



**BEFORE THE STATE COMMISSION
ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

CJC Nos. 20-0148 & 20-0469

PUBLIC ADMONITION

**HONORABLE SARAH ECKHARDT
FORMER TRAVIS COUNTY JUDGE
AUSTIN, TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS**

During its meeting on October 5-7, 2020, the State Commission on Judicial Conduct concluded a review of the allegations against the Honorable Sarah Eckhardt, former Travis County Judge, Austin, Travis County, Texas. Judge Eckhardt was advised by letter of the Commission's concerns and provided written responses. Judge Eckhardt appeared before the Commission on December 2, 2020 and gave testimony.

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 Sarah Eckhardt was the Travis County Judge, Austin, Travis County, Texas.
2. On January 24, 2017, Judge Eckhardt wore a pink knitted beanie with cat ears, referred to as a "pussy hat", while presiding over a meeting of the Travis County Commissioners Court.
3. When Judge Eckhardt introduced a proposed proclamation supporting reproductive health care, Judge Eckhardt adjusted her hat and said, "Get my cat ears going here for this one."
4. In 1984, a large tree limb fell on Governor Greg Abbott's back while he was jogging, leaving him forever paralyzed from the waist down.
5. On September 27, 2019, while appearing on a panel discussion at the Texas Tribune Festival, Judge Eckhardt made the remark that Governor Abbott "hates trees because one fell on him."

6. Judge Eckhardt expressed remorse for making the comment about Governor Abbott’s disability and later sent Governor Abbott a letter of apology, which she posted to her social media accounts and disseminated to local news outlets.
7. Tex. Gov’t Code §26.327 provides that the County Court of Travis County has the general jurisdiction of a probate court.

During her appearance before the Commission, Judge Eckhardt agreed with Findings of Fact 1 - 6, above.

RELEVANT STANDARD


Article V, Section 1-a(6) 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 Sarah Eckhardt, Former Travis County Judge, Austin, Travis County, Texas, should be publicly admonished for engaging in willful conduct that cast public discredit upon the judiciary in violation of Article V, Section 1-a(6) of the Texas Constitution when she; (i) wore a pink knitted beanie with cat ears referred to as a “pussy hat” during a public meeting of the Travis County Commissioners Court, an action that could be perceived as undignified, offensive and inappropriate; and, (ii) made the public remark that Governor Abbott “hates trees because one fell on him,” a comment which could be perceived as offensive, demeaning, and derogatory towards the governor and others with physical disabilities.

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

Issued this the 4th day of December, 2020.



David Hall
Chairman, State Commission on Judicial Conduct