

**BEFORE THE FLORIDA  
JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION**

INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE,

JQC NO. 2023-539;  
2023-721;2023-741;  
2023-745; 2024-552.

HON. JEFFREY ASHTON

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**NOTICE OF FORMAL CHARGES**

TO: Hon. Jeffrey Ashton  
Orange County Courthouse  
425 N. Orange Avenue  
Orlando, Florida 32801

The Investigative Panel of the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, at its meetings on March 21, 2024, and on September 19, 2024, by a vote of the majority of its members, pursuant to Rule 6(f) of the Rules of the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission and Article V, Section 12(b) of the Constitution of the State of Florida, finds that probable cause exists for formal proceedings to be instituted against you. Probable cause exists on the following formal charges:

1. While presiding over cases, trials, hearings, and other proceedings, you have behaved intemperately, including shouting at people appearing before you, and otherwise lacking the patience, dignity, and courtesy required by the Code of Judicial Conduct. It is also alleged that your conduct in certain instances evinced bias for or against parties or attorneys appearing before you. Examples of this misconduct include:

a. While presiding over the case of *Randy Casey v. Hernando Lancheros, et al.* (2017-CA-0586), among other instances of inappropriate comments and behavior, you shouted at Plaintiff's attorney, and later accused him of "provoking" your "angry face". Some of these inappropriate exchanges occurred in the presence of the jury. Although the white-noise device may have prevented those in the courtroom from hearing exactly what you said at sidebar conferences, observers were able to hear your raised voice and see that your facial expression and overall demeanor evinced a bias against one party or their attorney.

b. In the case of *Alisha Oliver v. Holly Swarthout* (Orange County Case No. 2021-CA-2065), you behaved intemperately towards people appearing before you. It is also alleged that your raised voice could be heard again over the white-noise machine, and that your facial expression and overall demeanor evinced a bias against one party or their attorney.

c. While presiding over the matter of *Megan Regan v. Hernando Lancheros, et al.* (Orange County Case No. 2017-CA-8661) you behaved intemperately towards people appearing before you. You also threatened the plaintiff's attorney with direct criminal contempt.

d. While presiding over the case of *Jain v. Baker* (Orange County Case No. 2016-CA-7260) in September 2023 you consistently and repeatedly treated the Plaintiff's attorney in a manner that was not patient, dignified or courteous.

2. In the matter of *Holt v. Nelson*, Case No. 6D24-966 (2020-CA-005088-O; 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit) a party filed a Motion to Disqualify you, alleging bias against the party's law firm, "signaling" by you to the opposing party, and intemperate behavior.

a. You denied this Motion to Disqualify, stating that it was moot because you were moving to a different division within the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit and would soon no longer be handling the case. In your Order, you also passed on the truth of the allegations, disputing the factual allegations.

b. The movant subsequently filed a Petition for Writ of Prohibition with the 6<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeal, which was granted. In its opinion, the appellate court reversed your ruling on the Motion to Disqualify, stating that it was not moot, but furthermore stated that your commentary passing on the facts alleged mandated disqualification. Passing on the facts alleged in a Motion to

Disqualify is prohibited by *Fla. Rule of Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin.*  
2.330(h).

3. In JQC Case No. 2019-648 the Commission cautioned you against allowing yourself to be provoked into intemperate behavior by what you perceive as unprofessional conduct by attorneys or parties. In that case you were recorded shouting down an attorney who appeared before you in the matter of *Willey v. Stillman*, (2010-DR-8250). This matter is hereby reopened and realleged as part of a pattern of misconduct.

Your repeated unwillingness or inability to govern your behavior raises questions about your fitness for judicial office, and the foregoing behavior constitutes inappropriate conduct that violates Canons 1, 2, 3B(4), 3B(5), 3B(7) and 3E(1) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

You are hereby notified of your right to file a written answer to these charges within twenty (20) days of service of this notice upon you. The original of your response and all subsequent pleadings must be filed with the Clerk of the Florida Supreme Court, in accordance with the Court's requirements. Copies of your response should be served in the undersigned Counsel for the Judicial Qualifications Commission.

DATED this 2nd day of October 2024.

**THE FLORIDA JUDICIAL  
QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION**

By: 

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Notice of Formal Charges has been furnished by electronic service to the following parties, on this 2nd day of October 2024:

Hon. Jeffrey Ashton  
Orange County Courthouse  
425 N. Orange Avenue  
Orlando, Florida 32801

  
Hugh R. Brown  
Assistant General Counsel