

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.



Doris L. Sassower

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.

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.

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.

EX "L"

Judge rejects suit by suspended lawyer

By Bruce Golding
Staff Writer

A state judge has thrown out a lawsuit in which a suspended White Plains lawyer challenged the performance of the state agency responsible for policing the conduct of New York's judges.

In a ruling published this week, state Supreme Court Justice Herman Cahn dismissed Doris L. Sassower's claims that the Commission on Judicial Conduct had failed and had refused to carry out its constitutionally mandated duties.

Cahn, who presides in Manhattan, also denied requests by Sassower for orders seeking appoint-



Doris L.
Sassower

ment of a special prosecutor and referral of the case for criminal investigation by federal, state and local authorities.

Sassower, founder of the not-for-profit Center for Judicial Accountability, vowed yesterday to appeal. In her lawsuit, she cited nine complaints she made to the commission since 1986, all of which were dismissed without investigation.

Sassower called Cahn's ruling "egregiously wrong" and said it was part of a pattern wherein "judges cover up for the commission so the commission will cover up for them."

"It's unfortunate that these lawsuits are not being heard impartially, on the merits, because of the political ramifications as far as the judiciary is concerned," she said. "There is just such an enormous self-interest here that is being protected."

Sassower also said Cahn's ruling revealed a bias against her

that she said was first demonstrated when he cut short her protests and ordered her removed from his Manhattan courtroom during a hearing in May.

"No one who was in that courtroom that day could have any confidence in the integrity of a decision by Justice Cahn after that," she said.

In a related matter, Sassower said the Center for Judicial Accountability had collected almost 1,000 signatures on a petition calling for Gov. George Pataki to appoint a special commission to hold public hearings on judicial corruption and the political manipulation of state judgeships.

Sassower, 62, has been suspended indefinitely from practicing law since June 1991 for failing to undergo a court-ordered competency exam. She contends that the order was illegal and that her suspension is thinly disguised retribution for her attempts at judicial reform.