

# Former judicial ethics chief files suit claiming Colorado justices, other officials conspired to hide misconduct

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*The former judicial ethics chief in Colorado has filed a lawsuit alleging that Colorado Supreme Court justices “engaged in a conspiracy intended to absolve themselves of any accountability” in a scheme to conceal information about a lucrative contract with a departing court administrative official. (Image from Shutterstock)*

The former judicial ethics chief in Colorado has filed a lawsuit alleging that Colorado Supreme Court justices “engaged in a conspiracy intended to absolve themselves of any accountability” in a scheme to conceal information about a lucrative contract with a departing court administrative official.

Christopher S.P. Gregory, the former executive director of the Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline, an independent

judicial disciplinary agency in Colorado, alleges in the Oct. 23 suit that the justices engaged in a “scheme to suppress evidence of their substantial criminal and ethical misconduct” in the matter.

Colorado justices concealed information about the contract from the Colorado Office of the State Auditor and from the Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline, the suit says. By retaliating against Gregory, the justices obstructed the investigation of possible judicial ethics offenses, according to the suit.

Law360 and Courthouse News Service have coverage.

The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado, names as defendants the current justices on the Colorado Supreme Court, as well as former Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Coats. Other defendants include Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser and other Colorado officials.

Gregory said he is a whistleblower who was wrongly terminated as part of a conspiracy to deprive him of his right to freedom of expression, to petition for grievances, to equal protection and to due process. Retaliation against him also included harassment, intimidation, creation of a hostile work environment, blackballing and defamation, he alleges in the suit.

The alleged conspiracy stems from a contract of up to \$2.75 million for leadership training that was to be paid to outgoing chief of staff Mindy Masias of the Colorado State Court Administrator's Office, according to the suit. Masias was being fired for "financial irregularities," according to a [2024 story by the Denver Gazette](#).

She had been accused of falsifying a receipt seeking reimbursement, the suit says. She also approved a favorable separation agreement for an employee with knowledge of damaging information, according to Courthouse News Service.

The contract with Masias was rescinded in 2019.

"The issue exploded in 2021," the Denver Gazette reported, "with the revelation that the contract was allegedly a quid pro quo scheme designed to prevent that executive—then-chief of staff Mindy Masias—from revealing in a tell-all sex-discrimination lawsuit years of judicial misconduct that went unreported or were handled quietly."

The Colorado justices "collaborated on damage control" after the allegations became public, the suit says.

All the defendants "have a long history of conspiring to suppress evidence of judicial, attorney and official misconduct through patterns of publicly funded hush money (i.e. [nondisclosure agreements], self-controlled investigations and self-serving public relations strategies," the suit alleges.

The obstruction and violations of the False Claims Act "have included repeated retaliation against the plaintiff for his duty-bound pursuit of discipline against the justices."

An independent investigation later concluded that Coats didn't agree to the contract to silence Masias, and the contract was not a quid pro quo, the [Denver Gazette reported in 2022](#). Instead, the deal was intended to keep an employee with valuable experience employed, the investigation concluded.

Coats was censured by a special tribunal in August 2023 for allowing the contract to go forward and for failing to disclose it to the state auditor the and state attorney general, Law360 reported in a prior article.

A spokesperson for the Colorado Supreme Court did not immediately respond to the ABA Journal's request for comment.