

West Virginia's Entire Supreme Court Just Got Impeached For Corruption

The four justices allegedly spent more than \$1 million in taxpayer funds on office renovations.

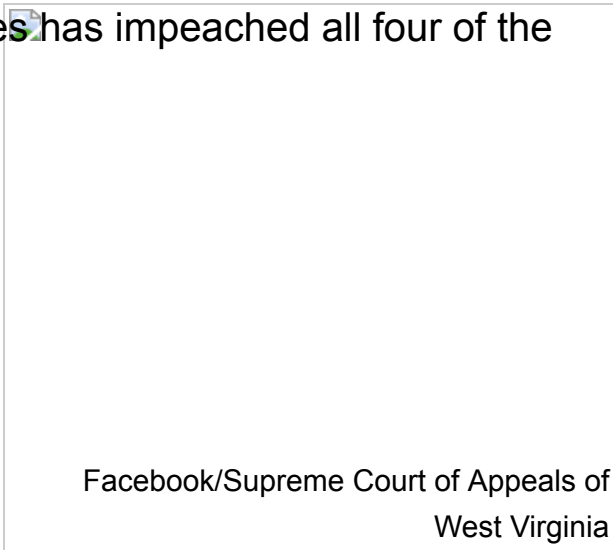
Joe Setyon |

West Virginia's House of Delegates has impeached all four of the state's Supreme Court justices, who allegedly abused their authority and used taxpayer funds for personal gain.

Fourteen **articles** of impeachment were brought up against Chief Justice Margaret Workman and Justices Allen

Loughry, Robin Davis, and Elizabeth Walker of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia. Eleven of those articles were officially adopted last night and this morning, putting the justices' fates in the hands of the state Senate. Davis has already **retired** from her post. Another former justice, Menis Ketchum, **resigned** last month and admitted to defrauding the state.

Of the four justices impeached this week, Loughry is probably in the most trouble. According to the articles of impeachment, he wasted more than \$363,000 of taxpayer funds on office renovations, including a \$32,000 couch. He's also accused of misusing government vehicles and computer equipment, taking a desk from



Facebook/Supreme Court of Appeals of
West Virginia

his office home with him, and lying to the state's House Finance Committee when questioned about his alleged wrongdoing.

Loughry is facing something worse than just removal from office. In June, he was **indicted** on multiple counts of fraud. His case is somewhat ironic, considering that he's the **author** of a 2006 book about political corruption in West Virginia.

Davis, meanwhile, allegedly spent \$500,000 to renovate her office. Workman and Walker were also accused of unnecessarily spending large amounts of state funds to remodel their offices (\$111,000 and \$131,000, respectively). But they were cleared, as those sums were considerably less than what Loughry and Davis allegedly spent.

The justices aren't just accused of overspending on themselves. The House of Delegates also approved impeachment articles charging Loughry, Workman, and Davis with overpaying senior status judges (who are retired but still preside over some cases) for their work.

Walker was the **last** of the justices to be impeached. The House said that she, along with her colleagues, failed "to provide or prepare reasonable and proper supervisory oversight" of the Supreme Court of Appeals and its "subordinate courts."

"This is indeed a sad day and certainly no cause for anyone to celebrate," Del. John Shott (R-27), chairman of the state's House Judiciary Committee, **told** *The New York Times*. "But it is our duty, and I think the public demands it."

There is also a significant timing issue at play with the impeachment proceedings and subsequent state Senate hearings. As NPR **notes**, West Virginia has until the end of today to set up a special election to replace any departing justices. If that deadline isn't met, Gov. Jim Justice, a Republican, will be able to appoint judges to fill the open seats.

In **announcing** her retirement, Davis explained that she wanted West Virginians to "be afforded their constitutional right to elect my successor in November." State officials have already scheduled a special election to replace Ketchum.

Photo Credit: Facebook/Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia