



NEW YORK STATE
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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NEWS RELEASE

March 30, 2021

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Suffolk County Town & Village Justice Should Be Admonished for Engaging in Prohibited Political Activity

The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that Lisa R. Rana, a Justice of the East Hampton Town Court and the Sag Harbor Village Court, Suffolk County, should be admonished for engaging in prohibited political activity when she offered advice and edited campaign related materials for a candidate running for town office.

Judge Rana agreed to the admonition.

Beginning in June 2019, Judge Rana began assisting David Gruber, a candidate for East Hampton Town Supervisor, with political opinion essays and letters to the editor that he intended to submit to local newspapers. Judge Rana provided substantive edits on political topics as well as stylistic suggestions. In addition to editing the articles and letters, the judge also emailed Mr. Gruber with additional substantive and strategic advice regarding his campaign.

Judge Rana's involvement in the Gruber campaign was publicly revealed when an article Mr. Gruber submitted to the press had "Track Changes" showing extensive edits by "lisa rana." She had previously cautioned Mr. Gruber about Track Changes, saying it would be "very bad" if her involvement in his campaign became known.

Prior Caution

In 2005, Judge Rana was confidentially cautioned by the Commission for personally preparing and approving a radio advertisement for her judicial candidacy that misrepresented facts about her opponent's reasons for seeking judicial office.

The Commission stated that Judge Rana "admitted that she participated in prohibited political activity" and "acknowledged, even political activity that is anonymous violates the Rules [Governing Judicial Conduct]." The Commission noted that the judge should have been "particularly attentive to her obligation to comply with the Rules."

Judge Rana has been a Justice of the East Hampton Town Court since 2004, and a Justice of the Sag Harbor Village Court, since 2011. Her current terms expire on December 31, 2023, and June 30, 2023, respectively.

Statement by Commission Administrator

Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian made the following statement.

"Judges may not engage in politics except as to their own campaigns for elected judicial office. Attempting to conceal prohibited campaign assistance to another political candidate is especially troubling, as it demonstrates that the judge knew but flouted the rule."

The Commission Proceedings

Judge Rana was served with a Formal Written Complaint dated January 14, 2021, containing one charge.

On March 5, 2021, the Administrator of the Commission, Judge Rana 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 March 11, 2021.

The Commission Determination

The Commission filed a determination dated March 19, 2021, in which all eleven members concurred: Joseph W. Belluck, Esq. (the Commission Chair), Taa

Grays, Esq. (the Vice Chair), Jodie Corngold, Judge Fernando M. Camacho, Judge John A. Falk, Paul B. Harding, Esq., Judge Angela M. Mazzarelli, Judge Robert J. Miller, Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq., Ronald J. Rosenberg, 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 29, 2021, that Judge Rana 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 Rana 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 278 determinations of admonition against judges in New York State. The Commission has issued 175 determinations of removal and 338 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 Rana was represented by Deborah A. Scalise, of Scalise & Hamilton, PC, 670 White Plains Road, Suite 325, Scarsdale, New York 10583, (914) 725-2801.

The Commission was represented by Robert H. Tembeckjian, Administrator and Counsel to the Commission; Mark Levine, Deputy Administrator in Charge of the New York City office; and Staff Attorney Stella Gilliland. Investigator Drew Zagami was assigned to the case.

Background Information on Judge Rana

Current Terms Began:

East Hampton Town Court	2004
Sag Harbor Village Court	2011

Current Terms Expire:

East Hampton Town Court	December 31, 2023
Sag Harbor Village Court	June 30, 2023

Year Admitted to NYS Bar:	1992
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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 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
Paul B. Harding, Esq.	Former Assembly Minority Leader Brian M. Kolb	March 31, 2021
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
Akosua Garcia Yeboah	Governor Andrew M. Cuomo	March 31, 2021