



Supreme Court of Georgia

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SUMMARIES OF OPINIONS

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INQUIRY CONCERNING JUDGE TAMMY STOKES (S19Z0269)

The Supreme Court of Georgia has ordered a public reprimand for **Judge Tammy Stokes**, Chief Judge of the **Chatham County** Recorder's Court, for her "habitual tardiness in starting court and her excessive absenteeism from the court," in violation of the Code Judicial Conduct.

Under today's unanimous opinion, the reprimand "shall be imposed on her in person in open court by a judge designated by this Court." Through an agreement between the parties, the matter resolves formal charges brought by the Director of the Judicial Qualifications Commission in September 2018 against Judge Stokes.

"During the past year-and-a-half, Judge Stokes often did not take the bench until more than an hour after the court's scheduled starting time," today's opinion says, adding that she "has offered no good cause to excuse this habitual tardiness. Accordingly, Judge Stokes failed to promote public confidence in the judiciary and to give her judicial duties precedence over all other activities."

In 2017, she missed court altogether on 38 of her scheduled court days; in 2018, she has already been absent 36 of her scheduled court days. "Furthermore, her absenteeism required the court to spend significant funds on judges pro tempore to fill in," the opinion says. "The court spent more than twice as much money on judges pro tempore to fill in for Judge Stokes as the other two Recorder's Court judges combined."

In mitigation, the Investigative Panel of the JQC considered Judges' Stokes's cooperation in responding to the allegations, her candor in admitting her tardiness and absences, her remorse,

and her “faithful service on that court for many years,” as well as “the fact that her absences and tardiness were due in part to then-pending litigation in which she was a party.”

IN OTHER CASES, the Supreme Court of Georgia has upheld **murder** convictions and life prison sentences for:

- * Justin Eric Dunn (Richmond Co.)
- * James S. Harris, Jr. (Chatham Co.)
- * Edwin Williams (Tift Co.)

DUNN V. THE STATE (S18A1284)
HARRIS V. THE STATE (S18A1305)
WILLIAMS V. THE STATE (S18A1454)

(Although the Supreme Court has upheld Williams’s felony murder conviction and sentence to life in prison, it has vacated his additional life prison sentence for criminal attempt to commit armed robbery. That count should have been merged with the felony murder count for sentencing purposes.)

IN OTHER DISCIPLINARY MATTERS, the Georgia Supreme Court has **granted a certificate of fitness for readmission** to the practice of law to attorney:

- * Freddie Darnell Harrell

IN THE MATTER OF: FREDDIE DARNELL HARRELL
(S18Z1390)