This list categorizes the types of conduct that prompted the Georgia Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) to investigate, discipline, or seek the removal of Georgia judges. For a more complete list of judges disciplined as a result of JQC action, visit our homepage and click “JQC Successes.”

DISCIPLINED JUDGES BY CATEGORIES

Racism/Race Discrimination

In February 2016, Fannin County Superior Court Judge Roger Bradley resigned after a JQC investigation into his use of the N-word during a trial.

After serving for 14 years, Cobb County Chief Magistrate Frank R. Cox resigned in early 2015. At the time of his resignation, the JQC was investigating complaints about Cox’s judicial temperament and how he treated people in his courtroom. For example, in 2014, Cox aggressively questioned an alleged victim of domestic abuse in open court about her heritage and why she wasn’t married to the father of her children.

In 2010, the JQC called for the resignation of Twiggs County Probate Judge Kenneth Fowler after an investigation into allegations that Fowler, among other things referred to African-Americans as “colored.” The Georgia Supreme Court permanently removed Fowler from the bench.

Using the Bench to Retaliate Against Others

After a trial into various ethical allegations, Twiggs County Probate Judge Kenneth Fowler retaliated against probation officers who testified against him. After this retaliation was discovered, the JQC suspended Fowler from the bench. The Georgia Supreme Court then permanently barred him from the bench.

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned after a JQC investigation into allegations that Doss threatened people who complained about his behavior on the bench.

Lookout Mountain Circuit Superior Court Judge Kristina Cook Connelly Graham was publicly reprimanded in 2010 after the JQC investigated allegations that she berated and cursed at GBI officials because her name had been mentioned in their investigations into drug activities. In another matter, Graham summoned prosecutors to her office to discuss an investigation of another judge who was being represented by Graham’s father. As with the first incident, Graham reprimanded and attempted to intimidate the prosecutors.

The JQC investigated Murray County Chief Magistrate Bryant Cochran for having drugs planted on a female defendant who refused his sexual advances. Following a JQC investigation, Cochran resigned, and was later sentenced to five years in federal prison for, among other things, sexually assaulting a county employee.
Using the Bench to Retaliate Against Others (cont.)

In 2011, the Georgia Supreme Court permanently removed Catoosa County Magistrate Judge Anthony Peters from the bench after a JQC investigation into allegations that Peters committed multiple acts of judicial misconduct, including going to a man’s home, identifying himself as a judge, and proceeding to kick in the man’s doors on behalf of a loved one.

Mishandling of the law

In 2010, the JQC called for the resignation of Twiggs County Probate Judge Kenneth Fowler due to allegations that Fowler, among other things, required defendants to prove their innocence, when in fact, defendants do not have to prove anything at trial. It is the prosecutor who must prove the defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The JQC also alleged that Fowler applied the wrong legal standard in finding defendants guilty (i.e. he used a “preponderance of the evidence” standard instead of “beyond a reasonable doubt”). Because of this allegation and many others, the Georgia Supreme Court permanently barred Fowler from the bench.

The JQC investigated Rabun County Chief Magistrate Judge Lawrence Ford, who allegedly violated the state’s rules of criminal procedure while on the bench; he resigned in 2012.

In 2014, the JQC investigated allegations that Monroe County Probate Judge Karen Pitman mishandled traffic citations. Following this probe, Pitman retired.

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned amid a JQC investigation into allegations that Doss demanded that a prosecutor agree to pretrial diversion in a criminal case, or else Doss would dismiss the charge (which he, as a judge, cannot do); when the prosecutor refused to agree, Doss left the bench, came within inches of the prosecutor, and while yelling and screaming, said the prosecutor “would regret having come to the Appalachian Circuit.”

The JQC brought corruption charges against Alapaha Circuit Judge Brooks Blitch, III for using his judicial office to advance his personal interests. A JQC investigation led to multiple ethical misconduct allegations, including that Blitch reduced the sentences of certain state prisoners without legal authority, and signed an illegal order removing a judge. Blitch resigned following the JQC probe. He was later prosecuted in federal court and temporarily prohibited from practicing law.
Mishandling of the law (cont.)

Former Chief Judge of the Coweta Judicial Circuit William Lee, Jr. stepped down in 2012 after a JQC investigation into allegations that he tossed out a defendant’s statutory rape conviction for having sex with a 14 year old girl, and replaced it with a charge that wouldn’t subject the defendant to the sex offender registry. This was done without informing the prosecution or the victim’s family as required by law. Lee only reinstated the original conviction after the prosecution learned of the backdoor deal.

In 2008, the JQC publicly reprimanded Glascock County Magistrate Chief Judge Misty May and barred her from holding judicial office again. The reprimand was the result of May’s mismanagement of court funds, handling matters that were outside the scope and jurisdiction of her position, and having improper, ex parte conversations with people appearing in her court.

Stone Mountain Superior Court Judge Cynthia Becker resigned in response to multiple allegations that she lied to JQC investigators about her handling of a criminal case, and her refusal to grant bond to a criminal defendant who was entitled to bond.

Sexism/Sex Discrimination/Sexual Harassment

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned amid a JQC investigation into allegations that Doss barred female bailiffs from his courtroom in Pickens County.

After serving 14 years as Cobb County’s chief magistrate, Frank R. Cox resigned in early 2015. At the time of his resignation, the JQC was investigating complaints about Cox’s judicial temperament and how he treated people in his courtroom. For example, in 2014, Cox aggressively questioned an alleged victim of domestic abuse in open court about her heritage and why she wasn’t married to the father of her children.

Cobb County Superior Court Judge Kenneth Nix resigned in 2010 amid a JQC investigation into allegations that he inappropriately touched a female prosecutor and investigator who posed with Nix for a picture.

On August 1, 2016, the JQC reprimanded Floyd County Superior Court Judge Bryant Durham after a heated exchange with a defendant charged with murder that devolved into comments about the defendant’s sexuality and masturbation. The defendant made many lewd comments throughout the hearing, and threatened to kill the judge and his family. Bryant, in turn, said the defendant looked like a “queer,” and “I’ll bet everybody enjoys sucking your cock.” In response to the defendant’s multiple references to his own genitalia, Bryant said “you’re fixated on butts and dicks,” and then invited the defendant to masturbate in open court.
Sexism/Sex Discrimination/Sexual Harassment (cont.)

In 2010, former Griffin Circuit Superior Court Judge Johnnie Caldwell, Jr. stepped down amid a JQC investigation into allegations that Caldwell made rude, sexually suggestive comments to a female attorney. He also agreed not to seek judicial office again. Two years later, former judge Caldwell joined the Georgia House of Representatives. This year, Representative Caldwell co-sponsored the constitutional amendment seeking the complete overhaul of the JQC.

In 2013, Hart County Probate Judge Bobby Jo Smith met with a woman seeking guidance with a traffic citation in another county. Judge Smith called the court where the woman’s case would be heard and lied about his relationship to the woman, claiming she was his granddaughter. Following the call, Judge Smith kissed the woman without her consent and attempted to touch her breasts. He was later arrested and charged with battery and criminal attempt to commit sexual battery. Smith announced his retirement during a JQC investigation into this conduct.

The JQC investigated Murray County Chief Magistrate Bryant Cochran for abusing his office for personal gain. In 2012, Cochran told a female defendant appearing before him that he would grant her a favorable ruling in exchange for sex. Cochran explained that he needed a mistress he could trust. He then asked her to return to court the next day wearing a dress with no underwear. The defendant refused and went public with her experience with Cochran’s propositions. Days later, Cochran directed law enforcement to plant methamphetamine on the defendant during a traffic stop, leading to her arrest; charged were dismissed soon after. Following the JQC’s investigation, Cochran resigned, and was later sentenced to five years in federal prison for, among other things, sexually assaulting a county employee.

Nepotism

The JQC brought corruption charges against Alapaha Circuit Judge Brooks Blitch III for allegedly using his judicial office to advance his personal interests. A JQC investigation led to multiple ethical misconduct allegations, including that Blitch ordered the collection of unauthorized court fees that were then deposited in a secret account and paid to Blitch and other court employees. The JQC also alleged that Blitch presided over cases involving his family members, and enlisted other judges in the circuit to threaten individuals with arrest if they did not resolve money disputes with his son. Blitch resigned following the JQC probe. He was later prosecuted in federal court and temporarily barred from practicing law.

In 2007, the JQC suspended Clinch County Magistrate Judge Linda Peterson from the bench following her federal indictment for perjury and making false statements to a grand jury denying that she recommended to jailed defendants that they use her father’s bond services. She was later indicted in federal court on the same grounds.
Nepotism (cont.)

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned amid a JQC investigation into Doss’s alleged purchase of personal computers for his family and others using government funds, and his purported show of favoritism during a trial towards an attorney representing one party; during the trial, Doss allegedly left the bench to hug this attorney in front of the jury.

Brunswick Circuit Chief Judge Amanda Williams resigned in 2012 after the JQC brought formal charges showing preferential treatment to relatives practicing in her court and allowing her personal lawyer to appear before her. Williams is now under indictment for her actions on the bench.

In 2011, Chattahoochee Circuit Superior Court Judge Douglas Pullen stepped down and agreed never to seek judicial office again shortly after the JQC and a special prosecutor began investigating allegations that Pullen tipped off targets of an undercover FBI operation.

Lookout Mountain Circuit Superior Court Judge Kristina Cook Connelly Graham was publicly reprimanded in 2010 after the JQC investigated allegations that she berated and cursed at GBI officials because her name had been mention in their investigations into drug activities. In another matter, Graham summoned prosecutors to her office to discuss an investigation of another judge who was being represented by Graham’s father. As with the first incident, Graham reprimanded and attempted to intimidate the prosecutors.

Paulding Circuit Superior Court Judge James Osborne entered early retirement during a 2014 JQC investigation. Among the allegations was that Osborne’s staff had close ties to a bonding company used by criminal defendants appearing in his court. Osborne also drew nepotism allegations because his swift departure from a reelection bid paved the way for his daughter to fill his seat. His daughter withdrew from the race once the JQC began its inquiry.

Enotah Circuit Chief Judge Lynn Alderman resigned in 2012 and agreed to never seek or to accept a judicial position following a JQC investigation into the impermissible use of her office to influence a state prisoner’s sentence.

Criminal Activity

The JQC brought corruption charges against Alapaha Circuit Judge Brooks Blitch, III for using his judicial office to advance his personal interests. A JQC investigation led to multiple ethical misconduct allegations, including that Blitch ordered the collection of unauthorized court fees that were then deposited in a secret account and paid to Blitch and other court employees. The JQC also alleged that Blitch reduced the sentences of
Criminal Activity (cont.)
certain state prisoners without legal authority, presided over cases involving his family members,
threatened certain attorneys appearing in his court, and signed an illegal order removing a
juvenile court judge. Blitch resigned following the JQC probe. He was later prosecuted in federal
court and temporarily prohibited from practicing law.

Clinch County State Court Judge and Alapaha Circuit Juvenile Court Judge Berrien
L. Sutton resigned in 2008 after the JQC charged him with ordering the collection of illegal
court fees alongside Brooks Blitch, III, appointing non-lawyers as magistrates, and
impermissibly attempting to interfere with a case. He was later prosecuted in federal court.

In 2007, the JQC suspended Clinch County Magistrate Judge Linda Peterson from the
bench following her federal indictment for perjury and making false statements to a grand jury
denying that she recommended to jailed defendants that they use her father’s bail bonding
services. She was later indicted in federal court on the same grounds.

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned after the
JQC investigated allegations that Doss, among other things, purchased personal computers for
his family and others using government funds.

In 2009, the JQC suspended Pickens County Magistrate Dana Blackwell following her
arrest for allegedly taking funds from the court. She later resigned.

In 2011, the Georgia Supreme Court permanently removed Catoosa County Magistrate
Judge Anthony Peters from the bench after the JQC investigated allegations that Peters
committed multiple acts of judicial misconduct, including going to a man’s home, identifying
himself as a judge, and proceeding to kick in the man’s doors, smoking marijuana once a week,
and pulling a gun in the Catoosa County Courthouse.

Brunswick Circuit Chief Judge Amanda Williams resigned in 2012 after the JQC brought
formal charges against her for jailing defendants indefinitely without access to lawyers, jailing
people for using the term “baby mama” or for challenging drug test results, showing preferential
treatment to relatives practicing in her court, using abusive and insulting language in court, and
allowing her personal lawyer to appear before her. She is now under indictment for allegedly
lying under oath during an investigation into her judicial practices and violating her oath of
office.

The JQC investigated and then filed formal charges against Camden County Probate Judge
Shirley Wise for theft of vital records fees, accepting bribes, submitting false invoices, and
forgery -- offenses for which she was also prosecuted. In 2012, Wise pleaded guilty to theft by
taking, theft by deception and violating her oath of office, all
Criminal Activity (cont.)

felonies. She was sentenced to serve seven years on probation, fined $1,000 and ordered to pay $5,500 in restitution. She also agreed not to seek or accept appointment to public office.

In 2013, Crawford County Chief Magistrate Judge Andrea Peterman resigned following a JQC investigation into her alleged misuse of public funds and the violation of her oath. These allegations led to her arrest by GBI agents.

DeKalb County State Court Judge Barbara Mobley stepped down in 2011 after the JQC filed a complaint alleging 16 violations, including that Mobley used probationers to work at her church and on her election campaign.

In 2011, the JQC publicly reprimanded Willie C. Weaver, Sr., Judge of the Municipal Courts for the cities of Albany (Dougherty County), Dawson (Terrell County), and Sylvester (Worth County) following a physical altercation with his wife that resulted in his arrest.

In 2012, David Barrett, then chief judge of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, pulled out a handgun in open court, pretended to offer it to a witness, and told her she could use his gun to kill her lawyer.

In 2013, Hart County Probate Judge Bobby Jo Smith met with a woman who was seeking guidance with a traffic citation in another county. Judge Smith called the court where the woman’s case would be heard and lied about his relationship to the woman, claiming she was his granddaughter. Following the call, Judge Smith kissed the woman without her consent and attempted to touch her breasts. He was later arrested and charged with battery and criminal attempt to commit sexual battery. Smith announced his retirement during a JQC investigation into this conduct.

In 2009, the JQC suspended Jefferson County Chief Magistrate Judge Murry Bowman indefinitely after he was charged with aggravated assault against his wife.

The JQC investigated Murray County Chief Magistrate Bryant Cochran for abusing his office for personal gain. In 2012, Cochran told a female defendant appearing before him that he would grant her a favorable ruling in exchange for sex. Cochran explained that he needed a mistress he could trust. He then asked her to return to court the next day wearing a dress with no underwear. The defendant refused and went public about her experience with Cochran’s propositions. Days later, Cochran directed law enforcement to plant methamphetamine on the defendant during a traffic stop, leading to her arrest; charges were dismissed soon after. Following the JQC’s investigation, Cochran resigned, and was later sentenced to five years in federal prison for, among other things, sexually assaulting a county employee.
**Criminal Activity (cont.)**

The JQC suspended **Chattooga County State Court Judge Carlton Vines** after a 2007 DUI in which he told the arresting officers that he would “make it worth their while” if they took him home (he’d previously been suspended in 2003 after a DUI arrest). The JQC further investigated charges of election fraud stemming from Vines’s illegal possession of voter ballots during a contested race for his seat. As a result of this investigation (and simultaneous indictment for voter fraud), Vines relinquished his seat and agreed not to seek judicial office again.

**Abusive Treatment of the Public and Staff**

In 2010, **Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr.** resigned after the JQC investigated allegations that Doss threatened people who complained about his behavior on the bench; demanded that a prosecutor agree to pretrial diversion in a criminal case, or else Doss would dismiss the charge; when the prosecutor refused to agree, Doss left the bench, came within inches of the prosecutor, and while yelling and screaming, said the prosecutor “would regret having come to the Appalachian Circuit”; and barred female bailiffs from his courtroom in Pickens County.

On August 1, 2016, the JQC reprimanded **Floyd County Superior Court Judge Bryant Durham** after a heated exchange with a defendant charged with murder that devolved into comments about the defendant’s sexuality and masturbation. The defendant made many lewd comments throughout the hearing, and threatened to kill the judge and his family. Bryant, in turn, said the defendant looked like a “queer,” and “I’ll bet everybody enjoys sucking your cock.” In response to the defendant’s multiple references to his own genitalia, Bryant said “you’re fixated on butts and dicks,” and then invited the defendant to masturbate in open court.

**Brunswick Circuit Chief Judge Amanda Williams** resigned in 2012 after the JQC brought formal charges against her for jailing defendants indefinitely without access to lawyers, jailing people for using the term “baby mama” or for challenging drug test results, showing preferential treatment to relatives practicing in her court, using abusive and insulting language in court, and allowing her personal lawyer to appear before her. Williams is now under indictment for allegedly lying about some of her actions during an investigation into her conduct.

After serving for 14 years, **Cobb County Chief Magistrate Frank R. Cox** resigned in early 2015. At the time of his resignation, the JQC was investigating complaints about Cox’s judicial temperament and how he treated people in his courtroom. For example, in 2014, Cox aggressively questioned an alleged victim of domestic abuse in open court about her heritage and why she wasn’t married to the father of her children.
Abusive Treatment of the Public and Staff (cont.)

In 2012, **David Barrett**, then chief judge of the Enotah Judicial Circuit pulled out a handgun in open court, pretended to offer it to a witness, and told her she could use his gun to kill her lawyer.

In 2013, **Hart County Probate Judge Bobby Jo Smith** met with a woman who was seeking guidance with a traffic citation in another county. Judge Smith called the court where the woman’s case would be heard and lied about his relationship to the woman, claiming she was his granddaughter. Following the call, Judge Smith kissed the woman without her consent and attempted to touch her breasts. He was later arrested and charged with battery and criminal attempt to commit sexual battery. Smith announced his retirement during a JQC investigation into this conduct.

**Lookout Mountain Circuit Superior Court Judge Kristina Cook Connelly Graham** was publicly reprimanded in 2010 after the JQC investigated allegations that she berated and cursed at GBI officials because her name had been mentioned in their investigations into drug activities. In another matter, Graham summoned prosecutors to her office to discuss an investigation of another judge who was being represented by Graham’s father. As with the first incident, Graham reprimanded and attempted to intimidate the prosecutors.

In 2011, the Georgia Supreme Court permanently removed **Catoosa County Magistrate Judge Anthony Peters** from the bench after the JQC investigated multiple allegations of judicial misconduct, including 1) going to a man’s home, identifying himself as a judge, and proceeding to kick in the man’s doors, 2) refusing to work hours assigned to him, 3) displaying a picture of a confidential informant and identifying the man as such, 4) calling into a local television show, attempting to disguise his voice with several foreign accents, and then calling the Catoosa Sheriff (who was on the show) a “spineless jelly spine” and accusing the Sheriff of having “crapped himself”; 5) smoking marijuana once a week, and 6) pulling a gun in the Catoosa County Courthouse.

The JQC suspended **Chattooga County State Court Judge Carlton Vines** after a 2007 DUI in which he told the arresting officers that he would “make it worth their while” if they took him home (he’d previously been suspended in 2003 after a DUI arrest). The JQC further investigated charges of election fraud stemming from Vines’s illegal possession of voter ballots during a contested race for his seat. As a result of this investigation (and simultaneous indictment for voter fraud), Vines relinquished his seat and agreed not to seek judicial office again.

The JQC investigated **Murray County Chief Magistrate Bryant Cochran** for abusing his office for personal gain. In 2012, Cochran told a female defendant appearing before him that he would grant her a favorable ruling in exchange for sex. Cochran
Abusive Treatment of the Public and Staff (cont.)

explained that he needed a mistress he could trust. He then asked her to return to court the next
day wearing a dress with no underwear. The defendant refused and went public about Cochran’s
propositions. Days later, Cochran directed law enforcement to plant methamphetamine on the
defendant during a traffic stop, leading to her arrest; charges were dismissed soon after.
Following the JQC’s investigation, Cochran resigned, and was later sentenced to five years in
federal prison for, among other things, sexually assaulting a county employee.

In 2010, the JQC called for the resignation of **Twiggs County Probate Judge Kenneth Fowler** after an investigation into allegations that Fowler, among other things, cursed at defendants and referred to African-Americans as “colored.” Following a trial on the ethics allegations, the JQC recommended Fowler’s removal from the bench. The Georgia Supreme Court then suspended Fowler for retaliating against witnesses who testified against him at the ethics trial. The Georgia Supreme Court later permanently removed Fowler from the bench.

**Dooly County Probate Judge Dwayne D. Forehand** retired in 2008 after the JQC investigated multiple allegations of misconduct, including the improper treatment of people appearing in his court. The JQC previously reprimanded Forehand for striking a sheriff’s deputy during a traffic stop.

**DUI/Alcohol/Drug Abuse**

The JQC privately reprimanded **Atlanta Municipal Court Judge Andrew Mickle** in 2009, following a DUI arrest. Mickle later pleaded no contest to the charge.

In 2011, the Georgia Supreme Court permanently removed **Catoosa County Magistrate Judge Anthony Peters** from the bench after the JQC investigated multiple allegations of judicial misconduct, including 1) going to a man’s home, identifying himself as a judge, and proceeding to kick in the man’s doors, 2) refusing to work hours assigned to him, 3) displaying a picture of a confidential informant and identifying the man as such, 4) calling into a local television show, attempting to disguise his voice with several foreign accents, and then calling the Catoosa Sheriff (who was on the show) a “spineless jelly spine” and accusing the Sheriff of having “crapped himself”; 5) smoking marijuana once a week, and 6) pulling a gun in the Catoosa County Courthouse.

The JQC suspended **Chattooga County State Court Judge Carlton Vines** after a 2007 DUI in which he told the arresting officers that he would “make it worth their while” if they took him home (he’d previously been suspended in 2003 after a DUI arrest). The JQC further investigated charges of election fraud stemming from Vines’s illegal possession of voter ballots during a contested race for his seat. As a result of this
DUI/Alcohol/Drug Abuse (cont.)

investigation (and simultaneous indictment for voter fraud), Vines relinquished his seat and agreed not to seek judicial office again.

In 2012, the JQC reprimanded Washington County State Court Judge Robert W. Wommack, Jr., following his arrest for DUI and excessive speeding.

The JQC issued a private reprimand against Monroe County Chief Magistrate Judge Jeffrey Davis after his 2012 DUI arrest.

The JQC issued Southwestern Circuit Chief Judge Rucker Smith a private reprimand after his arrest for DUI, driving with an open container, and speeding in 2012.

Embezzlement/Misuse of Government Funds

The JQC brought corruption charges against Alapaha Circuit Judge Brooks Blitch, III for using his judicial office to advance his personal interests. A JQC investigation led to multiple ethical misconduct allegations, including that he ordered the collection of unauthorized court fees that were then deposited in a secret account and paid to Blitch and other court employees. Blitch resigned following the JQC probe. He was later prosecuted in federal court and temporarily prohibited from practicing law.

Clinch County State Court Judge and Alapaha Circuit Juvenile Court Judge Berrien L. Sutton resigned in 2008 after the JQC charged him with ordering the collection of illegal court fees alongside Brooks Blitch, III, appointing non-lawyers as magistrates, and impermissibly attempting to interfere with a case. He was later prosecuted in federal court.

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned after the JQC investigated Doss’s alleged purchase of personal computers for his family and others using government funds.

In 2009, the JQC suspended Pickens County Magistrate Dana Blackwell following her arrest for allegedly taking funds from the court. She later resigned.

The JQC investigated and then filed formal charges against Camden County Probate Judge Shirley Wise for theft of vital records fees, accepting bribes, submitting false invoices, and forgery, offenses for which she was also prosecuted. In 2012, Wise pleaded guilty to theft by taking, theft by deception and violating her oath of office, all felonies. She was sentenced to serve seven years on probation, fined $1,000 and ordered to pay $5,500 in restitution. She also agreed not to seek or accept appointment to public office.
Embezzlement/Misuse of Government Funds (cont.)

In 2013, Crawford County Chief Magistrate Judge Andrea Peterman resigned following a JQC investigation into her alleged misuse of public funds and the violation of her oath. These allegations led to her arrest by GBI agents.

Dooly County Probate Judge Dwayne D. Forehand retired in 2008 after a JQC investigation into multiple allegations, including financial mismanagement.

Floyd County Magistrate Chief Judge Chris Mathis resigned in 2010 amid a JQC probe into dozens of theft and fraud allegations that prosecutors later likened to a Ponzi-scheme. Three years later, a Floyd County jury convicted Mathis of 52 counts of theft and fraud involving over $1 million, and a court sentenced Mathis to 100 years in prison.

In 2008, the JQC publicly reprimanded Glascock County Magistrate Chief Judge Misty May and barred her from holding judicial office again. The reprimand was the result of May’s mismanagement of court funds, handling matters that were outside the scope and jurisdiction of her position, and having improper, *ex parte* conversations with people appearing in her court.

In 2013, the JQC issued a public reprimand of Grady County State Court Judge William Bass, Sr., for his unauthorized collection of “administrative costs” from criminal defendants appearing in his court, and seeking a pay raise due to his revenue-generating practices for the county. He also violated judicial canons prohibiting nepotism when he appointed his son to serve as the state court judge in his absence.

Paulding Circuit Superior Court Judge James Osborne entered early retirement during a 2014 JQC investigation. Among the allegations was that Osborne’s staff had close ties to a bonding company used by criminal defendants appearing in his court. Osborne also drew nepotism allegations because his swift departure from a reelection bid paved the way for his daughter to fill his seat. His daughter withdrew from the race once the JQC began its inquiry.

Sumter County Probate Judge Russ Barnes resigned in 2012 amid a JQC investigation into his alleged mishandling of funds and undermining public confidence while on the bench.

Inappropriate Relationships with Court Staff or Defendants

Chattahoochee Circuit Superior Court Judge Robert G. Johnston, III, resigned in 2010 after a meeting with the JQC’s chief investigator. According to newspaper reports, emails surfaced showing that Johnston had developed a personal relationship with a female drug court defendant.

Mountain Circuit Superior Court Judge Ernest Woods, III, resigned in 2010 amid a JQC probe. Woods reportedly had developed a personal relationship with a female defendant appearing in his court via Facebook, and offered help with her case.
Inappropriate Relationships with Court Staff or Defendants (cont.)

Mountain Circuit Superior Court Judge Jim Cornwell, Jr. resigned in 2010 after a JQC investigation into several allegations, including motions he granted favoring a woman he took to Las Vegas, and his handling of cases involving his personal divorce lawyer.

Using the Bench for Personal Gain

In 2013, the JQC issued a public reprimand of Grady County State Court Judge William Bass, Sr., for his unauthorized collection of “administrative costs” from criminal defendants appearing in his court, and seeking a pay raise due to his revenue-generating practices for the county. He also violated judicial canons prohibiting nepotism when he appointed his son to serve as the state court judge in his absence.

The JQC investigated Murray County Chief Magistrate Bryant Cochran for abusing his office for personal gain. In 2012, Cochran told a female defendant appearing before him that he would grant her a favorable ruling in exchange for sex. Cochran explained that he needed a mistress he could trust. He then asked her to return to court the next day wearing a dress with no underwear. The defendant refused and went public about Cochran’s propositions. Days later, Cochran directed law enforcement to plant methamphetamine on the defendant during a traffic stop, leading to her arrest; charged were dismissed soon after. Following the JQC’s investigation, Cochran resigned, and was later sentenced to five years in federal prison for, among other things, sexually assaulting a county employee.

The JQC brought corruption charges against Alapaha Circuit Judge Brooks Blitch, III for using his judicial office to advance his personal interests. A JQC investigation led to multiple ethical misconduct allegations, including that Blitch ordered the collection of unauthorized court fees that were then deposited in a secret account and paid to Blitch and other court employees. The JQC also alleged that Blitch presided over cases involving his family members.

Clinch County State Court Judge and Alapaha Circuit Juvenile Court Judge Berrien L. Sutton resigned in 2008 after the JQC charged him with ordering the collection of illegal court fees alongside Brooks Blitch, III. He was later prosecuted in federal court.

In 2007, the JQC suspended Clinch County Magistrate Judge Linda Peterson from the bench following her federal indictment for perjury and making false statements to a grand jury denying that she recommended to jailed defendants that they use her father’s bail bonding services. She was later indicted in federal court on the same grounds.

In 2010, Appalachian Circuit Superior Court Judge Oliver Doss, Jr. resigned after a JQC investigation into Doss’s alleged purchase of personal computers for his family and others using government funds.

Brunswick Circuit Chief Judge Amanda Williams resigned in 2012 after the JQC brought formal charges against her for showing preferential treatment to relatives practicing in her
Using the Bench for Personal Gain (cont.)

court, and allowing her personal lawyer to appear before her. Williams is now under indictment for allegedly lying during an investigation into some of her actions on the bench.

In 2013, Crawford County Chief Magistrate Judge Andrea Peterman resigned following a JQC investigation into her alleged misuse of public funds and the violation of her oath. These allegations led to her arrest by GBI agents.

DeKalb County State Court Judge Barbara Mobley stepped down in 2011 after the JQC filed a complaint alleging 16 violations, including that Mobley used probationers to work at her church and on her election campaign, unlawfully barred the public from her courtroom, and directed law enforcement to run criminal background reports on individuals for matters unrelated to law enforcement or judicial purposes.

The JQC suspended Chattooga County State Court Judge Carlton Vines after a 2007 DUI in which he told the arresting officers that he would “make it worth their while” if they took him home (he’d previously been suspended in 2003 after a DUI arrest). The JQC further investigated charges of election fraud stemming from Vines’s illegal possession of voter ballots during a contested race for his seat. As a result of this investigation (and simultaneous indictment for voter fraud), Vines relinquished his seat and agreed not to seek judicial office again.

In 2012, Ocmulgee Circuit Judge John Lee Parrott resigned during a JQC investigation into allegations that Parrott “allowed the prestige of his office to advance his private interests.”

Sumter County Probate Judge Russ Barnes resigned in 2012 amid a JQC investigation into his alleged mishandling of funds and undermining public confidence while on the bench.

Failing to obtain mandatory training

The JQC removed Lithonia Municipal Court Judge Melvin Johnson from the bench in 2014 for persistent failures to obtain mandatory training.

Habersham County Probate Judge Pam Wooley filed falsified records about her compliance with a mandatory training program. As a result of a 2015 JQC investigation into this conduct, Wooley was suspended from the bench for four months and publicly reprimanded.