

Barred attorney removed from court

By Bruce Golding
Staff Writer

Suspended White Plains lawyer Doris L. Sassower was removed from a Manhattan courtroom yesterday while protesting a judge's decision to cut short a hearing into her legal challenge of the state's judicial-oversight agency.

State Supreme Court Justice Herman Cahn also threatened Sassower with a contempt ruling after she angrily opposed his decision to curtail her arguments so he could preside over a trial in progress.

"What an outrage!" Sassower yelled as court officers escorted her from Cahn's courtroom. About 20 members of Sassower's not-for-profit Center for Judicial Accountability attended the 25-minute court session.

Afterward, Sassower, 62, called her treatment a "gross affront to our system and our rights."

"It's the kind of thing you expect in a police state, but not in America," she said.

In legal papers filed last month, Sassower accused the state Commission on Judicial Conduct of "failing and refusing to perform" its duty to investigate allegations of judicial misconduct.



Doris L. Sassower

Sassower cited nine complaints she has made since 1986, all of which were dismissed without investigation. She also contended that the commission's actions were in part responsible for her ongoing professional suspension.

Sassower has been suspended indefinitely since June 1991 for refusing to undergo a competency examination ordered in the wake of professional misconduct allegations against her. She contends that her suspension is illegal retaliation for her attempts at judicial reform; earlier this month the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear her case.

During yesterday's court session, Sassower and her daughter, Elena, used a large chart to illustrate Sassower's arguments against the commission, including statistics showing that it summarily dismissed more than 87 percent of the 1,457 complaints filed in 1993.

Assistant Attorney General Oliver Williams, who appeared on behalf of the state commission, defended its actions as proper and lawful. He said the commission had the option of investigating or dismissing a complaint "based upon the face of the complaint and the allegations contained therein."

Cahn said he would issue a written ruling on Sassower's request for a temporary restraining order against the commission. The next court session in the case is scheduled for June 12 in Manhattan.