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Lowering the Bar

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As if whining about their pay weren't enough, New York's judges are now trying to rig the system by which their own corrupt members are sanctioned or removed from the bench.

The state Bar Association reportedly is about to lend its considerable political heft to a proposal that would drastically restructure the state's Commission on Judicial Conduct — in a way that would make it far harder to discipline bad judges.

Judges have long complained that the 11-member conduct commission is “a kangaroo court” that sanctions too many judges too easily.

As this page has long noted, the commission may come down hard on upstate justices of the peace, but it's been near invisible when it comes to removing judges in the five boroughs.

Indeed, when the commission bounced Queens Supreme Court Justice Laura Blackburne for egregious misconduct in 2005, she was only the fifth Supreme Court jurist removed since 1978.

Now the judges are demanding that the Bar, as it were, be set even lower: that evidence standards be watered down, that state money pay for judges' defense lawyers and that a new rule be imposed directing staff investigators to “accord judges the highest degree of respect” at their hearings — which, by law, are held behind closed doors to protect judges' privacy.

Moreover, the judges want the commission to give judges advance notice of when an investigation begins — notwithstanding that this would allow judges to destroy evidence, as some have done in the past.

Which is why commission director Robert Tembeckjian says these proposals are skewed to the judges' benefit, “as opposed to . . . the public's interest.”

Problem is, the Bar Association is influential — in large part because so many legislators are members. But this outrageous proposal needs to be canned — along with a lot more judges.

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