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Judge them in open court: Legislature should open Commission on Judicial Conduct proceedings to view

Some New York judges seem to believe they don't get a fair shake from the agency that polices their actions on the bench. There is one way to find out for sure:

The Legislature should open Commission on Judicial Conduct proceedings to view. All its hearings should be public once the panel has found grounds to vote charges against a judge.

The commission supports openness, as does every court-watching organization in the state. Only the judges balk at lifting the secrecy that bars the panel from releasing any information except a final order of discipline.

Despite this protection, judges complained that the commission has too much power to act against them. They got the ear of the New York County Lawyers Association, which in turn got the attention of the state bar association.

Ever friendly to its judicial brethren, the association is asking Albany to give judges consideration beyond the wildest dreams of due process.

Its proposals include requiring the commission to give judges early notice of probes, as well as almost full access to the work of investigators. The group also calls for limits on the panel's power to expand probes and for taxpayers to bankroll expenses judges incur in defending themselves.

These are not worth a moment's thought. But opening the process to sunlight after the commission has filed charges - a step ignored by the association - would enhance confidence that judges and the public alike are being treated justly.

Editorials

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GettyIt's time to open New York judges' hearings to the public.

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