMPOSING
PUBLIC CENSURE AND BAR
PURSUANT TO STIPULATION
(Commission Rule 116.5)**

This disciplinary matter concerns former Judge Israel Claustro, a judge of the Orange County Superior Court. Former Judge Claustro and his counsel, Paul S. Meyer, have entered into a stipulation with Director-Chief Counsel Gregory Dresser of the Commission on Judicial Performance, pursuant to commission rule 116.5, to resolve the pending preliminary investigation involving former Judge Claustro by imposition of a public censure and bar. The Stipulation for Discipline by Consent (Stipulation) was approved by the commission on March 18, 2026, pursuant to the following terms and conditions and stipulated facts and legal conclusions. A copy of the Stipulation is attached.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF AGREEMENT

1. This agreement resolves the matters alleged in the commission's pending preliminary investigation involving former Judge Claustro.
2. The commission shall issue a censure and bar based on the agreed Stipulated Facts and Legal Conclusions set forth therein.
3. If the commission accepts this proposed disposition, the commission's decision and order imposing a censure and bar may articulate the reasons for its decision and include explanatory language that the commission deems appropriate.
4. Upon acceptance by the commission, this stipulation and the commission's decision and order shall be made public.
5. Former Judge Claustro waives any further proceedings and review in this matter, including formal proceedings (Rules of Com. on Jud. Performance,

rule 118, et seq.) and review by the Supreme Court (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.60).

6. Former Judge Claustro agrees that the facts recited herein are true and correct, and that the discipline to which the parties stipulate herein is appropriate in light of those facts.

7. The commission may reject this proposed disposition and resume its preliminary investigation. If the commission does so, nothing in this proposed disposition will be deemed to be admitted or conceded by either party.

Accordingly, it is hereby stipulated and agreed that the commission shall issue a censure and bar on the above Terms and Conditions of Agreement, and based on the following Stipulated Facts and Legal Conclusions.

STIPULATED FACTS AND LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

This disciplinary matter concerns former Judge Israel Claustro, a judge of the Orange County Superior Court from 2022 until he resigned on January 12, 2026. His most recent term began in January 2023.

On January 7, 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice filed federal charges against former Judge Claustro in *U.S. v. Israel Claustro* (No. 8:26-cr-00001-FWS, C.D. Cal.) for his role, before he was a judicial officer, in a scheme to defraud the California Subsequent Injuries Benefits Trust Fund (which did not involve his practice of law). On January 12, 2026, former Judge Claustro pled guilty to one felony count of mail fraud and agreed to immediately resign from the bench. His plea agreement, attached, is incorporated by reference in the Stipulation. By pleading guilty, former Judge Claustro admitted that he is, in fact, guilty. He has not yet been sentenced as of the date of the Stipulation.

Former Judge Claustro's commission of one felony mail fraud offense, before he was a judicial officer, constitutes conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute within the meaning of article VI, section 18, subdivision (d) of the California Constitution.

Further, though the information was filed on January 7, 2026, and former Judge Claustro executed his guilty plea agreement on December 8, 2025, he failed to promptly report to the commission when he was charged in court by information with any crime in the United States, in violation of canon 3D(3).

Commission of a felony, regardless of the underlying facts of the crime, is a sufficient basis upon which to impose a censure and bar. (See *Censure and Bar of Former Judge Ronald C. Kline* (2006) p. 3; Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18, subd. (d).)

By signing this stipulation, in addition to consenting to discipline on the terms set forth, former Judge Claustro expressly admits that the foregoing facts are true and that he agrees with the stated legal conclusions.

DISCIPLINE

Article VI, section 18, subsection (d) of the California Constitution provides that the commission may “censure a judge . . . or remove a judge for action . . . that constitutes willful misconduct in office . . . or conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute.” “Prebench conduct is subject to ‘general ethical standards’ and provisions regarding ‘conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute.’ ” (Rothman et al., Cal. Judicial Conduct Handbook (4th ed. 2017) § 8:90, p. 576.) Former Judge Claustro concedes that his admitted prebench misconduct – committing felony fraud, a crime of moral turpitude – constitutes prejudicial misconduct that violated the Code of Judicial Ethics.

In determining to accept the Stipulation, the commission concluded that this resolution adequately fulfills its mandate to protect the public, enforce rigorous standards of judicial conduct, and maintain public confidence in the integrity of the judicial system, and avoids the necessity of further proceedings. (See *Broadman v. Commission on Judicial Performance* (1998) 18 Cal.4th 1079, 1111-1112; Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18, subd. (d).)

Commission members Hon. Lisa B. Lench; Mani Sheik, Esq.; Ms. Leisa Biggers; Ms. Kay Cooperman Jue; Hon. Julia C. Kelety; Mr. Richard A. Long; Hon. Kimberly Merrifield; Mr. Gerald C. Shelton; and Ms. Beatriz E. Tapia voted to accept the Stipulation and to issue this public censure and bar. Commission members Mr. Alton L. Garrett, Jr. and Rickey Ivie, Esq., did not participate.

Date: 3/24/2026

On behalf of the
Commission on Judicial Performance,



Hon. Lisa B. Lench
Chairperson

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE

IN THE MATTER CONCERNING
FORMER JUDGE ISRAEL CLAUSTRO

STIPULATION FOR DISCIPLINE
BY CONSENT (Rule 116.5)

Pursuant to Rules of the Commission on Judicial Performance, rule 116.5, former Judge Israel Claustro of the Orange County Superior Court, represented by counsel, Paul Meyer, and commission director-chief counsel, Gregory Dresser, (the “parties”) submit this proposed disposition of the matters that are the subject of the commission’s preliminary investigation. The parties request that the commission resolve this matter by imposition of a censure and bar. The parties believe that the settlement provided by this agreement is in the best interests of the commission and former Judge Claustro because, among other reasons, in light of the stipulated facts and legal conclusions, a censure and bar adequately protects the public and will avoid the delay and expense of further proceedings.

Former Judge Claustro irrevocably retired from judicial office, effective January 12, 2026.

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4. Upon acceptance by the commission, this stipulation and the commission's decision and order shall be made public.

5. Former Judge Claustro waives any further proceedings and review in this matter, including formal proceedings (Rules of Com. on Jud. Performance, rule 118, et seq.) and review by the Supreme Court (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.60).

6. Former Judge Claustro agrees that the facts recited herein are true and correct, and that the discipline to which the parties stipulate herein is appropriate in light of those facts.

7. The commission may reject this proposed disposition and resume its preliminary investigation. If the commission does so, nothing in this proposed disposition will be deemed to be admitted or conceded by either party.

Accordingly, it is hereby stipulated and agreed that the commission shall issue a censure and bar on the above Terms and Conditions of Agreement, and based on the following Stipulated Facts and Legal Conclusions.

STIPULATED FACTS AND LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

This disciplinary matter concerns former Judge Israel Claustro, a judge of the Orange County Superior Court from 2022 until he resigned on January 12, 2026. His most recent term began in January 2023.

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admitted that he is, in fact, guilty. He has not yet been sentenced as of the date of the Stipulation.

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By signing this stipulation, in addition to consenting to discipline on the terms set forth, former Judge Claustro expressly admits that the foregoing facts are true and that he agrees with the stated legal conclusions.

Dated: 2-25, 2026.



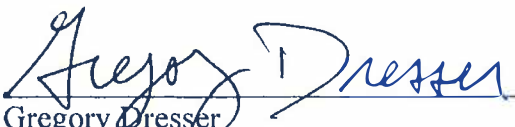
Former Judge Israel Claustro

Dated: 2-26, 2026.



Paul Meyer
Attorney for former Judge Claustro

Dated: Feb. 25, 2026.



Gregory Dresser
Director-Chief Counsel