



NEW YORK STATE  
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

ROBERT H. TEMBECKJIAN  
ADMINISTRATOR & COUNSEL

CORNING TOWER, SUITE 2301  
EMPIRE STATE PLAZA  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12223

MARISA E. HARRISON  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

518-453-4600 518-299-1757  
TELEPHONE FACSIMILE  
[www.cjc.ny.gov](http://www.cjc.ny.gov)

## NEWS RELEASE

*March 8, 2022*

**Contact:**

***Marisa E. Harrison, Public Information Officer***  
*(518) 288-8658*

### **Hamilton County, Family & Surrogate's Court Judge Should Be Admonished for Improper Political Activity**

---

The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that Tatiana Coffinger, a Judge of the County, Family and Surrogate's Courts, Hamilton County, should be admonished for (1) inappropriately soliciting contributions on behalf of the Hamilton County Republican Committee and (2) distributing misleading campaign literature.

Judge Coffinger agreed to the admonition.

During her 2019 campaign for judge of the Hamilton County, Family and Surrogate's Courts, Judge Coffinger (1) violated the prohibition on political fundraising by advertising tickets up to \$35 apiece for a local Republican picnic and (2) distributed a misleading sample ballot that falsely identified one of her Republican primary opponents as a Democrat shortly before the election.

In admonishing Judge Coffinger, the Commission noted that she acknowledged her misconduct.

Judge Coffinger has been a Judge of the County, Family and Surrogate's Courts, Hamilton County, since 2020. Her current term expires on December 31, 2030. She previously served as a Justice of the Indian Lake Town Court from July to December 2018.

### **Statement by Commission Administrator**

Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian made the following statement.

“Faith in the integrity of our elections and therefore in our elected officials is easily undermined when a candidate knowingly misleads the public to assume high office, even if we could not determine that the misinformation produced the margin of victory. Judge Coffinger should have known better than to approve an obviously inaccurate sample ballot, and it is well that she accepts responsibility for it.”

### **The Commission Proceedings**

Judge Coffinger was served with a Formal Written Complaint dated December 7, 2021, containing two charges.

On January 25, 2022, the Administrator of the Commission, Judge Coffinger and her attorney entered into an Agreed Statement of Facts, stipulating to the facts and sanction and waiving further submissions and oral argument.

The Commission accepted the Agreed Statement on February 3, 2022.

### **The Commission Determination**

The Commission filed a determination dated February 23, 2022, in which all eleven members concurred: Joseph W. Belluck, Esq. (the Commission Chair), Taa Grays, Esq. (the Vice Chair), Judge Fernando M. Camacho, Jodie Corngold, Judge John A. Falk, Judge Angela M. Mazzarelli, Judge Robert J. Miller, Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq., Ronald J. Rosenberg, Esq., Graham B. Seiter, Esq., and Akosua Garcia Yeboah.

### **Court of Appeals Review**

The Commission transmitted its determination to the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, pursuant to Judiciary Law Section 44, subdivision 7. The Commission

was notified on March 7, 2022, that Judge Coffinger had received the determination. Consequently, the matter is now public.

A judge may either accept the Commission's determination or, within 30 days from receipt, make a written request to the Chief Judge for a review of the determination by the Court of Appeals.

Pursuant to Judiciary Law Section 44, subdivision 7, if Judge Coffinger does not request review by the Court of Appeals, the Commission will admonish her in accordance with the determination.

If a Commission determination is reviewed by the Court of Appeals, the Court may accept the determined sanction, impose a different sanction including admonition, censure or removal, or impose no sanction.

### **Statistics Relating to Prior Determinations**

Since 1978, the Commission has issued 280 determinations of admonition against judges in New York State. The Commission has issued 176 determinations of removal and 340 determinations of censure.

The Court of Appeals has reviewed 101 Commission determinations. The Court accepted the Commission's sanctions in 85 cases (76 of which were removals, six were censures and three were admonitions). Of the remaining 16 cases, two sanctions were increased from censure to removal, and 13 were reduced: nine removal determinations were modified to censure, one removal was modified to admonition, two censures were modified to admonition, and one censure was rejected and the charges dismissed. The Court remitted one matter to the Commission for further proceedings.

### **Counsel**

Judge Coffinger was represented by William J. Dreyer of Dreyer Boyajian, LLP, 75 Columbia Street, Albany, New York 12210, (518) 463-7784.

The Commission was represented by Robert H. Tembeckjian, Administrator and Counsel to the Commission; Cathleen S. Cenci, Deputy Administrator in Charge of the Albany office; and Senior Attorney Kathleen E. Klein. Investigator Laura Misjak was assigned to the case.

**Background Information on Judge Coffinger**

|                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| First Took Office:         | 2020                      |
| Current Term Expires:      | December 31, 2030         |
| Prior Judicial Experience: |                           |
| Indian Lake Town Court     | July 2018 – December 2018 |
| Year Admitted to NYS Bar:  | 2001                      |

**Members of the Commission**

The Commission members serve four-year terms. A list of members is appended.

**The Public File**

The determination is attached. The record of the proceedings upon which the determination is based is available for inspection by appointment during regular business hours at the Commission's three offices:

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 61 Broadway<br>Suite 1200<br>New York, New York 10006 | Corning Tower, Suite 2301<br>Empire State Plaza<br>Albany, New York 12223 | 400 Andrews Street<br>Suite 700<br>Rochester, New York 14604 |
|---|---|--|

**MEMBERS OF THE STATE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

| <b>Member</b>                  | <b>Appointing Authority</b>                     | <b>Term End</b> |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Joseph W. Belluck, Esq., Chair | Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo                 | March 31, 2024  |
| Taa Grays, Esq., Vice Chair    | Senate President Pro Tem Andrea Stewart-Cousins | March 31, 2023  |
| Hon. Fernando M. Camacho       | Chief Judge Janet DiFiore                       | March 31, 2024  |
| Jodie Corngold                 | Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo                 | March 31, 2023  |
| Hon. John A. Falk              | Chief Judge Janet DiFiore                       | March 31, 2025  |
| Hon. Angela M. Mazzarelli      | Chief Judge Janet DiFiore                       | March 31, 2022  |
| Hon. Robert J. Miller          | Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo                 | March 31, 2022  |
| Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq.        | Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie                | March 31, 2022  |
| Ronald J. Rosenberg, Esq.      | Former Senate Minority Leader John J. Flanagan  | March 31, 2024  |
| Graham B. Seiter, Esq.         | Assembly Minority Leader William A. Barclay     | March 31, 2025  |
| Akosua Garcia Yeboah           | Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo                 | March 31, 2025  |