



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

CJC Nos. 19-0755 & 19-0759

**PUBLIC ADMONITION
AND
ORDER OF ADDITIONAL EDUCATION**

**HONORABLE LEE HARPER WILSON
HARRIS COUNTY CRIMINAL COURT AT LAW NO. 10
HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on August 5-6, 2020, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable Lee Harper Wilson, Judge of Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 10, Houston, Harris County, Texas. Judge Wilson was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided written responses. Judge Wilson appeared before the Commission on August 5, 2020 and gave testimony.

BACKGROUND

On January 29, 2019, Judge Wilson advised Sarai Garza ("Garza"), a paralegal employed by a local attorney, that she was not permitted to sit in a section of the courtroom reserved for attorneys. Judge Wilson then stepped down from the bench, approached Garza, and admonished her for doing so, speaking to her in a manner Garza found to be disrespectful and upsetting. According to Garza, Judge Wilson grabbed her arm during this episode, and she was left feeling "humiliated and traumatized" and "terrified" of Judge Wilson.

Garza filed a criminal complaint with the Houston Police Department accusing Judge Wilson of assault. On February 25, 2019, a Harris County grand jury declined to bring an indictment against Judge Wilson.

During his appearance before the Commission, Judge Wilson denied he treated Garza with a lack of patience, dignity, and courtesy, but acknowledged he stepped off the bench, approached Garza, and admonished her for sitting in the section of the courtroom reserved for attorneys. Judge Wilson testified

he has no recollection of touching Garza, though a number of witnesses gave statements to the Houston Police Department indicating he did in fact touch her.

After considering the evidence before it, the Commission enters the following Findings and Conclusion set forth below.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Honorable Lee Harper Wilson was the judge for Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 10, Houston, Harris County, Texas.
2. On January 29, 2019, Judge Wilson stepped off the bench, approached Sarai Garza, touched or grabbed Garza on her arm or elbow, and admonished her for sitting in a section of the courtroom reserved for attorneys.
3. Judge Wilson intended to engage in the above-referenced conduct, and the conduct was unwelcomed by Garza.
4. The incident took place in Judge Wilson's open courtroom, and was witnessed by those involved, court staff, and other members of the public.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

1. Canon 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct states that a judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity.
2. Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution prohibits a judge from engaging in willful conduct that casts public discredit upon the judiciary.

CONCLUSION

Based on the record before it and the factual findings recited above, the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct has determined that the Honorable Lee Harper Wilson, Judge of Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 10, Houston, Harris County, Texas, should be publicly admonished and ordered to obtain additional education for failing to treat Sarai Garza with patience, dignity, and courtesy by engaging in the unwarranted and unwelcome touching of Garza's person, willful conduct that cast public discredit upon the judiciary, in violation of Canon 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct and Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

Pursuant to this Order, Judge Wilson must obtain **2 hours** of instruction with a mentor, in addition to his required judicial education for Fiscal Year 2020. In particular, the Commission desires that Judge Wilson receive this additional education in the area of sexual harassment training. Pursuant to the authority contained in §33.036 of the Texas Government Code, the Commission authorizes the disclosure of certain information relating to this matter to the Texas Center for the Judiciary to the extent necessary to enable that entity to assign the appropriate mentor for Judge Wilson.

Judge Wilson shall complete the additional **2 hours** of instruction recited above within **60 days** from the date of written notification from the Commission of the assignment of a mentor. Upon receiving such notice, it is Judge Wilson's responsibility to contact the assigned mentor and schedule the additional education.

Upon the completion of the **2 hours** of education described herein, Judge Wilson shall sign and return the Respondent Judge Survey indicating compliance with this Order. Failure to complete, or report the completion of, the required additional education in a timely manner may result in further Commission action.

The Commission has taken this action pursuant to the authority conferred it in Article V, §1-a(8) of the Texas Constitution in a continuing effort to promote confidence in and high standards for the judiciary.

Issued this the 8th day of September, 2020.



David Hall

Chairman, State Commission on Judicial Conduct