



NEW YORK STATE  
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Town Justice in Oswego County Should Be Admonished for Making Many Prohibited Political Campaign Contributions**

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The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that James H. Ridgeway, a Justice of the Richland Town Court (Oswego County), should be admonished for directly or indirectly making more than \$6,000 in prohibited political contributions.

Judge Ridgeway agreed to the admonition.

Judge Ridgeway, who serves as a judge part-time, was also employed for many years on the staff of the United Steelworkers Union (“USW”). He made the following prohibited political contributions, either directly or by permitting others to make them for him.

- From 2006 to 2017, he made 138 contributions totaling \$3,311 in automatic payroll deductions to the USW political action fund, which supported USW efforts to elect lawmakers sympathetic to unions.
- From October 2006 to October 2016, he made 33 contributions totaling \$824 to ActBlue, an online fundraising platform for Democratic

candidates, “progressive” organizations, and certain nonprofit organizations.

- From 2015 to 2016, he made eight contributions totaling \$265 to Senator Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign.
- From 2019 to 2023, his wife made 109 contributions totaling \$1,306 to ActBlue, and seven contributions totaling \$322 to “Stop Republicans” – all in the judge’s name through his credit card.

In its determination the Commission noted that the Rules Governing Judicial Conduct require that a judge “refrain from directly or indirectly engaging in political activity, including making contributions to a political organization or candidate.”

In accepting the jointly recommended sanction of admonition, the Commission considered that the judge “acknowledged that his conduct was improper and warrants public discipline.”

Judge Ridgeway, who is not an attorney, has been a Justice of Richland Town Court since 2000. His current term expires on December 31, 2027. He previously served as an Acting Justice of the Pulaski Village Court from 2001 to 2012.

### **Statement by Commission Administrator**

Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian made the following statement.

“Judges are prohibited from making political contributions, and they cannot grant or cede authority to others to make such contributions for them – not to an employer, a relative, or anyone else. Judge Ridgeway was cooperative and candidly admitted ignorance of the applicable rules or even where some of his money was going. He also committed to strict adherence going forward.”

### **The Commission Proceedings**

Judge Ridgeway was served with a Formal Written Complaint dated August 2, 2024, containing two charges.

On November 1, 2024, the Administrator of the Commission, Judge Ridgeway 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 December 12, 2024.

### **The Commission Determination**

The Commission filed a determination dated December 18, 2024, in which all 11 members concurred: Joseph W. Belluck, Esq. (the Commission Chair), Taa Grays, Esq. (the Vice Chair), Judge Fernando M. Camacho, Stefano Cambareri, Esq., Brian C. Doyle, Esq., Judge John A. Falk, Judge Robert J. Miller, Nina M. Moore, Ph.D., Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq., Judge Anil C. Singh 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 January 7, 2025, that Judge Ridgeway 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 Ridgeway 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 288 determinations of admonition against judges in New York State. The Commission has issued 185 determinations of removal and 352 determinations of censure.

The Court of Appeals has reviewed 102 Commission determinations. The Court accepted the Commission's sanctions in 86 cases (77 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 Ridgeway was represented by Robert F. Julian, 2037 Genesee Street, Suite 2, Utica, New York 13501, (315) 797-5610.

The Commission was represented by Deputy Administrator John J. Postel, Senior Attorney David M. Duguay and Senior Investigator Betsy Sampson.

**Background Information on Judge Ridgeway**

First Took Office:	2000
Current Term Expires:	December 31, 2027
Prior Judicial Office:	2001-2012
Acting Justice of the Pulaski Village Court	

**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	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2028
Taa Grays, Esq., Vice Chair	Senate President Pro Tem Andrea Stewart-Cousins	March 31, 2027
Hon. Fernando M. Camacho	Chief Judge Rowan Wilson	March 31, 2028
Stefano Cambareri, Esq.	Assembly Minority Leader William A. Barclay	March 31, 2025
Brian C. Doyle, Esq.	Senate Minority Leader Robert G. Ort	March 31, 2028
Hon. John A. Falk	Former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore	March 31, 2025
Hon. Robert J. Miller	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2026
Nina M. Moore, Ph.D.	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2027
Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq.	Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie	March 31, 2026
Hon. Anil C. Singh	Chief Judge Rowan Wilson	March 31, 2026
Akosua Garcia Yeboah	Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo	March 31, 2025