

**BEFORE THE INVESTIGATIVE PANEL OF THE  
FLORIDA JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION**

INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE,

SC Case No.: 2024-1432  
JQC No. 2023-539; 2023-721;  
2023-741; 2023-745;  
2024-552

HON. JEFFREY ASHTON

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**ANSWER TO NOTICE OF FORMAL CHARGES**

COMES NOW, the Honorable Jeffrey Ashton, by and through his undersigned counsel and files his Answer to the Notice of Formal Charges and states:

1. Regarding Paragraph 1a, Judge Ashton denies that he behaved with intemperate behavior. Judge Ashton acknowledges that he has at times struggled with patience, but he has treated those who appear before him with dignity and courtesy. Judge Ashton admits he shouted the name of an attorney to regain that attorney's attention. At that time, the attorney was speaking over Judge Ashton and turned his back on Judge Ashton as he was speaking to the attorney. Judge Ashton admits he told the attorney he was provoking Judge Ashton's "angry face." This statement was made outside the presence of the jury. Judge Ashton was careful not to do or say anything to prejudice the litigants in the case. His goal in that particular

- case, as in all cases, was to make sure both sides had a fair trial. In order to accomplish that goal, he admonished both sides for their inappropriate theatrics during the trial.
2. Regarding Paragraph 1b, Judge Ashton denies that he raised his voice to a level that could be heard over the white noise machine in the courtroom in *Alisha Oliver v. Holly Swarthout* (Orange County Case No. 2021-CA-2065). Judge Ashton denies that his facial expressions and overall demeanor evinced a bias against one party or their attorney. Judge Ashton denies that he behaved intemperately toward people appearing before him as alleged in this subparagraph.
  3. Regarding Paragraph 1c, Judge Ashton admits that he threatened an attorney with contempt and acknowledges that was an error. However, he denies that his behavior was intemperate toward the people appearing before him.
  4. As to Paragraph 1d, the allegations are too vague to provide a specific response. Judge Ashton is not aware of any specific act he committed that evinced impatient, undignified, or discourteous behavior toward Plaintiff's counsel.
  5. As to Paragraph 2a and b, Judge Ashton admits the factual statements in those paragraphs. Judge Ashton acknowledges that he erred in the manner

in which he ruled upon the Motion to Disqualify. However, he denies that his error leads to the conclusion that he violated the Canons of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

6. Paragraph 3 does not require a response.

Judge Ashton denies that his actions as described in Paragraphs 1-3 of the Notice of Formal Charges constitutes inappropriate conduct that violates the Canons contained in the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Respectfully submitted,

**/s/THOMAS D. SOMMERVILLE**  
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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of October 2024, a true and correct copy of the foregoing Response was furnished by email delivery to Alexander J. Williams, General Counsel, Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, P.O. Box 14106, Tallahassee, FL 32317-4106, [awilliams@floridajqc.com](mailto:awilliams@floridajqc.com).

**/s/THOMAS D. SOMMERVILLE**  
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