PUBLIC RECORD REVIEW

Circuit Judge Diana Michelle Tennis

Ninth Judicial Circuit · Orange County, Florida

A Review of the Public Record, 1985–2026

Compiled by Devo Seereeram, Ph.D., P.E. · October 3, 2026

DISCLAIMER & METHOD

Compiled entirely from public records — court filings and dockets; Florida appellate opinions; Federal Election Commission campaign-finance data; Florida Department of Corrections records; Orange and Seminole County Comptroller recorded instruments; Florida Bar and Division of Corporations records; newspaper archives; and Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission and Supreme Court of Florida proceedings. No private or confidential sources were used. **Documented fact** means a statement supported by a named public record; **inference** — a reading of motive, or a figure estimated from a comparable case — is labeled as such. Where a sanction amount is estimated because the court's order does not state one, the text says so.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review traces a thirty-five-year public record and, now, its conclusion: in September 2026 the subject left the bench rather than accept escalating discipline, and agreed not to hold judicial office again.

Diana Michelle Tennis served as a circuit judge of Florida's Ninth Judicial Circuit from January 2015 until September 2026. This review, first compiled in March 2026, documented a consistent behavioral pattern across her career — image cultivation, financial distress, aggressive litigation postures, narrow escapes from accountability, and, on the bench, repeated disqualifications for bias and the most prolific set of Canon 7 political contributions the Judicial Qualifications Commission had ever reviewed. This edition adds the record's conclusion.

The violations were documented from the government's own data. Between January 26, 2017 and January 31, 2021 she made **913 political contributions totaling $29,154.76**, all while sitting as a judge, in violation of Canon 7A(1)(e). The Commission called her "far and away the most prolific offender" of that rule it had reviewed.

The discipline escalated on the same record, with no new evidence. The Commission first stipulated to a single public reprimand (September 2025). The Supreme Court of Florida rejected that resolution as too lenient — first announcing it would add a fine (June 25, 2026), then vacating that order and announcing it would add a suspension and a fine (July 2, 2026). Each step rested on the identical findings and stipulation already before the Court.

The exit. Rather than accept a suspension, Judge Tennis left the bench — her last day was September 4, 2026, with retirement effective September 5 — roughly four months before her term would have ended, and she had already organized a private law firm in June 2026 while still sitting. On September 28, 2026 the Commission dismissed the charges, reciting her retirement "and her agreement to not hold future judicial office." She left with **$2,512,000 in disclosed retirement accounts**, including an **$840,000 Florida Retirement System account that appears on none of her earlier disclosures** (Section XVI).

What a separate September 2026 filing identifies as the more serious problem is not the donations but what happened to the evidence of them: when the contribution record was placed in a public court file, a motion to seal it was met with an order **reserving** the motion rather than denying it — which, under the clerk's presumption of confidentiality, kept the record out of public view while leaving no final, appealable order to challenge.

Findings at a glance

Canon 7 contributions	**913** political contributions totaling **$29,154.76** (2017–2021) while a sitting judge; the JQC's most prolific Canon 7 offender on record.	XII
Escalating discipline	JQC stipulated to a public reprimand (Sep 2025); the Supreme Court rejected it twice, adding a fine (Jun 25, 2026) then a suspension and fine (Jul 2, 2026) — on the same record.	XV
Departure from bench	Left the bench Sep 4, 2026 (retirement effective Sep 5) rather than accept suspension; term would have run to January 2027; private firm organized Jun 2026 while still sitting.	XV
Agreement not to return	Sep 28, 2026 JQC dismissal recites her "agreement to not hold future judicial office."	XV
Retirement money	Left with **$2,512,000** in disclosed retirement accounts, including an **$840,000** FRS account that appears on none of her seven earlier disclosures; about 7% of it traces to her own paycheck.	XVI
Sealing of the evidence	A motion to seal the public contribution record was **reserved**, not denied — leaving it presumptively sealed with no appealable order (Sep 2026 Canon-5 filing).	XV
Bias disqualifications	Four writs of prohibition (2018–2023) for a legally sufficient fear of an unfair trial, plus multiple reversals.	XI
Candor	Told a 2014 candidate debate she was "found not guilty by a jury" of her 2001 DUI; the charge was dismissed on a suppression ruling, not a jury verdict.	X
Bench decorum	As a sitting judge in 2016, publicly posted a debate-night "drinking game" and a plan to arrive late and do an "adequate" job in court the next day (Canons 1, 2A, 3B(1)).	XIV
Financial pattern	Worthless-check arrest in law school; tax liens; a two-year foreclosure (2009–2012); $150,000 HELOC in 2020 while the household gave $32,039 to campaigns.	II, VIII, XIII

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I. Early Years and Self-Promotion (1980–1985)

Diana Michelle Tennis (born September 1966, Illinois) appeared in Tampa Bay-area newspapers 32 times between 1980 and 1985, beginning at age 14 shortly after moving to Florida from the Midwest in 1979. The coverage was uniformly self-promotional. On January 20, 1985, at age 18, a *Tampa Bay Times* profile featured her as a high-school senior, announcing her Mensa membership and clarifying that it meant she possessed a higher IQ than 98% of the population. She publicly announced her intention to study law at Harvard.

She did not attend Harvard. She enrolled at the University of Florida in the fall of 1985, earning an undergraduate degree in political science before entering UF Law School in January 1989. The gap between the public announcements and the actual outcomes established a pattern of image cultivation that would continue throughout her career.

Sources: Tampa Bay Times, Jan. 20, 1985; Tampa Tribune, Jan. 23, 1985; and 30 additional Tampa Bay-area newspaper citations, 1980–1985.

II. Law School: The Worthless-Check Case (1989–1991)

Tennis entered UF Law School in January 1989. By June 26, 1989 — during her first summer — an eviction action was filed against her and two roommates at Kings Creek Apartments in Alachua County (Case No. 89-963-LT). The case was voluntarily dismissed the same day, but the five-day notice (Florida's most aggressive eviction remedy, reserved for nonpayment) signaled financial difficulty despite the scholarship funding she had publicized.

The criminal case

On May 1, 1990, during her second year of law school, Tennis wrote a $150 check to the Kings Creek apartment manager that she knew would not clear. She was leaving the complex; the check bounced. She then moved to a new address (725/172 NE 6th Street, Gainesville) but did not update it with the court or the landlord.

On October 5, 1990, the landlord swore out a criminal complaint for worthless check under § 832.05(4)(a), Fla. Stat., a first-degree misdemeanor (Case No. 01-1990-MM-008215-A, Alachua County Court). On October 26, 1990 she was booked into the criminal-justice system, generating a permanent Florida Department of Corrections record. A criminal summons issued to Kings Creek Apt. B-13 — the address she had abandoned five months earlier. The summons was returned unexecuted on November 27, 1990. On November 30, 1990 the judge issued a capias (arrest warrant). On January 14, 1991 the capias was

entered into FCIC/NCIC, making Tennis the subject of a statewide and nationwide arrest warrant with a $25 bond.

The counter-lawsuit

While the arrest warrant was active, Tennis used UF Student Legal Services — a taxpayer-funded legal-aid program — to file a civil lawsuit against the same landlord she had defrauded (Case No. 01-90-03874-SC). She used her new address for the civil filing, proving she knew how to update her address when it benefited her. Attorney Andy Parmenter (Fla. Bar No. 334928) filed on her behalf. She won a default judgment of $326.85.

On July 31, 1991, the landlord paid the $326.85 judgment, then informed Student Legal Services about the outstanding arrest warrant. Between August and October 1991, Tennis made $150 in restitution and appeared before the judge. On November 15, 1991 — six weeks before her December 1991 graduation — the capias was recalled and charges dropped via nolle prosequi.

Final accounting: the $326.85 default judgment was split among Tennis and her two roommates, yielding about $109 each. Tennis then paid $150 in restitution and roughly $67 in court costs — meaning she lost money on the entire episode. She used taxpayer-funded legal aid to sue the victim of her bad check, collected less than she owed, and did so while a nationwide arrest warrant bore her name.

Sources: Florida DOC record (Case No. 019008215MMA); Alachua County Court (Case No. 01-1990-MM-008215-A, nolle prosequi Nov. 15, 1991); Alachua County Small Claims (Case No. 01-90-03874-SC).

III. Bar Delay and Career Consequences (1991–1994)

Tennis graduated from UF Law School in December 1991, reportedly second in her class. She did not sit for the February 1992 Florida Bar examination — the Bar's Character and Fitness review would have flagged the recently-dropped criminal case and the DOC booking record. She waited until the July 1992 sitting and was not admitted until November 20, 1992 (Bar No. 966703), nearly a year after graduation.

The career consequences were significant. A graduate finishing second in her class at UF Law in 1991 would ordinarily have been recruited by major Florida firms at starting salaries of $50,000–$65,000. Instead, no major firm offered her a position. She accepted an entry-level assistant public defender position in the Ninth Circuit at roughly $26,000 a year — the public defender's office being one of the few employers that does not disqualify candidates for having been on the other side of the criminal-justice system. She served about two years, primarily in the felony division, before leaving for private practice in late 1994.

IV. The Saint Nattis Case (2000–2001)

On February 3, 2000, at about 1:17 a.m., Orlando Police Officer Edward Diaz stopped a blue Chevrolet Cavalier on John Young Parkway for a cracked windshield and obscured tag. The driver was Emmanuel "Jimmy" Saint Nattis, accompanied by his girlfriend Deborah Lakes and Salomon Desrivieres, who had an outstanding warrant for pawnshop robbery. As Officer Diaz processed Desrivieres and called for backup, Officer George DeSalvia responded. When both officers attempted to arrest Saint Nattis — driving on a suspended license and wanted for a string of armed pawnshop robberies — Saint Nattis opened fire with a .40-caliber Glock. DeSalvia was shot at close range in the head; Saint Nattis shot at him again as he lay dying and tried to take his service weapon. Officer Diaz, hit eight times, radioed a Signal 43 (Officer Down) before collapsing. DeSalvia died at the scene; Diaz was permanently paralyzed. Neither officer returned fire.

Saint Nattis was found hours later hiding in a closet at a crack house on Rio Lane, about 1.5 miles away. Investigators recovered guns and jewelry from a pawnshop robbery at his apartment; the gun used to kill DeSalvia was traced to a stolen firearm from the robbery. Saint Nattis told police he shot the officers because he knew what was in the car. **Diana Tennis represented Saint Nattis as his defense attorney in state court.**

Source: Orlando Sentinel, Dec. 4, 2001.

V. The Federal Competency Hearing: Tennis as Witness

Saint Nattis faced parallel federal charges for obstructing interstate commerce through the pawnshop robberies. His federal attorney, Michael Nielsen, requested a competency evaluation. Saint Nattis spent 45 days at a federal facility in Miami under evaluation by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. He told U.S. Magistrate James Glazebrook he had headaches and heard the voice of the devil.

Glazebrook learned that the court-ordered evaluation had been obstructed by Saint Nattis's state-court attorney — Diana Tennis. Tennis testified at the federal hearing that she had urged her client not to cooperate with federal psychiatrists; her stated reason was that she feared the psychiatric findings could help send him to death row in the state murder trial. The federal judge rejected her account, ruling that the strange behavior was fabricated and noting that Saint Nattis had given lucid, coherent answers to police after his arrest. The judge also cited testimony from U.S. Marshals George English and Bryan Knoeffel, who said Saint Nattis appeared normal when they transported him between the Seminole County Jail and court over six months.

This episode is significant because Tennis was not merely a defense attorney performing an adversarial role: she appeared as a **witness** in a federal proceeding, testified that she

had actively coached her client to obstruct a court-ordered psychiatric evaluation, and a federal magistrate rejected her account.

The state trial and sentencing

The state murder trial was moved to West Palm Beach due to pretrial publicity. On May 18, 2001 a Palm Beach County jury found Saint Nattis guilty of first-degree murder; on October 17, 2001 it recommended life. On November 30, 2001, Circuit Judge Bob Wattles sentenced Saint Nattis to life without parole for the murder of Officer DeSalvia, a second life term for the attempted murder of Officer Diaz, and 30 years for armed escape — atop a 135-year federal term for the related robberies. Judge Wattles said he had been inclined toward the death penalty but noted that the Florida Supreme Court rarely upholds judges who override a jury's recommendation of life. About 80 OPD officers filled the courtroom.

Sources: Orlando Sentinel, Nov. 30 and Dec. 4, 2001.

VI. The DUI Arrest — Two Days After Sentencing (2001)

On Sunday, December 2, 2001 — exactly two days after the Saint Nattis sentencing — Diana Michelle Tennis, age 35, of Altamonte Springs was arrested in Maitland at **8:20 p.m.** for driving under the influence (Case No. CT-2001-26631-E). According to Maitland police **Lt. Gary Calhoun**, she was stopped after **failing to go at a green light on Maitland Avenue at Maitland Boulevard**, and officers also cited her for **driving 64 mph in a 50 mph zone**. Her blood-alcohol level was measured at **0.185 and 0.182** — the *Orlando Sentinel* reported it as 0.18 — more than twice the 0.08 legal limit. She was released on her own recognizance at **11:35 a.m.** the next morning.

Source: Orlando Sentinel, "Saint Nattis' Lawyer Arrested," Dec. 4, 2001 (Maitland police Lt. Gary Calhoun); breath-test readings .185/.182 per the DHSMV record (Section VII).

VII. The Intoxilyzer 5000 Source-Code Wars (2002–2004)

Tennis's DUI case was resolved not on the merits but through a mass legal challenge that swept the Ninth Judicial Circuit between 2002 and 2004, targeting the Intoxilyzer 5000 breathalyzer. The core argument: the State was convicting people on readings from a machine whose proprietary software (source code) and operator's manuals were withheld from the defense, so defendants could not examine how the machine that accused them actually worked.

The criminal case: suppression and dismissal

Tennis's criminal DUI case was consolidated with other DUI defendants before County Court Judge Carolyn B. Freeman, with hearings on July 23, September 26, and September 27, 2002. Her attorney was Michael J. Snure of Winter Park. Judge Freeman's order of November 19, 2002 found that FDLE could not prove the Intoxilyzer machines had been properly approved. Dr. Harlee Myler, chair of Electrical Engineering and Computers at UCF, testified that the e-prom software contained mismatched data, different forks, and bit counts inconsistent with approved versions. Freeman's analogy: FDLE had approved a machine similar to a steam engine, but the testing center was using machines that were either modified steam engines or jet engines. The State appealed; on March 2, 2004 a three-judge panel (Adams, Sprinkel, Rodriguez) affirmed the suppression in full, with the mandate issued March 22, 2004 under Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Jr. The DUI charges were effectively dead.

The administrative case: license suspension upheld

In a parallel civil proceeding (Case No. CIO-02-2589), Tennis petitioned for certiorari to overturn her administrative license suspension. A separate three-judge panel (Gridley, Mackinnon, Mihok) unanimously denied the petition on January 14, 2003, finding competent, substantial evidence that she drove under the influence and noting that Tennis had proffered nothing but pure speculation to rebut DHSMV's case. The court distinguished *Esler*, where a petitioner actually produced evidence of machine noncompliance; Tennis produced none.

The critical distinction: in the criminal track Tennis escaped via suppression of evidence; in the administrative track — where three judges actually examined the totality of the evidence — she lost, unanimously. Her BAC of .185/.182 was never disputed. Two three-judge panels within the same circuit thus reached opposite conclusions about the same breath-test evidence: the criminal panel freed her from prosecution; the administrative panel found the evidence showed she drove drunk.

Date	Event	Outcome
Dec 2, 2001	DUI arrest; BAC .185/.182	Two days after Saint Nattis sentencing
Feb 12, 2002	License suspension upheld	6-month suspension
Jul–Sep 2002	Joint DUI suppression hearings	Consolidated Intoxilyzer challenge
Nov 19, 2002	Motion to suppress granted	Breath test suppressed (Judge Freeman)
Jan 14, 2003	License-suspension writ denied	Gridley/Mackinnon/Mihok: suspension stands
Mar 2, 2004	State's appeal denied	Adams/Sprinkel/Rodriguez: suppression affirmed
Mar 22, 2004	Mandate issued	Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Jr.

Sources: Ninth Judicial Circuit, Case Nos. TEO1-020631, CIO-02-2589, CJAP 02-97; DHSMV records; Charles Short, "Guilt by Machine," 61 Fla. L. Rev. 177 (2009).

VIII. Private Practice: Financial Collapse (1996–2014)

Tennis incorporated the Law Office of Diana M. Tennis, P.A. on December 31, 1996 (Florida filing #P97000000387). Over the next 18 years her practice was marked by persistent financial difficulty, aggressive collection tactics against her own clients, and accumulating debt.

Tax liens and bad debts (2002–2005)

During the same period she was fighting her DUI case, four tax liens were filed against her law office within six months, totaling about $893, all satisfied February 24, 2003. After the DUI case resolved, larger debts surfaced. In April 2004, R.H. Donnelley Publishing sued for unpaid Yellow Pages advertising (Case No. 04-CA-3228); the underlying debt was $20,435.42 plus 18% interest, and on July 7, 2004 Tennis signed a stipulated settlement for $15,466.63, completed by August 2005. In April 2005, Reed Elsevier (Martindale-Hubbell) stipulated to $6,709.88 in unpaid directory fees. Combined, Tennis owed over $27,000 in basic operating expenses to legal-advertising vendors alone.

Aggressive client collections

Tennis filed attorney's charging liens against clients who could not pay, forcing property sales to recover fees. In one matter (Case No. 1998-CA-002825-O), she represented a domestic-violence client in 1995, then filed a foreclosure action that produced a $39,315.55 judgment against the client in 1999 (the United States was named a defendant, indicating federal tax liens). In another family-law matter she filed a lien against a client's property, producing an HOA foreclosure in 2011 (final judgment $11,952.66). In Episode 46 of the “Open Ninth” podcast (April 23, 2018), Tennis candidly acknowledged that her private practice had failed due to financial pressures and a lack of business acumen, and that the financial struggle played a key role in her decision to pursue a judgeship for the stability of a government salary.

Mortgage default and foreclosure (2009–2012)

Tennis's primary residence was 213 N Chase Ct, Altamonte Springs, purchased August 13, 1999 for $260,000 as a “single woman” with a $234,000 mortgage. She defaulted beginning December 1, 2009; at the April 2010 filing the unpaid principal was $200,671.21, and the foreclosure (Case No. 59-2010-CA-002931-14-K) remained active for 713 days. She married Michael John Cybrynski (born April 1959) in October/November 2010, during the active foreclosure. The foreclosure was resolved not by payment but by refinancing: on May 22, 2012 — weeks after the dismissals — Tennis and Cybrynski obtained a new $194,600 Bank of America mortgage, with the original Countrywide debt formally satisfied July 25, 2012.

Date	Instrument	Amount	Details
Aug 13, 1999	Purchase mortgage	$234,000	Contemporary Mortgage; OR Bk 3709 Pg 861
Dec 1, 2009	Default begins	—	Ceases payment on primary mortgage
Apr 23, 2010	Lis pendens	—	BAC Home Loans foreclosure
Oct/Nov 2010	Marries Cybrynski	—	During active foreclosure
Mar–Apr 2012	Foreclosure dismissed	—	Three separate dismissal recordings
May 22, 2012	BofA refinance	$194,600	With Cybrynski as “spouse”
Jan 28, 2015	Property sold	$342,000	Eight days after taking the bench

Eight days after taking the bench (January 28, 2015), Tennis sold the property for $342,000; both mortgages were satisfied in February 2015, resolving the liabilities of her private-practice era.

Sources: Seminole County Official Records; 18th Judicial Circuit, Case No. 59-2010-CA-002931-14-K; Orange County Marriage License 2010-ML-007221-O; R.H. Donnelley v. Tennis, Case No. 2004-CA-003228-O.

IX. The Casey Anthony / Dominic Casey Episode (2009)

In June 2009, Tennis entered the Casey Anthony orbit by filing a motion on behalf of private investigator Dominic Casey in the related civil defamation case, *Gonzalez v. Anthony* (Case No. 08-CA-24573). Acting as counsel for a non-party witness, she sought to strike a contempt motion, obtain a protective order, and recover fees, asserting that Dominic Casey “has no information whatsoever about any of these issues that is not firmly covered by work-product privilege.” Her filing went beyond conventional argument: it denounced the lawsuit as “a cynical and frivolous exploitation of a family's tragedy,” labeled the case “this piece of marketing,” and called the litigation a “circus.”

This collided with facts already in the record. By January 7, 2009, Dominic Casey had given an 80-page interview to law enforcement at attorney Bradley Conway's office, and on February 18, 2009, Judge Stan Strickland reviewed that transcript in camera and expressly concluded that “the statement contains no matter which this Court views as privileged.” In a September 2009 motion to compel Casey's deposition, Morgan & Morgan used the in-camera ruling, the public interview, and Tennis's own June motion against her, framing her representations about privilege and authorization as “false” and accusing both Casey and Tennis of violating their duty of candor to the court. The court allowed the affidavit and treated Dominic Casey as a discoverable witness, and Tennis ultimately withdrew — another instance in which an aggressive, image-driven litigation posture produced public embarrassment and professional blowback.

Sources: Gonzalez v. Anthony, Case No. 08-CA-24573; Dominic Casey's Motion to Strike (filed June 11, 2009, by Diana M. Tennis); Plaintiff's New Motion to Compel (Sep. 11, 2009, Morgan & Morgan); Order Regarding In-Camera Inspection (Judge Stan Strickland, Feb. 18, 2009).

X. 2014 Election to the Bench and Candor Analysis

Tennis announced her candidacy for Circuit Judge in July 2013 as her private practice faltered. She won the nonpartisan primary on August 26, 2014 (Circuit 9, Group 32) with 60,695 votes (43.91%); her opponent received 57,778 (41.81%), and 19,710 ballots (14.27%) left the race blank. She closed her law practice on December 31, 2014 and took the bench on January 5, 2015. Her opponent, Patricia Strowbridge, was later appointed to the same court by Governor Rick Scott on March 25, 2015. Strowbridge was the widow of Circuit Judge Bob Wattles — who had presided over the Saint Nattis murder trial and sentenced Tennis's former client to life — underscoring how directly her judicial campaign intersected with the most consequential case of her defense career.

The “found not guilty by a jury” claim

During a recorded candidate debate (Ninth Circuit, Group 32), Tennis was asked whether she had ever been arrested. She said she had been arrested in 2001, charged with DUI, and was “found not guilty by a jury sometime later.” The record is irreconcilable with this claim. The criminal case was not resolved by a jury verdict: the County Court granted a motion to **suppress** the breath test on November 19, 2002; the State appealed; a three-judge panel affirmed the suppression on March 2, 2004; and the mandate issued March 22, 2004, leading to a **dismissal on evidentiary grounds** — not a trial. The only judicial body to weigh the evidence, the administrative panel, upheld her license suspension and found competent, substantial evidence of impairment. *For a candidate seeking judicial office, the distinction between a jury acquittal and a dismissal on a suppression ruling is not a minor semantic difference; it is a misrepresentation of the public record to the audience evaluating her fitness.*

Sources: Ninth Judicial Circuit, Case Nos. TEO1-020631, CIO-02-2589, CJAP 02-97; Florida Division of Elections, Circuit 9 Group 32 (2014); Orlando Sentinel YouTube, Circuit Judge debate (Jul. 17, 2014).

XI. Appellate Record: Bias Disqualifications and Reversals (2017–2023)

Since taking the bench, Tennis has been the subject of multiple successful appellate challenges, including **four writs of prohibition** — the most severe appellate remedy, granted only when a lower-court judge's conduct creates a legally sufficient fear that a party will not receive a fair trial.

Case	Date	Finding
Torres v. Gomez, 5D18-2501	**Sep 14, 2018**	Legally sufficient fear of not receiving a fair trial
Wright v. Wright, 5D18-3354	**Dec 6, 2018**	Comments suggesting strategic advice to one party

Case	Date	Finding
Nieves v. Guthrie, 5D20-1667	**Aug 28, 2020**	Well-founded fear of bias
Temple v. Melchione, 6D23-2180	**Jul 28, 2023**	Exceeded jurisdiction; judicial overreach

Beyond the bias disqualifications, Tennis has been reversed on substantive grounds in multiple cases: due-process violations (*Hernandez Velez v. Lafontaine*, 5D20-2350), acting without jurisdiction after dismissal (*Graham v. Graham*, 5D21-1774), improper asset valuation and income imputation (*Gupta v. Gupta*, 5D20-536), unjustified fee awards (*Holloway v. Holloway*, 5D17-1709; *Ali v. Khan*, 6D23-1141), improper contempt findings (*Pace v. Pace*, 5D19-2354; *Carter v. Hart*, 5D18-609), and insufficient findings on alimony and support (*Woelk v. Woelk*, 5D17-1717). Judicial analytics indicate she managed 35% more active cases than the county average, with an average case duration of 746 days — 49% longer than the county average of 502.

XII. The 913 Canon 7 Violations and the JQC Case (2017–2025)

Between January 26, 2017 (six days after the Trump inauguration) and January 31, 2021 (eleven days after the Biden inauguration), Judge Tennis made **913 individual political contributions totaling $29,154.76**, all to Democratic causes and candidates, all through ActBlue. She listed her occupation as “JUDGE” and her employer as “STATE OF FLORIDA” on every contribution.

Canon 7A(1)(e) of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct prohibits judges from making contributions to political organizations or candidates; each contribution is a separate violation. The Judicial Qualifications Commission characterized Tennis as the most prolific Canon 7 offender in its history. For comparison, Judge Juan Merchan of New York made three small federal political contributions in 2020 totaling $35, for which New York's Commission on Judicial Conduct issued a private letter of caution. Tennis made 913 contributions totaling $29,154.76.

The complaint and the Commission's investigation

The matter originated in a public-records complaint filed by a self-represented litigant drawing on the FEC's own database. The Commission opened Docket No. 24-714 (acknowledged August 26, 2024; later consolidated as JQC Nos. 2024-714 and 2024-767), served a Notice of Investigation on February 11, 2025, and on May 1, 2025 held an Investigative Panel hearing at which Tennis admitted the violations under oath. On September 4, 2025 she signed a stipulation agreeing to a single public reprimand, and on September 16, 2025 the Commission filed its Findings and Recommendation with the Supreme Court of Florida as Case No. SC2025-1438 — recommending the reprimand as

the sole sanction. That lenient resolution drew amicus filings urging stronger discipline, and set up the escalation documented in Section XV.

Date	Event
Aug 26, 2024	Public-records complaint acknowledged (JQC Docket 24-714)
Feb 11, 2025	JQC Notice of Investigation served (Cases 2024-714, 2024-767)
May 1, 2025	Investigative Panel hearing; Tennis admits violations under oath
Sep 4, 2025	Signs stipulation agreeing to a public reprimand
Sep 16, 2025	JQC files Findings and Recommendation with the Florida Supreme Court (SC2025-1438)

XIII. Financial Disclosure Contradictions (2019–2020)

Judge Tennis's Form 6 for calendar year 2019 (filed April 13, 2020) reported a net worth of $2,661,200, total assets of $3,319,200, and liabilities of $658,000. Her liquid checking balances totaled $18,200 (BB&T $13,500; CFCU $4,700), and her sole disclosed income was her judicial salary of $160,688.05.

The HELOC contradiction

On December 1, 2020, Tennis and her husband borrowed $150,000 against their Winter Park home through a BB&T/Truist home-equity line of credit (Doc #20200647238). People take out HELOCs when they need cash they cannot otherwise access. Yet in that same calendar year, FEC records show the household contributed $32,039.48 to political campaigns — roughly 20% of the judge's gross annual salary — while she disclosed only $18,200 in liquid checking assets.

Year	Husband	Diana Tennis	Combined
2017	$0.00	$5,175.00	$5,175.00
2018	$0.00	$10,343.10	$10,343.10
2020	$19,298.82	$12,740.66	$32,039.48
2021	$440.00	$896.00	$1,336.00
2022	$600.00	$0.00	$600.00
2024	$725.00	$0.00	$725.00
Total	**$21,063.82**	**$29,154.76**	**$50,218.58**

In October 2021 the Winter Park property (1701 Walnut Ave) sold for $1,300,000, satisfying all mortgages and the HELOC; in November 2021 the couple bought 1306 Bahama Dr, Orlando, for about $1,050,000 (her 2021 Form 6, valued December 31, 2021, lists it at $1,200,000) with a $450,000 mortgage and an approximate $600,000 down payment.

The close-out disclosure and the recurring non-reconciliation

The pattern did not stay in 2019–2020. On her **final Form 6F**, filed September 5, 2026, she computed her eight months of 2026 judicial salary at the **superseded 2025 rate of $196,898**, reporting **$131,265.33**; at the applicable 2026 rate of $200,836.08 the figure is **$133,890.67** — an **understatement of $2,625.34.** The broader filings do not reconcile cleanly either: her **2024 values are reported identical to her 2023 values to the dollar**, and roughly **$146,350 in savings** disclosed through 2021 does not appear on the filings after 2021. *As with the 2019–2020 HELOC contradiction above, the sworn schedules do not fully square — on the disclosures of a judge whose own rulings turned on the accuracy of other people's sworn financial affidavits.*

Sources: Florida Form 6, CY 2019 (filed Apr. 13, 2020), 2021–2025 and Form 6F (filed Sep. 5, 2026); Florida judicial salary schedules (FY 2024–25, $196,898; FY 2025–26, $200,836.08); Orange County Comptroller Doc #20200647238 (HELOC), #20210605059 (sale); FEC individual-contributor records (ActBlue).

XIV. Conduct as a Sitting Judge: Social Media and Traffic (2016–2025)

Social-media posts during the 2016 presidential debate

On the evening of Monday, September 26, 2016 — the night of the first 2016 presidential debate, and while a sitting judge — Tennis published a running commentary from her public account **@tennisbench**, including a debate "drinking game" ("I probably shouldn't have started the drinking game aspect during the three hours of commercials leading up to the debate. Oops."). The post placed in the record is a different one. Late that evening, before a court day, she wrote: **"Planning to sleep in a bit tomorrow and head into work to do 'adequate' job. Feeling good. Not sure why I've been sweating it."**

A sitting judge's public statement, the night before a court day, that she intended to arrive late and to perform her duties at a level she herself placed in quotation marks as "adequate," engages the standards of judicial decorum and diligence — Canon 1 (uphold the integrity of the judiciary), Canon 2A (act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary), and Canon 3B(1) (perform judicial duties diligently). Litigants whose matters were set before her the next day had no notice of the statement; it was published to the public at large. The posts also place her political engagement on the public record in late 2016 — months before the conduct at the center of this review: her 913 Canon 7 contributions began on January 26, 2017 (Section XII). This review takes no position on her politics; Canon 7 binds every judge regardless of party.

Source: @tennisbench public posts, September 26, 2016 (screen captures); exhibit of the September 26, 2016 post.

Traffic violations (2020–2025)

The May 19, 2025 stop-sign violation occurred 18 days after Tennis admitted the Canon 7 violations under oath at the JQC Investigative Panel hearing; she completed a four-hour online traffic-school course on June 8, 2025. Including her pre-judicial citations (speeding in 2000, a pedestrian violation in 2001, speeding in 2009, a parking-meter violation in 2008), Tennis accumulated at least six traffic or municipal violations over 25 years, two of them as a sitting judge.

Date	Case Number	Violation	Disposition
Mar 10, 2020	2020-TR-004096-A-E	Failed to yield — school zone	Traffic school
May 19, 2025	2025-TR-501903-A-O	Ran stop sign	Traffic school

XV. The Escalation and the Exit from the Bench (2025–2026)

What began as a stipulated public reprimand became, within a single year and on the same evidentiary record, a rejected sanction, an announced fine, an announced suspension, a sudden departure from the bench, and an agreement not to hold judicial office again. No new evidence was added at any step; the escalation turned entirely on how the Supreme Court of Florida viewed the sufficiency of the discipline the Commission had proposed.



The discipline arc on a single record, August 2024 – September 2026. **Note:** the June order is dated June 25, 2026; the fine amount and suspension length shown are estimates (see below) — the Supreme Court's orders state that it would impose a fine and a suspension but do not specify either figure.

The Supreme Court rejects the reprimand — twice

On **June 25, 2026**, the Supreme Court of Florida **rejected the Commission's stipulated reprimand** as insufficient, stating that in addition to a public reprimand it *"would impose*

a fine," and giving the parties 30 days (Chief Justice Muñiz and five justices concurring; Justice Tanenbaum dissenting). One week later, on **July 2, 2026**, the Court **vacated its own June 25 order** and went further: it stated that in addition to the reprimand it *"would impose a suspension and fine"* and again gave the parties 30 days to agree or report that no agreement had been reached. Both orders rested on the identical Findings and Recommendation and the parties' stipulation already before the Court; neither added any new factual record.

The order does not state a dollar figure or a suspension length. The nearest recent parallel is **Judge Stefanie Moon**, disciplined in 2025 after the same Court rejected a reprimand-plus-fine deal: her sanction was a public reprimand, a **$2,115 fine equal to her contributions**, and a 10-day unpaid suspension. On that pattern, a fine tracking Tennis's $29,154.76 in contributions is the reasonable estimate, and is the figure used in the graphic above. *The specific amounts remain estimates until an order fixes them; the documented facts are that the Court announced a fine, then a suspension and fine, on the existing record.*

No agreement, then a sudden exit

On **July 31, 2026**, the Commission's general counsel and Tennis's counsel jointly filed a Notice advising the Court that **no agreement on a sanction had been reached**, returning the matter to the Commission for a formal hearing. Rather than face that hearing and the suspension the Court had signaled, Tennis left the bench: her **last day was Friday, September 4, 2026**, with **retirement effective September 5, 2026** — roughly four months before her term would have ended in January 2027. She had already prepared her landing: on **June 16, 2026**, while still sitting and while SC2025-1438 was pending, she organized **"Diana M Tennis LLC"** (Fla. Div. of Corporations Doc. No. L26000331341), naming herself manager; by September 15, 2026 her Florida Bar profile listed the firm as a family-law "Private Law Practice." **The departure reached the public before her own court confirmed it.** The press reported the resignation on **September 3, 2026**; the next morning, **September 4**, the Ninth Circuit's Director of Court Services confirmed only that "Judge Tennis' last day is today" and stated that the court was **"not in receipt of Judge Tennis' resignation letter"** — it had been sent to Governor DeSantis. *Her term ran only to January 5, 2027, and her seat was already on the 2026 ballot, with the winner due to take the bench that January; a departure this late in the term left the seat's next full term to the voters' choice rather than to a gubernatorial appointment through the Judicial Nominating Commission, which would reach at most the few remaining months.*

On **September 28, 2026**, the Commission filed a **Notice of Voluntary Dismissal** of the charges (Filing #257998018), stating the basis verbatim: *"Judge Tennis['s] retirement from judicial office effective September 5, 2026, and her agreement to not hold future judicial office."* That recital is the operative source for the undertaking not to return to the bench.

By **October 2, 2026**, the change was reflected in the authoritative directory: the Florida Bar profile for Bar No. 966703 no longer listed Tennis as a member of the judiciary, showing instead **"Member in Good Standing"** and **"Eligible to Practice Law in Florida,"** with the circuit-court judicial position removed. *The disciplinary case itself, SC2025-1438, nonetheless remained open — the voluntary dismissal was on file, but the Supreme Court had not yet acted on it.*

The sealing of the evidence

A separate complaint transmitted to the Commission on **September 17, 2026** (by certified mail) framed what its author contends is the more serious matter: not the donations, but what happened to the evidence of them. In a dissolution case then before Judge Tennis (Case No. 2023-DR-004193-O), a litigant placed the FEC record of the 913 contributions into the **public** court file and moved to disqualify her. Hours later, opposing counsel moved to seal that filing "for the protection of the judicial branch" under Rule 2.420(c). The next morning — in chambers, with no hearing — Judge Tennis entered an order providing that the motion to seal was **"RESERVED FOR TRIAL"** rather than denied. Two days later she granted her own disqualification and the case was reassigned, so the reserved motion was never reached.

The complaint's contention — which it expressly frames as argument, not adjudicated fact — is that this was not a neutral deferral. Under Rule 2.420(d)(1)(B), a motion to determine confidentiality that has not been ruled on is treated by the clerk as presumptively confidential until the court rules. By reserving rather than denying, the order left the contribution record presumptively sealed, with no findings, no hearing, and no compelling-interest determination; and because an order that merely reserves a motion decides nothing, there was no final, appealable order — a litigant cannot appeal a non-ruling — which foreclosed appellate review and produced, in effect, a seal beyond the reach of ordinary correction. The complaint also raises a Canon 5 concern: that organizing a private law firm in June 2026, while still a sitting judge with discipline pending, is itself a breach of the rule against engaging in the practice of law.

Sources: Supreme Court of Florida orders of June 25, 2026 and July 2, 2026 (SC2025-1438); Notice to the Court, July 31, 2026 (Filing #253725376); JQC Notice of Voluntary Dismissal, Sep. 28, 2026 (Filing #257998018); JQC complaint re Canon 5 and sealing, transmitted Sep. 17, 2026; Florida Division of Corporations Doc. No. L26000331341 (Jun. 16, 2026); Florida Bar member profile, Bar No. 966703 (Sep. 15, 2026, and the directory status change recorded Oct. 2, 2026); Orlando Sentinel, Jul. 8, 2026; WESH, Sep. 3, 2026; Ninth Judicial Circuit, Director of Court Services, email of Sep. 4, 2026 (public-records response: "last day is today"; court not in receipt of the resignation letter); Art. V §§10–11, Fla. Const., and §105.051, Fla. Stat. (judicial terms and vacancies). Sanction amounts are estimated from In re Moon (2025) because the Tennis orders state none.

XVI. The Retirement Money (1992–2026)

Her final disclosure, filed the day after she left the bench, reported **$2,512,000 in retirement accounts**. One of them, a Florida Retirement System (FRS) Investment Plan

account valued at **$840,000**, appears on **none of her seven earlier disclosures**. Press coverage reported that she "kept her pension." This section sets out what the disclosures show, why the account surfaces only at the end, and how much of it is public money. Figures marked as estimates are calculated from the stated assumptions; everything else is taken from a named record.

Retirement accounts on each disclosure

Account (US$)	2013*	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (6F)
Fidelity 401K	950,000	1,580,000	1,775,000	1,435,000	1,448,000	1,448,000	1,446,000	1,445,000
Nationwide 457(b)	—	78,000	117,900	116,800	134,000	134,000	165,000	182,000
IRAs (Northwestern, Putnam)	28,140	20,000	32,200	25,050	31,600	31,600	43,000	45,000
FRS Investment Plan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	**840,000**
Total	978,140	1,678,000	1,925,100	1,576,850	1,613,600	1,613,600	1,654,000	**2,512,000**

** The 2013 Form 6 is her candidate filing, valued as of April 22, 2014, while she was in private practice. The 2019 Form 6 is her candidate re-election filing, valued as of December 31, 2019. The 2024 values are identical to the 2023 values to the dollar.*

Between December 31, 2025 and September 4, 2026 her retirement holdings rose by **$858,000**. The new FRS line accounts for **$840,000** of that increase.

Why the account appears only on the final form

The Commission on Ethics drew the reporting line in CEO 12-10 (April 4, 2012). Investment products held in IRAs, 401(k)s, the FRS Investment Plan and the state deferred-compensation plan must be reported once they exceed $1,000. The FRS Pension Plan need not be, because the member has no say in how it is invested and no practical way to know its present value.

Her FRS service falls in two periods: about two years as an assistant public defender (1992–1994), and January 5, 2015 to September 4, 2026 as a circuit judge. The 1992–1994 service predates the Investment Plan, which did not exist until 2002, so it was pension service in any event. For the judicial service, members hired before January 1, 2018 who made no plan choice were placed in the Pension Plan by default.

The omission of any FRS account from her 2015–2025 disclosures is therefore **lawful if she was in the Pension Plan**, and a **reporting failure if she was in the Investment Plan.**

The size of the account points to a converted pension (estimate)

FRS allows each member one change of plan during a career, the "2nd Election." When a member moves from the Pension Plan to the Investment Plan, "the present value of the member's Pension Plan benefit will become their opening account balance," which FRS describes as "an actuarial determination of the member's service credit," not the total of contributions paid in. The three possibilities produce very different balances:

How the account could have arisen	Basis	Estimated value, Sept. 2026
Investment Plan from January 2015	Statutory allocations of 13.23%–18.23% of salary (her 3% included), grown at 5%–9% a year	$390,000 – $480,000
Pension converted in 2026, post-2011 rules	11.7 yrs × 3.33% × $177,316 avg. salary = $68,900/yr, unreduced from age 65	$480,000 – $590,000
Pension converted in 2026, pre-2011 rules (1992–1994 service counted)	(11.7 yrs × 3.33% + 2 yrs × 1.60%) × $187,293 avg. = $78,800/yr, unreduced from age 62	$760,000 – $910,000
Disclosed on Form 6F		**$840,000**

Assumptions: born September 1966 (Section I), so about 60 at departure; discount rates of 6.5%–7.0%, bracketing the 6.70% FRS assumed return; a range of female mortality; cost-of-living adjustment only on the pre-2011 service. These are the author's estimates, not FRS figures.

Inference: only the converted-pension case reaches $840,000. The account is most consistent with a Pension Plan benefit converted to an Investment Plan balance through the 2nd Election in 2026, valued under the pre-2011 rules that her assistant-public-defender years would bring into play. Her FRS service history would confirm both points.

When the switch had to be made

A 2nd Election is valid only if the member is "actively employed and earning salary and service credit when the enrollment form is received." Her 2025 Form 6, valued December 31, 2025, lists no Investment Plan account; her Form 6F, valued September 4, 2026, lists one. If the 2025 form was complete, the election was made between January 1 and September 4, 2026 — a window framed by the discipline:

Date (2026)	Event
June 7	Domain dianatennisresolutions.com created
June 16	Diana M Tennis LLC organized, with Tennis as manager
June 25	Supreme Court: in addition to the reprimand it "would impose a fine"
July 2	Supreme Court vacates that order: it "would impose a suspension and fine"
July 31	Joint notice: no agreement on sanction; matter returns to the Commission
Sept. 3	Departure announced
Sept. 4	Last day on the bench (Form 6F)
Sept. 5	Form 6F filed, listing the $840,000 FRS Investment Plan; "retirement" effective (JQC)
Sept. 28	JQC dismissal recites her "retirement" and "agreement to not hold future judicial office"

The date of the election is in FRS records, not in the disclosures. *Whether it came before or after the Court's June 25 and July 2 orders is the open question.*

What the conversion changes

Under the Pension Plan she would have received a monthly benefit — unreduced at normal retirement age (62 under the pre-2011 rules, 65 under the post-2011 rules) and reduced 5% for each year taken earlier. Under the Investment Plan the balance belongs to her and can be withdrawn or rolled over once she leaves FRS-covered employment, and the conversion costs the member nothing out of pocket. *Estimate: had she stayed in the Pension Plan under the pre-2011 rules, her benefit would have been about $78,800 a year ($6,600 a month) from age 62. Converted, it is an $840,000 balance available on separation.*

Whose money it is

FRS was noncontributory until July 1, 2011, so her 1992–1994 service cost her nothing. From January 2015 she paid 3% of salary: about **$59,300** on roughly $1.98 million of judicial pay — about **7% of the $840,000.** The remaining $780,700, about **93%**, derives from employer funding and the investment earnings on it. In fiscal 2025–26 the State's FRS contribution rate for judges was 46.14% of salary, about $92,700 on her pay, covering the normal cost, the unfunded liability and the health-insurance subsidy. On either reading of the record, the share traceable to her own paycheck is about 7%; the rest rests on public money.

Forfeiture: an open question

Article II, §8(d) of the Florida Constitution and §112.3173, Florida Statutes, provide for forfeiture of public retirement benefits. Section 112.3173(3) reaches an officer "convicted of a specified offense" and also one "whose office or employment is terminated by reason of his or her admitted commission, aid, or abetment of a specified offense." Section 112.3173(2)(e)5 lists "the committing of an impeachable offense," and Article III, §17 makes circuit judges liable to impeachment for "misdemeanor in office."

She admitted the violations under oath on May 1, 2025 (Section XII); the JQC's dismissal recites "retirement" as the basis for ending the case. *One commentator read the impeachable-offense clause as requiring an actual impeachment by the Senate; the statute's text speaks of "the committing" of such an offense and separately reaches a termination "by reason of" an admitted one. No record reviewed shows that any public body has taken up the question, and this review does not decide it.* The choice of the word "retirement" carries a second consequence: Article V, §2(b) lets the Chief Justice assign "consenting retired justices or judges" to temporary duty. The dismissal recites an agreement "to not hold future judicial office," but the agreement itself is not in the court file, so whether it also bars service as a retired judge on temporary assignment is not shown.

What leaving early cost, and what it kept

Leaving on September 4 rather than at the end of her term on January 5, 2027 gave up 122 days of salary at $200,836.08 a year — about **$67,129 gross** (*estimated $47,400–$48,700*

after federal income and payroll taxes). It avoided the fine (estimated in Section XV near her $29,154.76 in contributions) and an unpaid suspension of unstated length. It kept **$2,512,000 in disclosed retirement accounts**, including the **$840,000 FRS balance.**

Records that would settle the open points

- Her FRS service history, including whether the 1992–1994 service is credited.
- Her plan-election history, with the date and amount of any 2nd Election transfer.
- Any distributions or rollovers from her FRS account after September 4, 2026.
- Her written notice to the Governor ending her service.
- The agreement recited in the JQC dismissal.
- Her 2015–2018 and 2020 Forms 6 (Commission filing IDs 574796, 620033, 631949, 669654, 705968, 808183).

Sources: Florida Forms 6, 2013 (sworn Apr. 23, 2014), 2019 (filed Apr. 13, 2020), 2021–2025, and Form 6F (filed Sep. 5, 2026); Commission on Ethics, CEO 12-10 (Apr. 4, 2012); MyFRS ("Second Election," "1st Election," "Plan Funding"); §121.72, Fla. Stat.; FRS contribution rates eff. July 1, 2025 (Judges class, employer 46.14%); §112.3173, Fla. Stat.; Art. II §8(d), Art. III §17 and Art. V §2(b), Fla. Const.; JQC Notice of Voluntary Dismissal, Filing #257998018 (Sep. 28, 2026); Just the News, Sep. 29–30, 2026. Pension values, contribution totals and after-tax figures are the author's estimates from the stated assumptions.

XVII. Pattern Analysis

The public record reveals a consistent behavioral pattern spanning thirty-five years: provocation or exposure, escalation, use of process to manage the record, and a narrow escape — repeated across law school, private practice, and the bench.

Period	Incident	Resolution
1990–91	Worthless check; arrest warrant; counter-sued the landlord with taxpayer-funded legal aid	Nolle prosequi before graduation
2001–04	DUI at .185 BAC, two days after the Saint Nattis sentencing	Joined mass Intoxilyzer challenge; breath test suppressed
2009	Public blowback in the Casey Anthony matter	Withdrew; speeding ticket same month
2017–21	913 Canon 7 violations; $50K+ in household political donations	Stipulated to a single public reprimand
2024	The contribution record placed in a public court file	Motion to seal "reserved," not denied; record kept out of view
2026	Supreme Court rejects the reprimand; signals suspension and fine	Leaves the bench before the hearing; agrees not to hold judicial office again

The earlier editions of this review closed with a question about where that pattern would lead, noting that the subject then served as administrative head of the Domestic Relations Division and faced election in 2026. The record now answers it. Confronted

with discipline that escalated from a reprimand to a suspension on the same evidence she had already admitted, Judge Tennis did not contest the facts, seek a hearing, or stand for re-election. She organized a private firm while still on the bench, left without serving out her term, and accepted a bar on returning to judicial office. *The final chapter is of a piece with the thirty-five years before it: when accountability finally became unavoidable, the response was once again to manage the exit rather than answer the record — this time by leaving the bench on her own terms, four months early, and closing the door behind her.*

XVIII. References

1. Florida Department of Corrections Record, Case No. 019008215MMA.
2. Alachua County Court, Case No. 01-1990-MM-008215-A (nolle prosequi Nov. 15, 1991); Alachua County Small Claims, Case No. 01-90-03874-SC.
3. Orange County Circuit Court, Case No. CT-2001-26631-E (DUI); Ninth Judicial Circuit Case Nos. TEO1-020631, CIO-02-2589, CJAP 02-97.
4. *Orlando Sentinel*, Nov. 30 and Dec. 4, 2001; reporting on the federal competency hearing (U.S. Magistrate Glazebrook).
5. *State v. Muldowny*, 871 So. 2d 911 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004); Short, Charles, "Guilt by Machine," 61 Fla. L. Rev. 177 (2009).
6. Seminole County Official Records; 18th Judicial Circuit, Case No. 59-2010-CA-002931-14-K; Orange County Marriage License 2010-ML-007221-O.
7. R.H. Donnelley Publishing v. Diana M. Tennis, Case No. 2004-CA-003228-O; Reed Elsevier Inc. v. Law Office of Diana M. Tennis P.A. (Apr. 25, 2005).
8. *Gonzalez v. Anthony*, Case No. 08-CA-24573 (Dominic Casey motion filed Jun. 11, 2009; Morgan & Morgan motion to compel Sep. 11, 2009; Strickland in-camera order Feb. 18, 2009).
9. Florida Division of Elections, Campaign Finance Records, Circuit 9 Group 32 (2014); *Orlando Sentinel* YouTube, Circuit Judge debate (Jul. 17, 2014).
10. Torres v. Gomez, 5D18-2501; Wright v. Wright, 5D18-3354; Nieves v. Guthrie, 5D20-1667; Temple v. Melchione, 6D23-2180.
11. Florida Form 6 Financial Disclosure, CY 2019 (filed Apr. 13, 2020); Orange County Comptroller Doc #20200647238, #20210605059.
12. FEC Individual Contributor Records (ActBlue), contributors Tennis, Diana; Cybrynski, Michael (913 contributions, $29,154.76, Jan. 26, 2017 – Jan. 31, 2021).
13. Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, Cases 2024-714, 2024-767; Supreme Court of Florida, SC2025-1438 (orders Jun. 25, 2026 and Jul. 2, 2026; Notice to Court Jul. 31, 2026, Filing #253725376; Notice of Voluntary Dismissal Sep. 28, 2026, Filing #257998018).
14. JQC complaint re Canon 5 and the sealing of the Canon 7 evidence, transmitted Sep. 17, 2026; underlying dissolution Case No. 2023-DR-004193-O (Orange County); sealing-sequence filings #204482114, #204508525, #204590429, #204794462, #204795117 (Aug. 12–15, 2024).
15. Florida Division of Corporations, Diana M Tennis LLC, Doc. No. L26000331341 (Jun. 16, 2026); Florida Bar member profile, Diana Michelle Tennis, Bar No. 966703 (admitted Nov. 20, 1992; profile printed Sep. 15, 2026).
16. *In re Moon*, Supreme Court of Florida (2025) (public reprimand, $2,115 fine, 10-day suspension) — cited as the sanction comparator.
17. *Orlando Sentinel*, Jul. 8, 2026 ("Florida high court wants Orange judge suspended"); WESH, Sep. 3, 2026 ("Florida judge resigns after suspension ordered").

18. Tampa Bay Times and Tampa Tribune archives, 1980–1985 (32 citations); Open Ninth Podcast, Episode 46 (Apr. 23, 2018).
19. Florida Forms 6, Diana Michelle Tennis: 2013 candidate filing (sworn Apr. 23, 2014); 2019 candidate filing (filed Apr. 13, 2020); 2021 (filed Jun. 21, 2022); 2022–2025 (filed Jun. 1, 2023; Jun. 4, 2024; Jun. 3, 2025; May 15, 2026); Form 6F final disclosure (filed Sep. 5, 2026). Filing history: disclosure.floridaethics.gov.
20. Florida Commission on Ethics, CEO 12-10 (Apr. 4, 2012) (reporting of defined-contribution versus defined-benefit retirement plans on Form 6).
21. MyFRS, “Second Election,” “1st Election” (default plan by hire date), and “Plan Funding” (Investment Plan contribution rates), myfrs.com.
22. §121.72, Fla. Stat. (Investment Plan allocation rates); FRS contribution rates effective July 1, 2025 (Judges class, employer 46.14%).
23. §112.3173, Fla. Stat. (2025); Art. II §8(d), Art. III §17, and Art. V §2(b), Fla. Const.
24. Just the News, “Florida judge who made more than 900 donations to Democrats quits before suspension, keeps pension” (Sep. 29–30, 2026).

Public Record Review — Circuit Judge Diana Michelle Tennis, Ninth Judicial Circuit, Orange County, Florida. Compiled by Devo Seereeram, Ph.D., P.E., from public records. First compiled March 19, 2026; this edition October 3, 2026, adds the Supreme Court escalation (SC2025-1438), the September 2026 departure from the bench and agreement not to hold future judicial office, and the Canon 5 / sealing complaint. Documented facts are sourced above; inferences and estimated sanction figures are labeled as such.

ADDENDUM

New public records obtained after the October 3, 2026 edition

This addendum supplements **Section XV (The Escalation and the Exit from the Bench)** with records obtained after the body of this Review was finalized. It (1) adds the facts of Judge Tennis's mediator certification and (2) updates the disposition of SC2025-1438.

XV-A. A mediator credential assembled while still on the bench

The firm was not the only piece already in place. On an application **sworn August 25, 2026 — while she was still a sitting Ninth Circuit judge**, as her own cover letter stated — Tennis sought Florida Supreme Court certification as a family mediator. The Dispute Resolution Center received the application on **August 28, 2026** and certified her (Family Mediator No. 7388 F) effective **September 4, 2026 — the same Friday the court confirmed as her last day on the bench.** The qualifying steps were likewise taken on the bench: the 40-hour certified family-mediation training was completed **July 25, 2026** (provider Gregory Firestone), and the four required live-mediation observations occurred **August 4–25, 2026**, in pending family cases. The Florida Bar Certificate of Good Standing she submitted (August 22, 2026) states on its face that she was "not eligible to practice law… based on… Canon 5G." The credential was thus assembled while she sat under the Supreme Court's pending discipline and dated to take effect the day she left — the same Canon 5 concern the complaint raises as to the June 16 law firm.

The sworn application also answered **"No"** to whether she had ever been "sanctioned or disciplined for a breach of ethics… by any court… or bar association," though SC2025-1438 was then pending on found probable cause, with two Supreme Court orders (June 25 and July 2, 2026) announcing a suspension and fine. The application is reproduced as an exhibit to this Review and is posted in full.

XV-B. Disposition of SC2025-1438 — dismissed October 6, 2026

The October 3, 2026 edition noted that the disciplinary case remained open and that the Supreme Court had not yet acted on the Commission's voluntary dismissal. **That is now superseded:** on **October 6, 2026**, the Supreme Court of Florida entered an order voluntarily dismissing the notice of formal charges in SC2025-1438 (Couriel, C.J., and Labarga, Muñiz, Grosshans, Francis, Barrios, and Tanenbaum, JJ., concurring), closing the case without any merits adjudication.

Added sources. Florida Supreme Court Dispute Resolution Center, Application for Mediator Certification of Diana M. Tennis (Family Mediator No. 7388 F) — sworn Aug. 25, 2026; received Aug. 28, 2026; certified effective Sep. 4, 2026 — obtained by public-records request (DRC response, Oct. 13, 2026). Supreme Court of Florida order, Oct. 6, 2026 (SC2025-1438), dismissing the notice of formal charges.