



NEW YORK STATE
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Poughkeepsie City Court Judge Should be Removed for Retaliating Against Woman Who Complained About Him

The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that Frank M. Mora, a Judge of the Poughkeepsie City Court, Dutchess County, should be removed from office for retaliating against the manager of an eye doctor's office after she complained to the Commission that he had refused to follow office safety protocols and then refused to leave until the police were called. Judge Mora thereafter filed a \$425,000 lawsuit against her for defamation, knowing the Commission was investigating the manager's complaint against him.

In December 2021, Judge Mora accompanied his minor child to an appointment at a local ophthalmologist's office, where for over 30 minutes, with more than a dozen people in the waiting room, he repeatedly declined staff requests to follow their COVID-19 policy that all patients and visitors wear face masks or to leave the premises. He only left after the office manager twice called the police.

After the office manager complained about Judge Mora's behavior, the Commission commenced an investigation and asked the judge to explain himself. Several months later, he filed a well-publicized defamation lawsuit against the office manager. Not only

was the lawsuit dismissed, but Judge Mora was liable for costs and attorney's fees, ultimately agreeing to pay \$20,000 and apologizing to the office manager.¹

The Commission found that Judge Mora was wrong for refusing to leave the eye center when asked, and for retaliating against the manager who complained about him. Its determination said:

[I]t cannot be overstated that retaliating against an individual who made a complaint to the Commission is particularly serious misconduct because it undermines the New York State judicial disciplinary process. The integrity and effectiveness of that process is critical to public confidence in the judiciary.

The Commission also noted that removal was appropriate based on the retaliatory lawsuit alone.²

Judge Mora has served as a Judge of the Poughkeepsie City Court since 2011. His current term expires on December 31, 2030.

Statement by Commission Administrator

Commission Administrator Robert H. Tembeckjian made the following statement:

“A judge must act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary. It is inimical to the role of a judge to seek vengeance rather than justice in court. By suing a woman for hundreds of thousands of dollars for simply having filed a disciplinary complaint against him, Judge Mora escalated what might have been an admonition for churlish behavior at a medical office into removal from the bench for a shocking act of retaliation.”

The Commission Proceedings

Judge Mora was served with a Formal Written Complaint dated January 14, 2025, containing three charges, and filed an Answer dated April 11, 2025.

The Commission designated Peter Bienstock, Esq., as referee to hear and report proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. A hearing was held on October 15, 16 and 17, 2025, in New York, New York. The referee filed a report dated April 9, 2026, sustaining Charge II of the Complaint and finding that Charges I and III were not established.

¹ Information on the lawsuit, *Mora v Koch* is available on the Commission's website at [Mora v Koch](#).

² A third charge, alleging that Judge Mora withheld certain information during the Commission's investigation, was dismissed.

The parties submitted briefs with respect to the referee's report and the issue of sanctions. Counsel to the Commission argued that the referee's findings and conclusions of law be confirmed in part and disaffirmed in part and recommended that Judge Mora be removed from office. Judge Mora argued that all three charges be dismissed. On June 18, 2026, the Commission heard oral argument.

The Commission Determination

The Commission filed a determination dated August 21, 2026, in which all 11 members concurred.³

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. Judge Mora received it on August 25, 2026, and the Commission was subsequently notified by the Court of Appeals that service was complete. Consequently, the matter is now public.

After a removal determination is rendered, it is the Court's practice to suspend the judge, with pay. A judge has 30 days to request full review of the Commission's determination by the Court of Appeals. Should the judge request review of the Commission's removal determination, the Court's practice is to continue the suspension while the review is pending.

If the judge requests review, the Court sets a schedule for the parties to file briefs and appear for oral argument. On review, the Court may accept or reject the Commission's findings of fact or conclusions of law, may accept the determined sanction, impose a different sanction including admonition or censure, or impose no sanction.

Pursuant to Judiciary Law Section 44, subdivision 7, if Judge Mora does not request review by the Court of Appeals, the Court of Appeals will remove him in accordance with the determination.

Statistics Relating to Prior Determinations

Since 1978, the Commission has issued 190 determinations of removal against judges in New York State. The Commission has issued 361 determinations of censure and 292 determinations of admonition.

³ One member, Stefano Cambareri, Esq., voted that Charge I should be dismissed.

The Commission has accepted 163 permanent resignation stipulations, in which the judge has agreed to leave office and never seek or accept judicial office in the future, since the procedure was instituted in 2003.

The Court of Appeals has reviewed 102 Commission determinations. The results are available on the Commission's website at "[Appealed Decisions](#)."

Counsel

Judge Mora was represented by Stephen R. Coffey of O'Connell & Aronowitz, P.C., 6 Airport Park Boulevard, Latham, New York 12110, (518) 462-5601.

The Commission was represented by Deputy Administrator Mark H. Levine, Deputy Counsel Edward Lindner, Principal Attorney Melissa DiPalo, Senior Litigation Counsel Denise Buckley, and Investigator Andy Fenwick.

Background Information on Judge Mora

First Took Office:	2011
Current Term Expires:	December 31, 2030
Year Admitted to NYS Bar:	1997

Members of the Commission

The Commission members serve four-year terms. A list of members is noted below.

The Public File

The determination and other records are available on the Commission's website: www.cjc.ny.gov.

MEMBERS OF THE STATE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Member	Appointing Authority	Term End
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 D. Wilson	March 31, 2028
Stefano Cambareri, Esq.	Assembly Minority Leader William A. Barclay	March 31, 2029
Brian C. Doyle, Esq.	Senate Minority Leader Robert G. Ort	March 31, 2028
Hon. John A. Falk	Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson	March 31, 2029
Hon. David Fried	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2030
Robin Chappelle Golston	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2029
Nina M. Moore, Ph.D.	Governor Kathy Hochul	March 31, 2027
Hon. Peter H. Moulton	Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson	March 31, 2030
Marvin Ray Raskin, Esq.	Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie	March 31, 2030