

**RCW 7.21.040 Punitive sanctions—Fines.** (1) Except as otherwise provided in RCW 7.21.050, a punitive sanction for contempt of court may be imposed only pursuant to this section.

(2) (a) An action to impose a punitive sanction for contempt of court shall be commenced by a complaint or information filed by the prosecuting attorney or city attorney charging a person with contempt of court and reciting the punitive sanction sought to be imposed.

(b) If there is probable cause to believe that a contempt has been committed, the prosecuting attorney or city attorney may file the information or complaint on his or her own initiative or at the request of a person aggrieved by the contempt.

(c) A request that the prosecuting attorney or the city attorney commence an action under this section may be made by a judge presiding in an action or proceeding to which a contempt relates. If required for the administration of justice, the judge making the request may appoint a special counsel to prosecute an action to impose a punitive sanction for contempt of court.

A judge making a request pursuant to this subsection shall be disqualified from presiding at the trial.

(d) If the alleged contempt involves disrespect to or criticism of a judge, that judge is disqualified from presiding at the trial of the contempt unless the person charged consents to the judge presiding at the trial.

(3) The court may hold a hearing on a motion for a remedial sanction jointly with a trial on an information or complaint seeking a punitive sanction.

(4) A punitive sanction may be imposed for past conduct that was a contempt of court even though similar present conduct is a continuing contempt of court.

(5) If the defendant is found guilty of contempt of court under this section, the court may impose for each separate contempt of court a fine of not more than five thousand dollars or imprisonment for up to three hundred sixty-four days, or both. [2011 c 96 § 3; 2009 c 37 § 1; 1989 c 373 § 4.]

**Findings—Intent—2011 c 96:** See note following RCW 9A.20.021.