



NEW YORK STATE  
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Judicial Conduct Commission Releases Annual Report of Activity in 2021

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In the Annual Report of its activities for 2021, released today, the Commission on Judicial Conduct reported the following:

- 1,938 new complaints were received and processed.
- 375 preliminary inquiries were conducted.<sup>1</sup>
- 302 full-fledged investigations were undertaken: 125 new ones and 177 carried forward from 2020.
- 13 judges resigned and publicly agreed never to return to judicial office.
- 10 other judges resigned while complaints were pending, where it had not been determined permanent departure from office was warranted or appropriate.<sup>2</sup>
- 4 judges were publicly censured or admonished.
- 20 judges were issued confidential cautionary letters.
- 191 matters were pending at year's end.

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<sup>1</sup> Defined in the Commission rules as the preliminary analysis, clarification and fact-finding activity intended to aid the Commission in determining whether or not to investigate a complaint.

<sup>2</sup> The Commission notifies such judges that proceedings would resume if they return to the bench.

### **Operating Throughout the Pandemic: 2-Year Statistics**

Well before 2020, the Commission had adopted a digitized/paperless records system, and both members and staff were already connected electronically to the agency servers and one another through a Virtual Private Network (VPN). When the coronavirus pandemic forced much of state government into an involuntary hiatus in March 2020, the Commission seamlessly adjusted its operations to a hybrid model, rotating between working from home and in the office. Meetings, depositions and hearings were conducted via video platforms rather than in person, and most written/documentary communications were transmitted electronically.

Thus, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Commission has met its responsibilities without interruption. Indeed, over the past two years:

- 3,442 new complaints were received and processed.
- 693 preliminary inquiries were conducted.
- 245 new investigations were authorized.
- 2 judges were removed from office for egregious misconduct.
- 22 judges resigned and publicly agreed never to return to office.
- 17 judges were publicly censured or admonished.
- 54 judges were issued confidential cautionary letters.

Established in the State Constitution as an independent agency in 1978, the Commission evaluates and investigates complaints of misconduct against judges of the state unified court system and, where appropriate, disciplines such judges for ethics violations. Through 2021, it rendered public decisions against 903 judges, including 175 who were removed from office and 110 who resigned and publicly agreed never to return to the bench.

All Commission decisions and the Annual Report are available on the agency's website: [www.cjc.ny.gov](http://www.cjc.ny.gov).<sup>3</sup>

### **Commentary**

In addition to summaries of the year's public disciplines, confidential cautions and statistics, the 2022 Annual Report comments on the requirement for all judges (except those serving in town or village courts) to file annual financial statements in a timely manner and the perils of social media.

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<sup>3</sup> The website and Annual Report also report on cases decided by two predecessor commissions, beginning with a legislatively-created temporary commission on judicial conduct in 1975, whose dockets were carried over to the current Commission.

### **The Commission's Budget**

This year, after mutually respectful and substantive communications evincing the Governor's appreciation of the Commission's constitutional mandate and independence, the Executive Budget recommended the \$7,189,000 appropriation the Commission requested. This represents an increase of \$840,000, which will allow the Commission to fill vacant positions after years of attrition due to underfunding, implement a much-needed electronic case-management system, upgrade its records-keeping software, and meet mandated increases in rent and other contractual obligations.

### **Statement by Commission Chairman Joseph W. Belluck**

"Faith in the integrity of the courts is fundamental to the rule of law. The work of the Judicial Conduct Commission has continued unabated during two years of pandemic challenges, helping to promote public confidence in a judiciary that is both independent and accountable, as well as judicial confidence in the Commission's fairness. I thank my dedicated fellow Commission members and our talented staff for unfailingly meeting their commitments."

### **Statement by Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian**

"Judges wield great power and are held to higher standards of conduct than any other public officials. The vast majority discharge their responsibilities capably and honorably. By appropriately disciplining the relative few who fall short, the Commission plays a critical role in enhancing respect for the administration of justice."

### **Office Addresses**

The Commission's offices are located at the following addresses:

61 Broadway Suite 1200 New York, NY 10006	Corning Tower, Suite 2301 Empire State Plaza Albany, NY 12223	400 Andrews Street Suite 700 Rochester, NY 14604
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### **Commission Members**

There are 11 members of the Commission on Judicial Conduct. Four are appointed by the Governor, three by the Chief Judge and four by the leaders of the Legislature. Members serve overlapping 4-year terms and are eligible for re-appointment. The present Commission members are:

Joseph W. Belluck, Esq., *Chair*

Taa Grays, Esq., *Vice Chair*

Hon. Fernando M. Camacho

Jodie Corngold

Hon. John A. Falk

Hon. Angela M. Mazzarelli

Hon. Robert J. Miller

Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq.

Ronald J. Rosenberg, Esq.

Graham B. Seiter, Esq.<sup>4</sup>

Akosua Garcia Yeboah

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<sup>4</sup> On May 4, 2021, Mr. Seiter was appointed to succeed Paul B. Harding, Jr., Esq., whose term ended on March 31, 2021.