

By [Patrick Anderson](#)[Print Page](#)

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Providence lawyer McKenna suspended for a year

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PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Rhode Island Supreme Court Friday suspended the law license of former state representative and Providence Municipal Court Judge Keven A. McKenna for one year, culminating a long-running professional misconduct case.

In a 37-page decision, a four-justice majority found that McKenna had deliberately tried to disrupt and delay a Workers' Compensation Court proceeding, failed to disclose income to a U.S. Bankruptcy Court, ignored a subpoena and conducted his law practice under an unauthorized limited liability corporation, among other things.

"The integrity of the justice system is not served when an attorney, who has been sworn to tell the whole truth in a proceeding, refuses to answer simple, straightforward questions, whether posed by the court or by opposing counsel," the court wrote in its decision. "Nor is it served by an attorney who disregards an order of this Court, fails to respond to a subpoena, or deliberately misrepresents his assets to a bankruptcy trustee."

The sanction, however, was less severe than Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg, who wrote a partial dissent in the case, thought was warranted.

"In the face of this egregious misconduct, this sanction does scant justice and overlooks the sad fact that this lawyer of many years refuses or is unable to accept the authority of the Supreme Court over the conduct of attorneys," Goldberg wrote. "In my opinion, this sanction amounts to a slap on the wrist."

Goldberg said she thought McKenna should have been suspended for two years.

The assistant disciplinary counsel in the case had recommended McKenna be disbarred, according to the ruling.

Reached by phone Friday evening, McKenna disputed the facts and reasoning of the decision, which he called "retaliation" for his criticism of the court.

"They took everything out of context and are using that as an excuse to get at me for criticism of them," McKenna said. "I am the only attorney that the Supreme Court has ever hired a special prosecutor to look for little allegations against. I'll be back. I am not finished with them."

McKenna's suspension begins in 30 days and after it is over, he will need to apply for reinstatement.

panderson@providencejournal.com

On Twitter: [@patrickanderso_](#)



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Keven A. McKenna

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