



NEW YORK STATE
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Town Justice in Columbia County Resigns While Under Investigation for Sexual Misconduct

George K. Wittlinger, a Justice of the Ancram Town Court, Columbia County, resigned while under investigation by the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct for allegedly encouraging a minor to have sex with his teenage son, offering her gifts and money in exchange for sexual favors, and providing her with alcoholic beverages.

The Commission apprised Judge Wittlinger in December 2021 that it was investigating, and he was scheduled to appear for testimony on January 12, 2022. Instead, he tendered his resignation and left office on December 31, 2021, agreeing never to seek or accept judicial office at any time in the future. The Commission accepted a stipulation to that effect, signed by the judge and the Commission's Administrator, and closed its investigation.¹

Judge Wittlinger waived the statutory provision of confidentiality applicable to Commission proceedings, to the limited extent that the stipulation and Commission's order accepting it and closing the case would be public.

¹ The Stipulation was signed on January 24, 2022. The Commission accepted it and issued an order closing the matter on February 3, 2022.

The Commission's investigation involved the same subject matter as that which was set forth in a civil complaint filed against Judge Wittlinger, *Anonymous P.T. v. George Wittlinger, et al*, which has since been dismissed. Judge Wittlinger denied the allegations in the civil complaint, which was separate and distinct from the Commission's investigation.

Judge Wittlinger, who is not an attorney, had been a Justice of the Ancram Town Court since 1999. His current term would have expired on December 31, 2023.

The stipulation and the Commission's order closing the case can be found on the Commission's website: www.cjc.ny.gov.

Statement by Commission Administrator

Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian made the following statement.

“Claims of sexual impropriety, particularly where they involve a judge and a minor, must be dealt with promptly as well as fairly, in order to maintain public confidence in the courts. Whether or not such serious allegations lead to criminal or civil proceedings, the Judicial Conduct Commission will investigate and take appropriate disciplinary action. Effectuating a judge's permanent departure from the bench is our most significant authority, and that happened here.”

Statistics Relating to Prior Commission Decisions

The Commission has accepted 111 such stipulations since the procedure was instituted in 2003.

Since 1978, the Commission has issued 278 determinations of admonition against judges in New York State, 340 determinations of censure and 176 determinations of removal.

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

In the proceedings before the Commission, Judge Wittlinger 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. Investigators Ryan Fitzpatrick and Laura Misjak were assigned to the case.

Background Information on Judge Wittlinger

First Took Office:	1999
Current Term Expires:	December 31, 2023

Members of the Commission

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

The Public File

The stipulation and order are attached. They are also available for inspection during regular business hours at the Commission's three offices:

61 Broadway Suite 1200 New York, New York 10006	Corning Tower, Suite 2301 Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12223	400 Andrews Street Suite 700 Rochester, New York 14604
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MEMBERS OF THE STATE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Member	Appointing Authority	Term End
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