

## Georgia Supreme Court Ousts Appeals Judge for Breaching Ethics Standards



The Georgia Supreme Court has rendered a decision to remove a state appeals judge from his position following an extensive investigation. The judge, Christian Coomer, who had previously served as a state legislator and was a member of the Atlanta-based Georgia Court of Appeals, faced allegations of violating campaign finance regulations and exploiting an elderly client.

The ruling, issued on Wednesday, upheld the conclusions of a hearing panel that had found Coomer's actions to be in bad faith and driven by personal financial gain. The court's decision stressed that Coomer's repeated disregard for legal regulations and professional ethics eroded the public's confidence in his capacity to impartially administer the law in the cases brought before him.

In a comprehensive 49-page opinion, the Georgia Supreme Court expressed its concern, asserting, "By demonstrating a pattern of refusing to comply with the law and professional norms when noncompliance was in his interest, he has undermined the public's trust in his ability to follow and apply the law honestly and fairly in cases that come before him."

**See also: [Supreme Court Urged to Implement Ethics and Transparency Reforms, According to ABA Task Force](#)**

In response to the court's decision, Coomer conveyed his disappointment in a statement, conceding, "I acknowledge that my own errors in judgment resulted in the Supreme Court's decision." Coomer, a legal practitioner, had transitioned from his role as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives to assume the position of a judge on the Court of Appeals in 2018. Notably, before his formal induction as a judge, Coomer utilized campaign funds to finance a family trip to Hawaii. Despite his attempt to justify the trip as having a legislative purpose, the court's opinion pointed out that it was primarily a leisure trip.

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This judicial controversy unfolded with Coomer being suspended from his judicial duties, with pay, since January 2021, subsequent to the initiation of disciplinary charges by the state's Judicial Qualifications Commission against him. The commission's hearing panel undertook a comprehensive investigation into multiple facets of Coomer's conduct.

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Of particular interest was Coomer's involvement with James Filhart, an elderly client, prior to his judicial appointment. Coomer played a pivotal role in drafting Filhart's will, positioning himself initially as the executor, and later including his wife in the role, while designating his own children as beneficiaries. More notably, Coomer secured a loan of \$130,000 from Filhart, leveraging terms of repayment that he himself had drafted. After thorough examination, the hearing panel concluded that Coomer had abused the trust Filhart placed in him, leveraging the vulnerable position of his elderly client to gain control over his financial assets.

The Georgia Supreme Court's decision to remove Coomer from office marks a significant stance on maintaining the integrity of the judiciary. It underscores the critical importance of adhering to ethical and legal standards for judges, who play a fundamental role in upholding the rule of law and public trust in the justice system.

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