



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION  
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

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**CJC Nos. 20-1456 & 22-1710**

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**PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

**HONORABLE AMBER GIVENS  
282<sup>ND</sup> DISTRICT COURT  
DALLAS, DALLAS COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on December 3-4, 2024, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations in the above-referenced complaints against the Honorable Amber Givens, judge of the 282<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court, in Dallas, Dallas County, Texas. Judge Givens was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided a written response. On June 4, 2025, Judge Givens appeared before the Commission and provided testimony regarding these matters.<sup>1</sup>

After considering the evidence before it, the Commission entered the following Findings and Conclusion:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Honorable Amber Givens was the judge for the 282<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court, in Dallas, Dallas County, Texas.

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2. In August of 2020, the Commission received a complaint from the Dallas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (the "DCDLA") that alleged, among other things, that Judge Givens engaged in possibly illegal conduct when she allowed/directed her court coordinator, Arceola Warfield ("Warfield"), to conduct an agreed bond reduction hearing on August 3, 2021, in *State of Texas v. Floyd Aaron*, Case No. F-1541959 (the "Aaron Case").

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<sup>1</sup> Judge Givens appeared before the Commission on October 13, 2022, and provided testimony regarding these complaints. After her appearance, the complaints were tabled because of the active investigation by the Texas Rangers. After the Texas Rangers completed their investigation and the Kaufman County District Attorney declined to press charges against Judge Givens, the Commission proceeded with its investigation of these complaints. Based on additional evidence, Judge Givens again appeared before the Commission following the Texas Rangers investigation.

3. According to the complaint and the affidavits of participants in the August 3, 2021 hearing in the Aaron Case (the “Aaron Hearing”), the proceeding was conducted via Zoom and a picture of Judge Givens was displayed instead of her appearing live on the video, and the following occurred:

A voice stated, “on the record” and the defendant and defense counsel both addressed this voice as “your honor” and “judge” during this hearing without being corrected. The “judge” set the bond and added an electronic leg monitor as a condition of bond. At the end of the hearing the court reporter stated “Judge, you forgot to say off the record” and at that point the voice stated “off the record”.

4. In their affidavits, Floyd Aaron, the defendant, and Tim Jeffrey, his attorney, reiterated that during the Aaron Hearing, Judge Givens’ image appeared on the screen, but the person who conducted the hearing was not Judge Givens and did not identify herself as otherwise.
5. Believing that it was not Judge Givens, but rather her court coordinator, Warfield, who conducted the Aaron Hearing, the prosecutors involved in the Aaron Case reported the matter to Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot (“DA Creuzot”).
6. Upon learning the prosecutors reported to DA Creuzot that Warfield conducted the Aaron Hearing, Judge Givens sent an email to DA Creuzot stating, in relevant part:

It has come to my attention that a Dallas County Assistant District Attorney has falsely accused this Court of having my Court Coordinator, Arceola Warfield, pretend to be me and preside over a matter. It is an absurd allegation and is extremely troubling that this same individual is purportedly operating under the duties of a District Attorney pursuant to TEX.CODE CRIM. PROC. Art. 2.01. I question his/her ability to serve justice in any matter. . . I will be filing a Bar complaint against this Assistant District Attorney once I am able to ascertain his/her identity. In light of these false allegations, I submit that it would be prudent to reassign said Assistant District Attorney.

7. In response to the DCDLA’s allegations regarding her conduct during the Aaron Hearing, on January 11, 2022, Judge Givens filed a petition in the 193<sup>rd</sup> District Court titled Verified Petition to take Oral and Videotaped Depositions with Duces Tecum Pursuant to Rule 202, in which she sought to depose certain members of the DCDLA board and a “corporate representative” in an effort to investigate her potential claims for defamation and related causes of action.<sup>2</sup>
8. The matter of what transpired during the Aaron Hearing was referred to the Texas Rangers Public Integrity Unit (the “Texas Rangers”), who investigated whether Judge Givens and/or Warfield violated the laws against impersonating a public servant and/or being a party to impersonating a public servant.
9. The Texas Rangers concluded that sufficient evidence existed to refer the matter to DA Creuzot. Specifically, they determined Warfield’s phone records established she had no incoming or outgoing calls on her office phone during the Aaron Hearing, and that she made one outgoing phone call on her cell phone during that time, a call to Judge Givens’ cell phone at 9:52 a.m., which lasted eight seconds and went straight to voicemail. The phone records showed that

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<sup>2</sup> *In re: The Honorable Amber Givens Requesting the Depositions of: Deandra Grant Clendenin, Amanda Branan, Teresa Hawthorne, and Dallas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association* (Cause No. DC-22-00335).

Warfield had no other person-to-person calls on her cell phone for the duration of the Aaron Hearing.

10. DA Cruzot recused himself from the matter and Judge Ray Wheless, the presiding judge of the First Administrative Region, referred the Texas Rangers' findings to the Kaufman County District Attorney Erleigh Norville Wiley ("DA Wiley").
11. In September of 2023, DA Wiley issued a public statement announcing that while she believed Judge Givens' behavior with respect to the Aaron Hearing was unprofessional and improper, she did not find that it rose to the level of criminal conduct. Accordingly, she declined to press criminal charges against either Warfield or Judge Givens.
12. Judge Givens' conduct during and with respect to the Aaron Hearing and the resulting criminal investigation garnered significant media attention. While the investigation was ongoing, Judge Givens made public statements, both in writing and while speaking publicly. In her public statements, Judge Givens denied doing anything inappropriate and described the investigation as a "false narrative" designed to "suppress the will of the community and to pressure [her] to discontinue progress" she had made in the court system.
13. In at least one interview, Judge Givens suggested the criminal investigation into what transpired during the Aaron Hearing was motivated by her anti-discrimination policy with respect to lawyers who have espoused racist views or made racist comments on social media.
14. During her testimony before the Commission on October 13, 2022, Judge Givens made statements about what transpired during the Aaron Hearing that were inconsistent with not only the affidavits submitted to the Commission by participants in the proceeding, but also the information obtained by the Texas Rangers during their investigation into Warfield's phone records. Specifically, in contradiction with the Texas Rangers' findings, Judge Givens made the following statements during her testimony:
  - "I spoke to the parties via cell phone" and "I spoke to the parties and told them that I was granting their bond reduction, and that Ms. Warfield would be reading the bond conditions that I had sent her."
  - "So I called [Warfield] on her cell phone. I had her personal cell phone, and she held it up to her laptop where she had Zoom going just like we do now. And the court has two computers set up inside the courtroom that had Zoom going as well and so they could hear me through the laptop."
  - "And so [Warfield] called me on the phone, and I was on speakerphone so that I could tell them that I was granting their agreed bond request and that [Warfield] would be reading them the orders that I had given her regarding the bond conditions."
  - "And then I speak to my court coordinator. [Warfield] calls me, and then I'm on speakerphone and I tell [the defendant and the attorneys] that I'm granting the bond reduction [and Warfield] is going to read you the bond conditions."
  - "Yes, I was calling from my personal cell phone, yes."
  - "Yes, we were on speakerphone together . . . [for] about 60 [seconds]."
  - "I wasn't on the Zoom before [Warfield] called me on the speakerphone. . ."

15. In addition to complaining about her handling of the Aaron Hearing, the DCDLA alleged Judge Givens has, since assuming the bench, “consistently demonstrated a poor judicial temperament highlighted by aggression, condescension, and disrespect towards attorneys practicing in her court”. As examples of Judge Givens’ behavior, the DCDLA provided video recordings of Judge Givens’ behavior during various hearings towards attorneys Jaime Young, Tom Cox, Rebekah Dall’Asen, and Ron Goranson, which exhibited her poor judicial demeanor and disrespectful treatment of attorneys.
16. Members of the DCDLA filed dozens of recusal motions against Judge Givens with verified affidavits accusing Judge Givens of bias against them in her handling of their cases.
17. In her written response regarding the allegations against her, Judge Givens asserted that the DCDLA and other defense attorneys in Dallas were displeased she was elected judge of the 282<sup>nd</sup> District Court because she “brought a level of transparency and accountability to the bench that they were not accustomed to”, claiming they much preferred her predecessor who “was known for his extremely relaxed view on the law”.
18. Judge Givens stated the complaint DCDLA filed with the Commission was part of a concerted effort by its board members to “get [her] off the bench and to strategize a political attack”.
19. Judge Givens described what transpired with respect to the Aaron Case as a “political attack”, indicating “there was never a good faith basis to believe that a crime had been committed”.
20. In her testimony before the Commission on June 4, 2025 regarding the allegations against her, Judge Givens reiterated what she provided in her written responses regarding DCDLA’s motivation for filing the complaint and what transpired regarding the Aaron Case.

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21. In August of 2022, the Commission initiated a complaint against Judge Givens based on news reports about the filing of more than 100 recusal motions against her in a short period of time by both prosecutors and defense lawyers practicing in her court. The recusal motions accused Judge Givens of lacking impartiality, making unfair rulings, treating lawyers with disrespect, and having a “retaliatory nature”.
22. According to the news reports, Judge Givens voluntarily recused herself from most of the cases, and Presiding Judge Wheless presided over a Zoom hearing at which he granted the dozens of recusal motions that remained pending.
23. Judge Wheless provided a written statement to the Commission regarding this matter, and confirmed that in the summer of 2022, Judge Givens was recused from dozens of cases, either voluntarily or by his order.
24. Also, Judge Wheless indicated Judge Givens “routinely” failed to comply with the requirement pursuant to Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18a(f)(1) that recusal motions be granted by order or denied and referred to the regional presiding judge within three (3) business days of filing.
25. Before deciding to conduct the hearing on the recusal motions via Zoom using a freelance court reporter, Judge Wheless asked Judge Givens if he could use her courtroom and court reporter to handle these matters, but Judge Givens refused his request.
26. In her written responses to the Commission, Judge Givens expressed her opinion that Judge Wheless granted some of the recusal motions filed against her for reasons not contemplated by

Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18b. In support of this argument, Judge Givens submitted to the Commission, among other materials, a copy of an audio recording she made of a telephone conversation between herself and Judge Wheless, during which Judge Wheless indicated he granted one of the motions in an effort “to try and help insulate [Judge Givens] from criticism”.

27. During her appearance before the Commission, Judge Givens pointed to the recording as evidence of what Judge Wheless said when he thought no one was listening, thus confirming she made the recording without Judge Wheless’ knowledge or consent.
28. During her testimony, Judge Givens indicated to the Commission that any failure on her part to grant or refer a recusal motion within three business days as required by Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18a(f)(1) was the result of the Dallas County District Clerk’s Office failing to timely notify her and/or her office of its filing.
29. Judge Givens testified that she declined Judge Wheless’ request to use her courtroom and court reporter because her court/docket was very busy at the time and there was not a date on which her courtroom or court reporter were available for his use.

### **RELEVANT STANDARDS AND AUTHORITIES**

1. Canon 2A on the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall comply with the law...”
2. Canon 2B of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, “A judge shall not allow any relationship to influence judicial conduct or judgment.”
3. Canon 3B(1) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, “A judge shall hear and decide matters assigned to the judge except those in which disqualification is required or recusal is appropriate.”
4. Canon 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides in relevant part, “A judge shall be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity.”
5. Canon 3B(5) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, “A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice.”
6. Canon 3B(6) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall not in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct, manifest bias or prejudice.”
7. Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18a(f)(1) provides, “Regardless of whether the motion complies with this rule, the respondent judge, within three business days after the motion is filed, must either: (A) sign and file with the clerk an order of recusal or disqualification; or (B) sign and file with the clerk an order referring the motion to the regional presiding judge.”
8. *Arnold v State*<sup>3</sup> provides, “Although the Code of Criminal Procedure does not specifically address the procedure to follow in seeking disqualification of a judge, the Court of Criminal Appeals has held that Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18a applies to criminal cases absent ‘any explicit or implicit legislative intent indicating otherwise.’”

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<sup>3</sup> 853 S.W.2d 543, 544 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993).

9. Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution prohibits a judge from engaging in “willful and persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of the [judge’s] duties or casts public discredit on the judiciary or on the administration of justice.”

### CONCLUSION

Based upon the record before it and the factual findings recited above, the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that the Honorable Amber Givens, judge of the 282<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court in Dallas, Dallas County, Texas, should be publicly reprimanded for: (1) directing or allowing her court coordinator to conduct the August 3, 2021 Zoom hearing in the Aaron Case without informing the parties and attorneys, and in so doing: (a) failed to hear and decide a matter assigned to her, and (b) failed to treat the attorneys and litigants in the Aaron Case with patience, dignity, and courtesy; (2) failing to treat attorneys Jaime Young, Tom Cox, Rebekah Dall’Asen, and Ron Goranson with patience, dignity, and courtesy during hearing in her court; (3) performing judicial duties with bias or prejudice, and exhibiting, through words or conduct, bias or prejudice in the performance of her judicial duties with respect to DCDLA members; (4) failing to comply with and maintain professional competence in the law, namely Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18a(f)(1), when she repeatedly failed to grant and order recusals or deny and refer recusal motions to the regional presiding judge within three business days of their filing; and (5) failing to treat Judge Wheless with patience, dignity, and courtesy when she recorded their telephone conversation without his knowledge or consent and when she refused his request to use her courtroom and court reporter to handle the numerous recusal motions filed against her.

Judge Givens’ failures in the foregoing respects constituted willful and/or persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of her judicial duties and cast public discredit upon judiciary or the administration of justice, in violation of Canons 2A, 3B(1), 3B(2), 3B(4), 3B(5) and 3B(6), and Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

The Commission has taken this action pursuant to the authority conferred it in Article V, Section 1-a(8) of the Texas Constitution in a continuing effort to promote confidence in and high standards for the judiciary.

Issued this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of June, 2025.

  
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Gary L. Steel  
Chair, State Commission on Judicial Conduct