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Subject: FW: NY commission urges reforms in judicial hiring
Attachments: ~WRD000.jpg

From: Lijo Panghat [mailto:dr.panghat@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 02, 2012 1:40 PM
To: Eliot Ivan Bernstein; eliot@iviewit.tv; Eliot Ivan Bernstein
Subject: NY commission urges reforms in judicial hiring

NY commission urges reforms in judicial hiring

<http://online.wsj.com/article/AP3d565b031cbc47a18832968ac417622a.html>

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — An oversight commission has urged New York judicial officials to reform hiring practices after an investigation showed one appeals court favored insiders who have relatives, friends or acquaintances there.

The State Commission on Judicial Conduct says the 2010 hiring of 25 staff under Presiding Justice Luis Gonzalez at the Appellate Division's First Department shows openings generally weren't advertised outside the court and were filled by those connected to judges or court workers. That court has jurisdiction in Manhattan and the Bronx.

Following a complaint about Gonzalez hiring his ex-wife, secretary's brother, executive assistant's nephew and driver's son, the commission says its probe shows hiring of non-lawyers there has been "a closed process for decades," with some exceptions.

Gonzalez says he hired qualified staff.

Administrative judges are meeting Tuesday on setting protocols.

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Top Judge Luis Gonzalez turned appeals court into patronage pit for family & friends: report

Hired ex-wife, two dozen others without advertising jobs

Judge Luis Gonzalez, who was investigated for patronage by the state Commission on Judicial Conduct.

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/top-judge-luis-gonzalez-turned-appeals-court-patronage-pit-family-amp-friends-report-article-1.1054383#ixzz1quE9ZRsy>

A top Bronx-based appeals judge turned the court system into a patronage trough for his family and the relatives of his top staff, an explosive new report alleges.

[Judge Luis Gonzalez](#), presiding justice of the appellate division's First Department, hired his ex-wife and five relatives of his top staffers, the report by the state Commission on Judicial Conduct found.

Gonzalez "moved the hiring practice into his chambers" in 2010 when he took the top spot on the appeals court that oversees Manhattan and the Bronx, the report states.

After a lengthy investigation, the commission found Gonzalez rushed to fill 25 open spots in late 2010 as the court faced budget cuts.

He turned the hiring process over to his executive assistant, [Susan Hernandez](#), and signed off on each hire himself - a practice not occurring in other New York courts, the report found.

In defending himself, Judge Gonzalez provided investigators with a list of 50 former First Department employees hired over the last 30 years he says were related to judges or other court employees. Commission officials declined to release the list.

None of the Gonzalez jobs were advertised outside the non-public areas of the courthouse.

"Virtually all 25 replacements got their jobs through word-of-mouth because they had acquaintances, friends, relatives or other contacts at the Appellate Division," the report found.

The judge passed along the resume of his his ex-wife, Vivian, to his assistant, Hernandez, then signed the hiring papers after Hernandez offered her a \$64,834-a-year job as associate appellate court clerk.

The judge instructed Hernandez "not to mention to anyone that [Vivian Gonzalez](#) was his ex-wife, ostensibly to avoid the appearance of favoritism."

The report notes that she worked as a paralegal at a higher salary than most paralegals.

The judge's assistant also interviewed and then hired her own nephew, even though he was not a college graduate and had never worked in the court system - both job requirements.

The judge approved of the hire and said he approved because "he discerned the young man was good with computers," the report states.

The commission declined to penalize Gonzalez but announced a top-to-bottom of all the appellate division's hiring practices.

The report called for reforms and noted that "accountability becomes more personal and direct as the (hiring) process gets closer to" the judges.

The judge's lawyer, [Ben Rubinowitz](#), noted that the commission had cleared Gonzalez of three other allegations of wrongdoing, including a claim that he arranged a no-show job for ex-city councilwoman [Maria Baez](#). He said the judge's ex-wife was "certainly more than qualified and did an excellent job."

Asked why the judge warned his assistant not to mention to anyone that the new hire was his ex, Rubinowitz said, "You would want to make sure that anyone who evaluated her was not pressured. He was avoiding the appearance of impropriety."

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/top-judge-luis-gonzalez-turned-appeals-court-patronage-pit-family-amp-friends-report-article-1.1054383#ixzz1quE3FM9N>