



NEW YORK STATE
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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NEWS RELEASE

June 16, 2021

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Town Justice in Schoharie County Resigns While Under Investigation for Anti-LGBTQ and Other Inappropriate Facebook Posts

Kenneth C. Knutsen, a Justice of the Schoharie Town Court and an Associate Justice of the Schoharie Village Court, Schoharie County, resigned while under investigation by the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct for anti-LGBTQ posts on Facebook and other misconduct.

The Commission apprised Judge Knutsen in April 2021 that it was investigating complaints alleging anti-LGBTQ bias and content on his personal Facebook page. His Facebook page also revealed numerous other posts containing: partisan political content; expressions of bias in favor of law enforcement and against criminal defendants; expressions of anti-Muslim bias; and prohibited public commentary on pending cases, including the murder trial of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. The Facebook posts no longer appear publicly visible.

Judge Knutsen was scheduled to give testimony concerning these allegations on May 26, 2021. Instead, on that date he tendered his resignation, effective July 1, 2021, agreed never to seek or accept judicial office at any time in the future and

signed a stipulation to that effect. On June 10, 2021, the Commission accepted the stipulation and closed its investigation.

Judge Knutsen 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.

Judge Knutsen, who is not an attorney, has been a Justice of the Schoharie Town Court and an Associate Justice of the Schoharie Village Court, since 2002. His current terms would have expired on December 31, 2022 and December 31, 2021, respectively.

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.

“Public confidence in the integrity of the courts requires judges to avoid even the appearance of bias. Social media posts that exhibit anti-LGBTQ, anti-Muslim, pro-police or other biases are abhorrent and inimical to the role of a judge. In these circumstances, Judge Knutsen's departure from office is warranted.”

Statistics Relating to Prior Commission Decisions

The Commission has accepted 106 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, 339 determinations of censure and 175 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 Knutsen was represented by John R. Seebold, 1536 Union Street, Schenectady, New York 12309, (518) 374-2270.

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. Senior Investigator Ryan Fitzpatrick was assigned to the case.

Background Information on Judge Knutsen

First Took Office:	2002
Current Terms Expire:	
Schoharie Town Court	12/31/2022
Schoharie Village Court	12/31/2021

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	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	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	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	Governor Andrew M. Cuomo	March 31, 2025