

THE JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION OF GEORGIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hearing Panel

Hon. Robert C.I. McBurney
Presiding Officer

Judge Member, Superior Court of Fulton County
Supreme Court of Georgia Appointee

Mr. Dax López

Attorney Member, Atlanta
Supreme Court of Georgia Appointee

Mr. Richard Hyde

Citizen Member, Atlanta
Governor Appointee

Investigative Panel

Mr. Bob Barr, Chair

Attorney Member, Atlanta
Governor Appointee

Hon. Stacey K. Hydrick, Vice Chair

Judge Member, Superior Court of DeKalb County
Supreme Court of Georgia Appointee

Hon. Victoria S. Darrisaw

Judge Member, Superior Court of Dougherty County
Supreme Court of Georgia Appointee

Mr. W. Pope Langdale, III

Attorney Member, Valdosta
Lieutenant Governor Appointee

Mr. James Balli

Attorney Member, Atlanta
Speaker of the House Appointee

Mr. Warren Selby

Citizen Member, Macon
Lieutenant Governor Appointee

Mr. Alexander “Lex” Rainey

Citizen Member, Ellijay
Speaker of the House Appointee

COMMISSION STAFF

Mr. Chuck Boring, Director*
Mrs. Courtney Veal, Deputy Director
Ms. Yosra Khalifa, Staff Attorney
Mr. John Gosart, Chief Investigator
Ms. Kristen Bertsch, Executive Administrator
Mrs. Marsha Petrea, Administrative Assistant

*Mr. Boring's service as the Commission's Director ended on January 16, 2023. Pursuant to JQC Rule 4 (A), the Investigative Panel subsequently delegated the powers and duties of the Director to Deputy Director Courtney Veal.

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PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION

I. Authority and Jurisdiction of the Commission

The Judicial Qualifications Commission of Georgia (“Commission”) is the constitutionally created State Commission with the responsibility and power to investigate and prosecute complaints of misconduct by and incapacity of Georgia judges. Currently, there are approximately 1,600 judges in Georgia.

The disciplinary authority of the Commission extends to all full-time and part-time Georgia judges and encompasses all levels of court, including our two appellate-level courts: the Supreme Court of Georgia and the Georgia Court of Appeals; and our six classes of trial-level courts: Superior Court, State Court, Juvenile Court, Probate Court, Magistrate Court, and Municipal Court. See JQC Rule 1. The Commission also has disciplinary authority over judicial candidates, judges pro tempore, special masters, and others who perform judicial functions under the Constitution and laws of Georgia.¹ The Commission does not have authority over federal judges.

Pursuant to JQC Rule 2 (B)(1), “the Commission has jurisdiction over judges regarding allegations that misconduct occurred before or during service as a judge and regarding allegations of incapacity during service as a judge.” Further, the Commission has continuing jurisdiction over former judges and judicial candidates regarding allegations that misconduct occurred during service as a judge or judicial candidate if a complaint is made within one year following service as a judge or judicial candidate. JQC Rule 2 (B)(2).

II. Members of the Commission

In 2017, the Commission was reconstituted and divided into two Panels, an Investigative Panel of seven members and a Hearing Panel of three members. Each Panel includes three categories of members: judge members, who are elected or appointed and preside over courts of record; attorney members, who are active status members of the State Bar of Georgia for at least ten years and registered voters in Georgia; and citizen members, who are neither attorneys nor judges and are registered voters in Georgia. O.C.G.A. 15-1-21 (f)(1). Commission members were initially appointed for staggered terms beginning July 1, 2017, as provided in O.C.G.A. 15-1-21 (f)(3)(A) and (f)(4)(A). Successors to those members serve for a term of four years beginning on July 1 following their appointment and are eligible for reappointment to a second full term. O.C.G.A. 15-1-21 (f)(5) and (f)(6). All Commission members serve in a volunteer, unpaid capacity.

¹ “Anyone, whether or not a lawyer, who performs judicial functions under the Constitution and laws of Georgia, including an associate judge, senior judge, special master, magistrate, or municipal judge, or any person who is a judicial candidate for any such office, is a judge for purposes of this Code.” Code of Judicial Conduct, Application Section.

A. The Hearing Panel

The Hearing Panel consists of one judge member, one attorney member, and one citizen member. The judge member of serves as the presiding officer. O.C.G.A. 15-1-21 (f)(4)(A) and (f)(4)(B). The Hearing Panel has the duty and authority to adjudicate formal charges filed by the Investigative Panel, including ruling on pre-hearing motions, conducting hearings, and making findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Supreme Court. The Hearing Panel also has the authority to issue formal advisory opinions regarding the Code of Judicial Conduct, which are subject to review by the Supreme Court. JQC Rule 3 (E)(4).

Judge Robert McBurney, a Superior Court Judge in Fulton County and a Supreme Court appointee, has served as the judge-member and presiding officer of the Hearing Panel since 2017. Judge McBurney was most recently re-appointed by the Supreme Court to serve a term that began on July 1, 2020, and ends on June 30, 2024.

On June 20, 2022, **Mr. Dax López** was appointed by the Supreme Court to fill the attorney-member vacancy on the Hearing Panel, which was created upon the expiration of Ms. Jamala McFadden's term. Mr. López, now in private practice, is a former State Court of DeKalb County Judge and brings a wealth of legal experience and knowledge to the Hearing Panel. Mr. López's term ends on June 30, 2026.

Mr. Richard Hyde serves as the citizen-member of the Hearing Panel. Mr. Hyde was most recently re-appointed by Governor Brian Kemp to serve a term that began on July 1, 2021, and ends on June 30, 2025. Mr. Hyde is the Commission's longest-serving member, having served the State of Georgia in various roles and the Commission since 2004.

B. The Investigative Panel

The Investigative Panel consists of two judge members, three attorney members, and two citizen members. O.C.G.A. 15-1-21 (f)(3)(A). The Investigative Panel has the duty and authority to promulgate rules for the Commission's governance, subject to review and adoption by the Supreme Court; propose amendments to the Code of Judicial Conduct, also subject to review and adoption by the Supreme Court; recommend formal advisory opinions to the Hearing Panel; select the Director of the Commission and authorize the employment of additional staff; review the recommendations of the Director after preliminary investigations and decide how to proceed after full investigations; and oversee the Director's prosecution of formal charges. JQC Rule 3 (E)(1) and (E)(3). The Investigative Panel delegates to the Director the duty and authority to maintain the Commission's records; maintain statistics concerning the operation of the Commission; prepare the Commission's budget for approval and administer the funds; and to inform the judiciary and public of the existence and operation of the Commission. JQC Rule 3 (E)(2).

In 2022, the Investigative Panel met monthly to discuss disciplinary, incapacity, and administrative matters. Although some Panel meetings were held virtually due to continuing challenges related to COVID-19, the majority of the Panel's meetings were held in-person at Taylor English Duma, LLP, in Atlanta, GA.

Mr. Bob Barr serves as the Chair of the Investigative Panel, a position to which he was re-elected by his fellow Panel members on June 17, 2022. Mr. Barr was appointed by Governor Brian Kemp to serve as an attorney-member on July 19, 2019, and his term ends on June 30, 2023. As Chair, Mr. Barr has been an invaluable asset to the Commission in navigating multiple challenges as well as internal improvements.

Judge Stacey K. Hydrick, a Superior Court Judge in DeKalb County, serves as Vice-Chair of the Investigative Panel, a position to which she was re-elected by her fellow Panel members on June 17, 2022. Judge Hydrick was initially appointed by the Supreme Court as a judge-member to the Panel in 2017 and was most recently re-appointed to a term that began on July 1, 2021, and ends on June 30, 2025.

Judge Victoria S. Darrisaw, a Superior Court Judge in Dougherty County, also serves as a judge-member on the Investigative Panel. Judge Darrisaw was appointed by the Supreme Court to a term that began on September 9, 2021, and ends on June 30, 2023.

Mr. W. Pope Langdale III serves as an attorney-member of the Investigative Panel. Mr. Langdale previously served as Chair of the Panel and continues to support the Commission by providing a significant amount of historical knowledge and guidance to the Panel. Mr. Langdale was most recently re-appointed by former Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan to a term that began on July 1, 2021, and ends on June 30, 2025.

Mr. James Balli also serves as an attorney-member on the Investigative Panel. Mr. Balli was initially appointed as an attorney-member in 2017 and was most recently re-appointed by late Speaker of the House of Representatives David Ralston to a term that began on July 1, 2020, and ends on June 30, 2024.

Mr. Warren Selby serves as a citizen-member on the Investigative Panel. Mr. Selby was initially appointed as a citizen-member in 2017 and was most recently re-appointed by former Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan to a term that began on July 1, 2022, and ends on June 30, 2026.

Mr. Alexander “Lex” Rainey also serves as a citizen-member on the Investigative Panel. Mr. Rainey was appointed by late Speaker of the House of Representatives David Ralston to a term that began on September 29, 2021, and ends on June 30, 2023.

III. Commission Staff

The end of 2022 marked the completion of Mr. Charles Boring’s (“Director Boring”) third full year as the Commission’s Director. Mrs. Courtney Veal (“Deputy Director Veal”) completed her second full year as the Commission’s Deputy Director, and Ms. Kristen Bertsch completed her second full year as Executive Administrator. Ms. Yosra Khalifa (“Staff Attorney Khalifa”) completed her first full year as Staff Attorney, and Mr. John Gosart completed his first full year as Chief Investigator.

In May 2022, the Commission welcomed Mrs. Marsha Petrea, a part-time Administrative Assistant. Mrs. Petrea's experience and knowledge related to her tenure in the Cobb County Superior Court Clerk's Office has been instrumental in assisting the Commission's staff with effective front-end complaint intake as well as organization and maintenance of the Commission's electronic and physical records.

PART TWO: INTERNAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS

I. Commission Records

The Commission's staff continues to work to improve the manner in which its records are received, stored, and maintained. This is a priority given the sensitive and confidential nature of many of the Commission's records, and the previous loss of many of the Commission's records during the 2019 ransomware attack at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Currently, all complaints and related documentation that the Commission receives are securely stored, both electronically and physically. The secure, electronic, and cloud-based storage system currently utilized by the Commission's staff stores data including, but not limited to complaints, all related documentation, the date of complaint and supporting documentation receipt, complaint status, and party contact information. Additionally, Commission staff has started to save and maintain requests for written Director's Opinions, the resulting Director's Opinions, and relevant corresponding communications and information on the cloud-based storage system, so that the requests and/or resulting Director's Opinions may be referenced in the future if necessary.

II. Commission Website

In 2021, the Commission began the process of completely overhauling its outdated and non-functional website. With the assistance of the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Commission completed a domain transition from GoDaddy.com, and launched a new, functional website focused on user ease of access. The updated website (www.gajqc.gov) provides quick access to Commission information and simple navigation for members of the judiciary and public. The website now allows individuals to submit complaints, contact the Commission's staff, and request Director's Opinions electronically. These website improvements have greatly assisted the Commission's staff in streamlining its intake and tracking procedures for complaints as well as requests for Director's Opinions.

Each month, the Commission's staff posts informational items on its website. These items include Investigative Panel meeting notices, as well as previous Panel meeting minutes and agendas. The Commission also posts information related to appointments and announcements when there are changes in the Commission's members. The Commission's website directs viewers to the Supreme Court's website for information and filings related to public judicial disciplinary matters.

III. IT Upgrades

The Commission has recently improved their cybersecurity by migrating all emails, collaboration tools, and device management to Microsoft's Government Computer Cloud ("GCC"). This new system is monitored and administered by a full-time security team. The Commission has also begun the process of implementing physical network monitoring with additional security measures, which are designed to strengthen on-site defenses. The Administrative Office of the Courts has been instrumental in implementing these much-needed security improvements for the Commission.

IV. Office Relocation

On March 28, 2022, the Commission staff relocated to a larger office space within the same corporate building at 1995 North Park Place SE, Atlanta 30339. The larger office space allows the staff to each have an office, maintain in-office secure storage of physical records, and conduct meetings and interviews within the office suite to ensure security and confidentiality.

PART THREE: JUDICIAL EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE IN 2022

One of the primary functions and focuses of the Commission is providing education and assistance to the judiciary on the Code of Judicial Conduct. The Commission recognizes that proper education on the Code and assistance in interpreting and applying the Code will aid in preventing and mitigating ethical violations by judges.

I. Presentations

In 2022, Director Boring, Deputy Director Veal, Staff Attorney Khalifa, and other Commission members presented at multiple judicial conferences hosted by the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education ("ICJE").² The presentations provided an overview of the Commission's role, structure, and function, and offered practical considerations and guidance for common issues that may implicate the Code of Judicial Conduct. As the Commission's staff grew into presenting at judicial conferences, the need to tailor presentations to classes of court became apparent. As such, the Commission's staff spends a great amount of time and effort in preparing presentations that are specifically tailored to the audience class of court and issues which are most relevant to that class of court. During 2022, the Commission conducted more presentations than it has previously, presenting to Superior Court judges, State Court judges, Juvenile Court judges, Magistrate Court judges, and Municipal Court judges.³ Table A, found below, outlines the dates, conferences, and

² The ICJE is a "resource consortium" of the Georgia Judicial Branch, the State Bar, and Georgia's accredited law schools. Significantly, the ICJE bears the main responsibility for providing training and continuing education for Georgia's judiciary and other court personnel. More information about the ICJE is available on its website, <http://icje.uga.edu>.

³ The Council of Probate Court Judges did not extend a presentation invitation to the Commission in 2022.

Commission staff and members which presented at the respective conference for calendar year 2022.

Table A: Presentations by Date and Conference

Date	Conference	Speaker
January 31, 2022	State Court Judges: New Judge Orientation	Director Boring, Judge Melodie Clayton
February 22, 2022	Magistrate Court Judges: 40 Hour Criminal Certification	Deputy Director Veal
April 27, 2022	Magistrate Court Judges: Spring Conference	Deputy Director Veal, Staff Attorney Khalifa
May 2, 2022	Juvenile Court Judges: New Judge Orientation	Director Boring
May 3, 2022	Juvenile Court Judges: Spring Conference	Director Boring
May 18, 2022	State Court Judges: Spring Conference	Hon. Victoria S. Darrisaw
June 16, 2022	Municipal Court Judges: Law and Practice Update	Deputy Director Veal
August 3, 2022	Superior Court Judges: Summer Conference	Director Boring, Deputy Director Veal, Hon. Stacey K. Hydrick
August 29, 2022	Magistrate Court Judges: 40 Hour Civil Certification	Director Boring
September 26, 2022	DeKalb County Juvenile Court: Staff Attorneys	Staff Attorney Khalifa
September 29, 2022	Municipal Court Judges: Law and Practice Update	Deputy Director Veal
October 3, 2022	Magistrate Court Judges: Fall Conference	Director Boring
October 26, 2022	Juvenile Court Judges: Fall Conference	Director Boring
December 14, 2022	Superior Court Judges: New Judge Orientation	Director Boring

II. Director’s Opinions

Pursuant to Commission Rule 28, the Commission’s Director, or any other staff member designated by the Director, may render an informal opinion (i.e., a “Director’s Opinion”) regarding the Code of Judicial Conduct as applied to a given state of facts. When judges, judicial candidates, or other interested parties are faced with inquiries related to the Code and need assistance in interpreting and/or applying the Code, they can reach out to the Commission’s staff via the website, email, or phone to request a Director’s Opinion. Director’s Opinions are designed to address the

submitting party’s inquiry by providing written or verbal guidance and analysis related to the fact-specific scenario and the Code. Once an inquiry is received, the Director, or staff designated by the Director, aim to issue a Director’s Opinion within a week. Some inquiries, however, require research and a deeper examination of the issues raised, and therefore, may take longer to issue.

In 2022, the Director and staff rendered numerous Director’s Opinions on a myriad of judicial ethics topics, including but not limited to: judges engaging and participating in campaign activities or fundraisers, disqualification and recusal, part-time judges and the practice of law, judges serving on community boards, and judges participating in law-related activities. In 2022, the Director and staff rendered 145⁴ written Director’s Opinions based upon requests from judges, attorneys, and members of the public. This figure does not include the weekly, and sometimes daily, verbal requests for guidance or verbal Director’s Opinions given to the judiciary. Table B, found below, reflects the number of requests for written Director’s Opinions by class of court for calendar year 2022.

Table B: Requests for Director’s Opinions by Class of Court

Class of Court	Number of Requests for Director’s Opinions
Superior Court	38
State Court	27
Juvenile Court	16
Probate Court	19
Magistrate Court	29
Municipal Court	9

PART FOUR: COMMISSION REPORT FOR 2022

I. Complaint Information

The number of complaints received annually by the Commission continues to increase, and between 2021 and 2022, doubled. In 2022, the Commission received 1,103 complaints – the largest number of complaints received in the history of the Commission. Despite the significant increase in the number of complaints received, the Director continues to dismiss a large percentage of complaints during initial complaint review. Obviously, the increased volume of complaints means the Commission staff spends a larger amount of time and resources on thoroughly reviewing complaints, which often includes review and consideration of extensive supporting documentation such as court filings, orders, and transcripts.

The Commission’s Director has the duty to receive and screen complaints alleging judicial misconduct or incapacity. JQC Rule 4 (B)(1). In so doing, the Director evaluates all information

⁴ Of the 145 requests received, 138 were from judges, and seven were from attorneys and members of the public.

that comes to her attention, by complaint or from any other source. Often, the Director’s review includes review of the complaint, which may be oral or written, as well as review of supporting documentation such as court filings, orders, transcripts, video or audio recordings, and photographs. In some instances, the Director must carefully review entire court case files that span several years. If, after the conclusion of the Director’s review, the information would not constitute misconduct or incapacity if true, the Director is required to dismiss the complaint. JQC Rule 17 (A).

If, after review, the information, taken together, raises allegations that would constitute judicial misconduct or incapacity if true, the Director must conduct a preliminary investigation. *See Id.* During preliminary investigations, the Director may conduct interviews and examine evidence. If evidence supports the allegations against a judge, the Director shall recommend to the Investigative Panel that the Panel authorize a full investigation. *See JQC Rules 17 (B)(1) and (B)(2).* The Investigative Panel then reviews the Director’s recommendation for a full investigation and either dismisses the complaint or authorizes a full investigation. JQC Rule 17 (B)(3).

Tables C – G, found below, offer an overview of complaint data and compare figures from calendar years 2021 and 2022 (January 1 – December 31).

Table C: Complaint Summary

	2021	2022
Complaints Filed	542	1,103
Complaints Dismissed after Director Review	462	979
Complaints Withdrawn by Complainant after Filing	N/A ⁵	10
Complaints Pending Review by Director	N/A ⁶	35
Complaints Warranting Preliminary/Full Investigation	70	79

Table D: Basis for Complaint Dismissal after Director Review

	2021	2022
Allegations are Legal/Appellate Issues	178	392
Allegations Do Not Constitute a CJC Violation	265	552
The Commission Does Not Have Jurisdiction	13	22
No Further Intervention Needed/Moot	6	13

⁵ This figure was not tracked for 2021 complaints.

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Table E: Complaint Dispositions⁷

	2021	2022
Complaints Warranting Preliminary/Full Investigation	70	79
Complaints Resolved after Preliminary Investigation	22	24
• Dismissal with Letter of Instruction	8	15
• Dismissal	14	9
Complaints Resolved after Full Investigation	22	23
• Resignation/Retirement	4	8
• Deferred Discipline Agreement	1	2
• Private Admonition	5	3
• Dismissal with Letter of Instruction	6	4
• Dismissal	6	5
Complaints Resulting in Formal Charges	13	18

Table F: Preliminary/Full Investigation Complaints by Class of Court

	2021	2022
Superior Court	24	31
State Court	3	4
Juvenile Court	4	6
Probate Court	13	14 ⁸
Magistrate Court	19	14 ⁹
Municipal Court	6	9
Special Master	1	1

⁷ Though the Commission is diligent in intaking, reviewing, investigating, and resolving complaints, not every complaint is disposed of in the calendar year in which it was filed. As such, these figures reflect the complaints that have been disposed of at the time of this Report.

⁸ Of the 14 complaints against Probate Court judges which warranted Preliminary/Full Investigations, five were against non-lawyer Probate judges.

⁹ Of the 14 complaints against Magistrate judges which warranted Preliminary/Full Investigations, five were against non-lawyer Magistrate judges.

Table G: Preliminary/Full Investigation Complaints by Primary Allegation

	2021	2022
Demeanor/Temperament	18	19
Failure to Follow Law	14	14
Conflict of Interest/Failure to Recuse	8	10
Lending Prestige of Office	9	10
Improper Social Media Conduct	6	8
Improper Ex-Parte Communication	6	9
Bias/Prejudice	4	6
Failure to Timely Rule	5	3

II. Final Hearings Conducted

In 2022, the Director conducted two final hearings in discipline matters before the Commission’s Hearing Panel. The Commission’s final hearings are akin to bench trials – the Director must present evidence on the formal charges sufficient to prove the allegations by clear and convincing evidence. JQC Rules 7 and 24 (C). Often, depositions are taken during discovery and the Director files and responds to multiple substantive motions prior to final hearings.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Christian Coomer, S21Z0595

The final hearing in Judge Coomer’s matter was conducted in October and December 2022. The Hearing Panel’s Report and Recommendation found Judge Coomer violated the Code of Judicial Conduct and recommended his removal from the Court of Appeals. On March 15, 2023, the Supreme Court issued a decision finding the Code does not extend to pre-judicial conduct, and remanding Judge Coomer’s matter to the Hearing Panel for additional findings.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Gerald Johnson, S22Z0858

The final hearing in former Judge Johnson’s matter was conducted in November 2022. Former Judge Johnson stipulated that he violated the Code of Judicial Conduct. The Hearing Panel’s Report and Recommendation recommended former Judge Johnson’s removal from the Magistrate Court of Habersham County. Judge Johnson then resigned. Former Judge Johnson’s matter is currently pending final decision by the Supreme Court.

III. Formal Charges Filed

In 2022, the Director filed formal charges related to eighteen separate complaints, twelve of which involved Judge Christina Peterson of the Probate Court of Douglas County.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Manzie Broxton, S22Z0592, filed on January 21, 2022

In three complaints consolidated into one set of formal charges, Judge Broxton was alleged to have violated the Code of Judicial Conduct by improperly detaining a citizen without probable cause; having improper *ex-parte* communications with parties; attempting to mediate disputes to discourage parties from filing lawsuits; hearing cases without proper notice; and personally paying for judgments for parties. On January 5, 2023, the Director filed a Motion to Dismiss the Formal Charges against Judge Broxton in light of Judge Broxton's passing. On February 16, 2023, the Hearing Panel issued an Order Dismissing Formal Charges.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Gerald Johnson, S22Z085, filed on March 31, 2022

In one complaint, which forms the basis of the formal charges, Judge Johnson is alleged to have violated the Code of Judicial Conduct when, while intoxicated at his home, he smashed the windshield of his wife's vehicle during a dispute; shot multiple rounds from an AR-15 style rifle into the ground outside of his home; and pointed his AR-15 at law enforcement when they arrived at the home. This matter is pending final decision by the Supreme Court.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Christina Peterson, S22Z0180, filed on July 15, 2022

In twelve complaints consolidated into one set of formal charges, Judge Peterson is alleged to have violated the Code of Judicial Conduct on multiple occasions, beginning when she was a practicing attorney and continuing through her judicial candidacy and judgeship. Allegations during her judicial candidacy include improperly lending the prestige of judicial office to advance her private interests and the private interests of businesses she was promoting. Allegations during her judgeship include, but are not limited to ignoring courthouse security protocol by allowing civilians to enter the courthouse on a weekend for a wedding ceremony without security screening; her staff denying access to public records; improperly jailing a citizen who sought to correct an entry on her marriage application from years prior; allowing her staff to improperly contact a litigant; and failing to properly train and supervise the Probate Court staff. Judge Peterson's matter is set to conclude with a final hearing in the near future.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Robert Reeves, S23Z0337 filed on November 16, 2022

In two complaints consolidated into one set of formal charges, Judge Reeves is alleged to have violated the Code of Judicial Conduct by making inappropriate comments to courthouse staff; making inappropriate comments to lawyers and litigants who appear in front of him; having improper *ex parte* communications; and improperly engaging in fundraising efforts. Judge Reeves' matter is pending with the Hearing Panel.

III. Public Discipline Matters Concluded

Inquiry Concerning Judge Cary Hays III, S21Z1181, decided by the Supreme Court on February 1, 2022; Suspension without pay for 90 days and Public Reprimand.

Inquiry Concerning Judge JaDawyna Baker, S20Z1070, decided by the Supreme Court on March 8, 2022; Public Reprimand.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Eric W. Norris, S21Z0916, decided by the Supreme Court on June 22, 2022; Public Reprimand.

Inquiry Concerning Judge Terrinee Lynette Gundy, S19Z1369, decided by the Supreme Court on August 23, 2022; Suspension without pay for 90 days and Public Reprimand.

IV. Motions for Interim Suspension Filed

Inquiry Concerning Judge Christina Peterson, S22Z0180

On July 19, 2022, the Director, with approval from the Investigative Panel, filed a Second Motion for Interim Suspension Pursuant to JQC Rule 15 (C).¹⁰ The Supreme Court denied the Motion on August 23, 2022, finding that “it [was] not at all clear” that Judge Peterson’s “alleged actions show that she ‘poses a substantial threat of serious harm to the public or to the administration of justice [.]’”

V. Budget

The Commission is an independent agency within Georgia’s judicial branch and is funded through a line item in the State of Georgia’s annual budget. During the 2022 Legislative Session, Director Boring requested an increase in funds to provide staff attorney assistance to the Commission’s Hearing Panel. Director Boring’s request was approved, and the Commission received \$100,000.00 in funding for the Hearing Panel. The Commission received an appropriation of \$1,231,371.00 for Fiscal Year 2022. The Commission appreciates the consideration given by members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as by the Governor, in providing an increase of funds for the Hearing Panel and in supporting the work of the Commission.

VI. Conclusion

An independent and honorable judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society; therefore, the Commission will continue to work to maintain and enhance public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of Georgia’s judiciary. To this end, the Commission intends to diligently pursue investigations and prosecutions of violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct when warranted, and to focus on and improve education to the judiciary regarding the Code and judicial ethics.

/s/ COURTNEY VEAL
Deputy Director
With Delegated Powers of Director
Judicial Qualifications Commission

March 31, 2023

¹⁰ The Director’s Second Motion for Interim Suspension related to the twelve complaints against Judge Peterson which form the basis of the Formal Charges in S22Z0180.