

**COUNCIL MEMBER MARGARET S. CHIN
COUNCIL MEMBER ROSIE MENDEZ**

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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**COMMUNITY MEMBERS JOIN LGBT
ADVOCATES AND BAR ASSOCIATIONS TO
DEMAND THAT VOTERS HAVE SAY ON
WHETHER TO KEEP INDEPENDENT JUSTICE
ON BENCH**

***Outrage over decision to remove Justice Doris Ling-Cohan, a
distinguished jurist responsible for groundbreaking LGBT
decision, from November's ballot***

CITY HALL - The Lower East Side and Chinatown communities rallied on the steps of City Hall today to express their outrage that the Hon. Justice Doris Ling-Cohan, the only Asian American woman justice in the New York State Appellate Court system, has been subjected to unfounded attacks on her character and work ethic.

Led by local representatives Council Members Margaret S. Chin and Rosie Mendez, Tuesday's rally included bar associations and LGBT advocates who joined community members to denounce the flawed and tainted process that resulted in the unprecedented refusal of the New York County Democratic Committee's judicial screening panel to recommend Justice Ling-Cohan for re-election to the Supreme Court.

*"For decades, Justice Doris Ling-Cohan has stood against powerful interests to protect the rights of tenants, working families, and everyday New Yorkers wanting to marry the one they love," said **Council Member Chin**. "Today, we stand up for her by denouncing the back-room deal that would deny this independent advocate of the people a voice on the bench. It is time to take rumors and character assassinations out of the judicial review process. We demand that a new judicial screening panel be formed immediately so that voters — and not those beholden to powerful interests — decide who will serve on our courts."*

"Today, I join residents from the Lower East Side and Chinatown communities who worked diligently to get Justice Doris Ling-Cohan on the bench," said Council Member Mendez. "For 20 years, Justice Ling-Cohan has had a distinguished career on the bench including an appointment to the Appellate Term just two years ago. It is inconceivable to me that someone who constantly writes opinions and dissents, including the landmark decision of Hernandez v. Robles (granting all New Yorkers the right to marry) would be denied an opportunity to return to the bench. A detailed explanation is owed to the justice with an opportunity for her to dispel any aspersions to her character and her work ethic. I join many in demanding that a new judicial screening panel be formed immediately."

Justice Ling-Cohan's distinguished career on the bench began on the Civil Court of the City of New York in 1995 when she became the first Asian-American in her district elected to public office. She has since been elected to the New York State Supreme Court before being appointed to the Appellate Term in 2014 — both historic firsts.

Among Justice Ling-Cohan's many decisions and dissents is her landmark ruling in Hernandez v. Robles in February 2005 that same-sex couples have a "fundamental right" to marry who they love.

To date, Justice Doris Ling-Cohan has not been officially informed of the decision to vote her off a panel of judges that will appear on November's ballot. However, rumors of her removal were confirmed last week in an article in the New York Post, which included unfounded statements assailing her character and reputation as a judge.

"We cannot have a democracy without an independent judiciary. Judicial independence is eroded when special interests, government or media attempt to influence, or punish judges for their legal, discretionary acts on the bench," said New York State Supreme Court Justice (ret.) Emily Jane Goodman. "Ending the career of a long-time justice whose life has been dedicated to the public sector not only deprives the public of her service but has a chilling effect on all other judges and potential judges. Judges must do what is right, acting within the law, without fearing that saving a litigant's home, or displeasing a lawyer or segment of the bar, or employing innovative procedures will result in her removal from the bench. Removing Justice Doris Ling-Cohan would be a disgraceful loss, a travesty based on sound and fury signifying nothing but the destruction of judicial independence."

*"I have known Doris Ling-Cohan for many years," said **Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-NY)**. "She has been a mentor and role model for the AAPI community, and I have always admired her legal intellect, fairness and commitment to justice. She is a distinguished and widely respected justice who authored a landmark ruling on marriage equality and other important decisions over the course of her accomplished career. I thank her for her service to our City, and would like to see her continue to serve on the bench."*

*"I respect the Independent Screening Panel process, but Justice Doris Ling-Cohan has always shown true courage and independence in her decisions. Regardless of the Screening Panel's recommendations, I urge delegates to the judicial nominating convention to put Justice Ling-Cohan on the ballot for reelection to the Supreme Court bench," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**.*

*"Our community is outraged to have the only Asian-American woman judge in the New York State Appellate Term be subjected to unfounded attacks on her character and her work ethic," said **Jerry Shiao, President of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association**. "Justice Doris Ling-Cohan has worked tirelessly for our community, and has fought to protect tenants across our City. As members of the community that first elected her to judicial office, we demand that Justice Ling-Cohan remain on the bench to serve all the people, not just special interests."*

*"We are surprised by this development," said **Susan Shin, President of the Asian American Bar Association of New York**. "Justice Ling-Cohan is a pillar in our community and a role model to generations of young lawyers. While we respect the Manhattan Democratic Party's panel process, we urge the party's Judiciary Committee to adopt a procedure to afford Justice Ling-Cohan the opportunity to seek reconsideration of this most unusual outcome."*

***Larry Lee, the executive director of The New York Asian Women's Center (NYAWC)** said, "Over 30 years ago Judge Doris Ling-Cohan was a founding board member of NYAWC. She always stood up for vulnerable victims of batterers' indiscriminately and unjustifiably wielding their power and exercising their control. Now it is time for all residents of New York City to stand up for an exemplary jurist."*

*"This decision by the screening panel defies all logic. Justice Ling-Cohan has fought to protect tenants for two decades, and has produced many well-written and scholarly dissents -- hardly the mark of a 'lazy' judge. We call for the immediate reconvening of the screening panel to ensure that Justice Ling-Cohan continues to be an independent voice on the bench," said **Michael McKee, Treasurer of the Tenants Political Action Committee**.*

*“Judge Doris Ling-Cohan has over 20 years of superior judicial history and a strong record of service to the City of New York. Her rulings on civil rights and against tenant harassment by predatory landlords have been applauded by the community. Clearly, the integrity of the judicial screening process has been compromised, so we ask that a new independent panel be constituted to review Judge Ling-Cohan’s record based on facts and not innuendo to ensure that she is on the ballot in November,” said **Chris Kui, Executive Director for Asian Americans for Equality.***

*“We must take special care to protect sitting judges, such as Justice Ling-Cohan, from the political consequences of making unpopular decisions. Judicial independence is a critical key to maintaining a free and open society, and faith in our legal system,” said **Bridgette Y. Ahn, President of the Korean American Lawyers Association of Greater New York.***

*“Doris Ling-Cohan is one of the most distinguished judges in the New York judiciary,” said **Allen Roskoff, president of the Jim Owles club, New York’s citywide progressive LGBT Democratic organization.** “Her historic decision in 2005 ordering New York City to provide marriage licenses to gay couples is just one such example. In her twenty years on the bench she has developed a well-deserved reputation for fairness and meticulously written decisions. Her rejection by this panel was tainted with politics and conflicts of interest. The panel was stacked with lawyers from the real estate and corporate sectors who were determined to remove her from the bench because of her fairness to tenants and consumers. We cannot afford to lose her.”*

*“Judge Doris Ling-Cohan has been an unfaltering pillar of justice in our community for her entire career,” said **Council Member Peter Koo.**” For 20 years, she has repeatedly made herself available to our community all while managing a large caseload of complex cases. She is known for her work of demystifying the courts so that those without lawyers, or who are not English-proficient, can have equal access to the system. Judge Doris Ling-Cohan deserves to be judged with the same objectivity, fairness and respect that she has shown to thousands of cases over the course of her career.”*

*“Justice Ling-Cohan has demonstrated that she is well qualified by her distinguished service as a Judge. New York is a better place when our judiciary reflects the diversity of our state and when our judges recognize critical civil rights must be protected. Justice Ling-Cohan has done so and I hope that she will continue to serve the people of New York,” said **State Sen. Toby Ann Stavisky.***

*“She will forever remain a hero to members of LeGaL and the entire LGBT community for issuing her landmark 2005 trial court ruling in *Hernandez v.**

*Robles, finding in favor of the fundamental right to marry for same-sex couples. She had the foresight to safeguard the equal protection of members of our community before it was politically popular, over six years before the Legislature acted and over a decade before the Supreme Court of the United States made it the constitutional law of the land,” said **the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York (LeGaL)**.*

*“I am personally shocked to hear that the NY democratic committee would not endorse Justice Ling-Cohan for reelection. This is devastating news for the Asian American legal community as she has been a trailblazer and a great mentor to many young attorneys. Justice Ling-Cohan is the only female appellate judge of Asian descent. I call upon the NY democratic committee to review its procedures and the process in which Justice Ling-Cohan's credentials were evaluated. She is an esteemed judge with a good record who deserves respect, fairness, and due process throughout this difficult time,” said **Eve Cho Guillergan, Board Member, Korean American Lawyers Association of Greater New York**.*

*“Justice Doris Ling-Cohan is an eminently qualified judge who applies the law meticulously and considers the human and social justice dimensions of the cases before her, particularly when litigants are vulnerable due to age, disability, poverty, and discrimination,” said **Joseph Rosenberg, Professor of Law at CUNY School of Law**.*

*“Judicial independence is imperative to achieving justice. If the status of sitting Judges is placed in jeopardy by the ebbs and flows of the political process, the foundation of our judicial system is placed at risk. Also troubling is the leaking of unconfirmed information allegedly discussed in the confidential review process to members of the press,” said **Paula Edgar, President of the Metropolitan Black Bar Association**. “The Metropolitan Black Bar Association stands with our fellow bar associations in calling for a reassessment of Judge Ling-Cohan’s candidacy and for a thorough review of the selection process going forward.”*

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