



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

CJC Nos. 24-1101 & 25-0393

PUBLIC WARNING

**HONORABLE MELISSA MORRIS
263RD DISTRICT COURT
HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on April 8-9, 2026, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable Melissa Morris, judge of the 263rd District Court, in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Judge Morris was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided a written response.

After considering the evidence before it, the Commission enters the following Findings and Conclusions:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Honorable Melissa Morris was a judge for the 263rd District Court in Houston, Harris County, Texas.
2. On March 8, 2024, Assistant District Attorney Barbara Phillips ("Phillips") emailed Judge Morris requesting records from the pretrial services ("PTS") monitoring file for a criminal defendant. The records were not provided.
3. On April 16, 2024, a member of law enforcement, via email, requested the same records pursuant to a grand jury subpoena (the "Subpoena Email Chain"). Judge Morris inquired with Phillips regarding the request.
4. On April 19, 2024, Judge Morris forwarded the Subpoena Email Chain to the defendant's attorney, with Phillips included.
5. In four criminal cases before Judge Morris' court, the defendants pled guilty to a sex crime involving a child and were required to register as sex offenders pursuant to Texas Code of Criminal Procedure

Article 62.051 (the “Four Cases”).¹ Shortly after sentencing, each of the defendants in the Four Cases were deported back to their home country. Harris County’s Community Supervision and Corrections Department recommended warrants be issued in case any defendant(s) re-entered the United States.

6. The Harris County District Attorney’s Office (the “HCDAO”) became aware that Judge Morris had entered orders “early terminating” the deferred adjudication community supervision in the Four Cases. The *Order Unsatisfactorily Discharging Defendants from Community Supervision* in the Four Cases (the “Discharge Orders”) stated, “[T]he Court ORDERS defendant’s community supervision terminated. The Court further ORDERS, ADJUDGES AND DECREES that the defendant is discharged according to law.”
7. In response to the Discharge Orders, the HCDAO filed a *Motion to Reconsider* in the Four Cases. Three of the cases were heard by Judge Morris on December 11 and 12, 2024, and then subsequently reset in January 2025 (the “Reconsideration Hearings”).
8. After the Reconsideration Hearings were reset, the HCDAO filed a *Petition for Writs of Mandamus* (the “Writs”) to have the Discharge Orders vacated.² Prior to the appellate courts hearing the Writs, Judge Morris set aside the Discharge Orders, after which the Writs were dismissed as moot.
9. During the Reconsideration Hearings, Assistant District Attorney Ryan Kent (“Kent”) represented the State. On December 13, 2024, Judge Morris sent an email to Kent, with the HCDAO Appellate Division and Trial Bureau (and incoming D.A.-Elect) Chiefs carbon copied, with the Texas Lawyer’s Creed attached. In the email, Judge Morris alleged a lack of professionalism and disrespect on Kent’s part and closed by stating, “Please renew your commitment to professionalism ... as I am certain that Mr. Teare does not celebrate prosecutors who behave in a manner inconsistent with the mandate of respect and integrity.”
10. In her written response to the Commission, Judge Morris acknowledged breaching grand jury secrecy but stated it was a single mistake made as a “novice jurist trying to ensure that [she] was not violating [her] rules of ethics by having [e]x [p]arte communications.”
11. Judge Morris acknowledged erroneously issuing the Discharge Orders, explaining she believed it “would be saving the county time, money and resources.”
12. Judge Morris denied she failed to be patient, dignified and courteous towards Kent in sending the Kent Email, clarifying it was not meant as a threat but a reminder of the requirements of professionalism in the courtroom. Judge Morris also denied any of her actions were made in bad faith, the result of bias, or that they cast public discredit upon the judiciary.

¹ The four defendants: (1) *The State of Texas v. Oscar Ismael Perez*, Cause No. 1516897; (2) *The State of Texas v. Rigoberto Silva Sierra*, Cause No. 1692446; (3) *The State of Texas v. Meliton Crespo*, Cause No. 1756391; and (4) *The State of Texas v. Dennis Erazo-Sanchez*, Cause No. 1800737.

² The four Mandamus Cases: (1) *In re The State of Texas ex rel. Kim Ogg, Harris County District Attorney v. Hon. Melissa Morris, Presiding Judge, 263rd District Court of Harris County, Texas*, Cause No. 01-24-01011-CR; (2) *In re The State of Texas ex rel. Kim Ogg, Harris County District Attorney v. Hon. Melissa Morris, Presiding Judge, 263rd District Court of Harris County, Texas*, Cause No. 14-24-00979; (3) *In re The State of Texas ex rel. Kim Ogg, Harris County District Attorney v. Hon. Melissa Morris, Presiding Judge, 263rd District Court of Harris County, Texas*, Cause No. 14-24-00980; and (4) *In re The State of Texas ex rel. Kim Ogg, Harris County District Attorney v. Hon. Melissa Morris, Presiding Judge, 263rd District Court of Harris County, Texas*, Cause No. 14-24-00981.

RELEVANT STANDARDS AND AUTHORITIES

1. Canon 2A of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall comply with the law ...”
2. Canon 3B(2) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge ... shall maintain professional competence in [the law].”
3. Canon 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct provides, in relevant part, “A judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to ... lawyers ... with whom the judge deals in any official capacity, ...”
4. Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution provides, in relevant part, that a judge shall not engage in “willful or persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of the person’s duties or casts public discredit on the judiciary or on the administration of justice.”
5. Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 20A.202(b) provides, “A subpoena or summons relating to a grand jury proceeding or investigation must be kept secret to the extent and for as long as necessary to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of a matter before the grand jury.”
6. Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 42A.111(b) provides, in relevant part, “The judge may dismiss the proceedings and discharge a defendant before the expiration of the period of deferred adjudication community supervision ... except that the judge may not dismiss the proceedings and discharge a defendant charged with an offense requiring the defendant to register as a sex offender under Chapter 62.”

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 Melissa Morris, judge of the 263rd District Court, in Houston, Harris County, Texas, should be publicly warned for: (1) failing to comply with and maintain professional competence in the law when she: (a) breached grand jury secrecy by forwarding the Subpoena Email Chain to defense counsel; and (b) issued the Discharge Orders in the Four Cases in which the defendants were required to register as sex offenders; and (2) failed to be patient, dignified, and courteous towards Kent when sending the Kent Email. Judge Morris’ failures in the foregoing respects constituted willful and persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of her duties and cast public discredit on the judiciary or on the administration of justice, in violation of Canons 2A, 3B(2) and 3B(4) of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct and Article V, Section 1-a(6)A of the Texas Constitution.

The Commission has taken this action pursuant to the authority conferred it in Article V, Section 1-a(8) of the Texas Constitution in a continuing effort to protect the public and promote public confidence in the judicial system.

Issued this the 23rd day of April, 2026.

Ken Wise

Ken Wise
Vice Chair, State Commission on Judicial Conduct