



NEW YORK STATE  
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

ROBERT H. TEMBECKJIAN  
ADMINISTRATOR & COUNSEL

CORNING TOWER, SUITE 2301  
EMPIRE STATE PLAZA  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12223

MARISA E. HARRISON  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

518-453-4600 518-299-1757  
TELEPHONE FACSIMILE  
[www.cjc.ny.gov](http://www.cjc.ny.gov)

## NEWS RELEASE

*November 18, 2022*

**Contact:**

*Marisa E. Harrison, Public Information Officer  
(518) 453-4600*

### **Westchester County Town Justice Should Be Admonished for Supporting Neighbors' Pistol Permit Applications**

---

The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that John M. Aronian, a Justice of the North Salem Town Court, Westchester County, should be admonished for repeatedly identifying himself as a judge in support of a neighboring couple who were applying for pistol permits.

Judge Aronian agreed to the admonition.

In May 2020, Judge Aronian completed two Character Reference Letters on behalf of his court clerk and her husband, who were his neighbors and were applying for unrestricted pistol licenses. Although he is a practicing attorney as well as a part-time justice, he identified his occupation as “Judge” on each letter. After his court clerk’s application was denied by the Westchester County Court, Judge Aronian personally called the court to inquire about the appeals process. He then wrote a letter to the judge handling the matter, on court stationery identifying himself as a town justice. The appeal was denied.

In admonishing Judge Aronian, the Commission noted that when the judge “invoked his judicial status and used his judicial stationery to write to the County Court judge to advocate for reconsideration of the denial...[Judge Aronian] created

the improper appearance that he expected special treatment and deference because of his status as a judge.”

Judge Aronian, who is an attorney, has been a Justice of the North Salem Town Court since 2016. His current term expires on December 31, 2023.

### **Statement by Commission Administrator**

Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian made the following statement.

“Judicial office is a public trust, and a judge must avoid using the prestige of the bench to advance a private interest. Such assertions of judicial influence undermine public confidence in the courts and the administration of justice.”

### **The Commission Proceedings**

Judge Aronian was served with a Formal Written Complaint dated July 13, 2022, containing one charge.

On September 26, 2022, the Administrator of the Commission, Judge Aronian, and his 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 October 27, 2022.

### **The Commission Determination**

The Commission filed a determination dated November 7, 2022, in which all eleven members concurred: Joseph W. Belluck, Esq. (the Commission Chair), Taa Grays, Esq. (the Vice Chair), Judge Fernando M. Camacho, Jodie Corngold, Judge John A. Falk, Judge Angela M. Mazzarelli, Judge Robert J. Miller, Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq., Ronald J. Rosenberg, Esq., Graham B. Seiter, 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 November 17, 2022, that Judge Aronian 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 Aronian does not request review by the Court of Appeals, the Commission will admonish him 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 281 determinations of admonition against judges in New York State. The Commission has issued 178 determinations of removal and 347 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. One request for review is pending.

### **Counsel**

Judge Aronian was represented by Paul DerOhannesian, II, of DerOhannesian & DerOhannesian, 159 Wolf Road, Suite 305, Albany, New York 12205, (518) 465-6420.

The Commission was represented by Deputy Administrator Mark Levine, Senior Attorney Eric Arnone and Investigators Drew Zagami and Kieran Rock.

**Background Information on Judge Aronian**

First Took Office: 2016  
 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 determination and other records are available on the Commission's website:  
[www.cjc.ny.gov](http://www.cjc.ny.gov).

**MEMBERS OF THE STATE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Appointing Authority</b>	<b>Term End</b>
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. Angela M. Mazzarelli	Former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore	December 31, 2022 <sup>1</sup>
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

---

<sup>1</sup> Judge Mazzarelli's term on the Commission will end upon her retirement from judicial office on December 31, 2022.