



NEW YORK STATE
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Kings County Surrogate's Court Judge Resigns While Facing Charges of Misconduct

Harriet L. Thompson, a Judge of the Surrogate's Court, Kings County, has agreed to leave office on March 1, 2023, in the face of misconduct charges brought against her by the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct. She also agreed never to seek or accept judicial office in the future.

Judge Thompson was charged in May 2022 with a Formal Written Complaint, alleging that she made inappropriate comments to and about employees and judges of the Unified Court System; displayed bias against various individuals and ethnicities; failed to administer Surrogate Court matters in a timely manner, leading to substantial delays; and, as a candidate for Surrogate in 2018, failed to complete mandatory campaign ethics education in a timely manner.

A formal hearing was scheduled to commence on January 17, 2023, before a Commission referee, Mark S. Arisohn.

After Judge Thompson produced a letter from her physician on November 30, 2022, claiming she was "not medically fit to stand trial at this time" and that further medical procedures were likely, the Commission authorized a Second

Formal Written Complaint against her, dated December 16, 2022, alleging that she was medically unfit to remain in office.

In lieu of filing an Answer to the Second Complaint, Judge Thompson agreed to leave office permanently due to her medical situation. She also agreed to discontinue any lawsuits she had commenced against the Commission.

Judge Thompson waived the statutory provision of confidentiality applicable to Commission proceedings, to the limited extent that the stipulation and the Commission's order accepting it would be public.¹

Judge Thompson has served as a Judge of the Surrogate's Court since 2019. Her current term would have expired on December 31, 2026. She previously served as a Judge of the New York City Civil Court from 2011 to 2018.

The stipulation 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.

“The conduct charged against Judge Thompson was egregious and, if established at trial, would have warranted her removal from office. She now claims a medical condition prevents her from performing judicial duties, which opens a different path in furtherance of the public interest for her immediate and permanent departure from the bench.”

Statistics Relating to Prior Commission Decisions

The Commission has accepted 123 such stipulations since the procedure was instituted in 2003.

Since 1978, the Commission has issued 281 determinations of admonition against judges in New York State, 347 determinations of censure and 178 determinations of removal.

¹ The Commission has not yet accepted the stipulation signed by the judge, her attorney and the Commission's administrator. After the stipulation is accepted, an order closing the matter will be issued.

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. One request for review is pending.

Counsel

For the limited purpose of the retirement stipulation, Judge Thompson was represented by Andrew Fisher, Esq.

The Commission was represented by Deputy Administrator Mark Levine, Principal Attorney Brenda Correa, Principal Attorney Jennifer L. Lowry, and Investigators Andrew Fenwick, Kieran Rock and Andrew Zagami.

Background Information on Judge Thompson

First took office (Civil Court):	2011
First took office (Surrogate's Court):	2019
Current term expires:	December 31, 2026
Salary:	\$210,900
Year Admitted to the New York State Bar:	1986

Members of the Commission

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

The Public File

The stipulation is attached.

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	Former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore	March 31, 2024
Jodie Corngold	Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo	March 31, 2023
Hon. John A. Falk	Former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore	March 31, 2025
Hon. Robert J. Miller	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2026
Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq.	Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie	March 31, 2026
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
Vacant	Chief Judge	March 31, 2026