

CODE OF CONDUCT  
FOR UNITED STATES JUDGES<sup>1</sup>  
(Proposed Revised Code 02/29/08)

**Introduction**

This Code applies to United States Circuit Judges, District Judges, Court of International Trade Judges, Court of Federal Claims Judges, Bankruptcy Judges, and Magistrate Judges. Certain provisions of this Code apply to special masters and commissioners as indicated in the "Compliance" section. In addition, the Tax Court, Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces have adopted this Code.

The Judicial Conference has authorized its Committee on Codes of Conduct to render advisory opinions concerning the application and interpretation of this Code only when requested by a judge to whom this Code applies. Requests for opinions and other questions<sup>2</sup> concerning this Code and its applicability should be addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Codes of Conduct as follows:

Chairman, Committee on Codes of Conduct  
c/o General Counsel  
Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts  
One Columbus Circle, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20544

202-502-1100

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<sup>1</sup> The Code of Conduct for United States Judges was initially adopted by the Judicial Conference on April 5, 1973, and was known as the "Code of Judicial Conduct for United States Judges." At its March 1987 session, the Judicial Conference deleted the word "Judicial" from the name of the Code. Substantial revisions to the Code were adopted by the Judicial Conference at its September 1992 session. Section C. of the Compliance section, following the code, was revised at the March 1996 Judicial Conference. Canons 3C(3)(a) and 5C(4) were revised at the September 1996 Judicial Conference. Canon 3C(1)(c) was revised at the September 1999 Judicial Conference. The Compliance section was clarified at the September 2000 Judicial Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Procedural questions may be addressed to: Office of the General Counsel, Administrative Office of the United States Courts, Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building, Washington, D.C., 20544, 202-502-1100.

**CANON 1: A JUDGE SHOULD UPHOLD THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY**

An independent and honorable judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society. A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high standards of conduct, and should personally observe those standards, so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved. The provisions of this Code should be construed and applied to further that objective.

**COMMENTARY**

Deference to the judgments and rulings of courts depends upon public confidence in the integrity and independence of judges. The integrity and independence of judges depend in turn upon their acting without fear or favor. Although judges should be independent, they should comply with the law, as well as the provisions of this Code. Public confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary is maintained by the adherence of each judge to this responsibility. Conversely, violation of this Code diminishes public confidence in the judiciary and thereby does injury to the system of government under law.

The Canons are rules of reason. They should be applied consistent with constitutional requirements, statutes, other court rules and decisional law, and in the context of all relevant circumstances. The Code is to be construed so as not to impinge on the essential independence of judges in making judicial decisions.

The Code is designed to provide guidance to judges and nominees for judicial office. The Code may also provide standards of conduct for application in proceedings under the Judicial Councils Reform and Judicial Conduct and Disability Act of 1980 (28 U.S.C. §§ 332(d)(1), 351 to 364), although it is not intended that disciplinary action would be appropriate for every violation of its provisions. Whether disciplinary action is appropriate, and the degree of discipline to be imposed, should be determined through a reasonable application of the text and should depend on such factors as the seriousness of the violation, the intent of the judge, whether there is a pattern of improper activity, and the effect of the improper activity on others or on the judicial system. Many of the proscriptions in the Code are necessarily cast in general terms, and it is not suggested that disciplinary action is appropriate where reasonable judges might be uncertain as to whether or not the conduct is proscribed. Furthermore, the Code is not designed or intended as a basis for civil liability or criminal prosecution. Finally, the Code is not intended to be used to obtain tactical advantage.

**CANON 2: A JUDGE SHOULD AVOID IMPROPRIETY AND THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY IN ALL ACTIVITIES**

- A. A judge should respect and comply with the law and should act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.
- B. A judge should not allow family, social, political, financial, or other relationships or interests to influence judicial conduct or judgment. A judge should not lend the prestige

of the judicial office to advance the private interests of the judge or others; nor convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence the judge. A judge should not testify voluntarily as a character witness.

- C. A judge should not hold membership in any organization that practices invidious discrimination.

#### COMMENTARY

**Canon 2A.** Public confidence in the judiciary is eroded by irresponsible or improper conduct by judges. A judge must avoid all impropriety and appearance of impropriety. This prohibition applies to both the professional and personal conduct of a judge. A judge must expect to be the subject of constant public scrutiny. A judge must therefore accept restrictions that might be viewed as burdensome by the ordinary citizen and should do so freely and willingly. Because it is not practicable to list all prohibited acts, the proscription is necessarily cast in general terms that extend to conduct by judges that is harmful although not specifically mentioned in the Code. Actual improprieties under this standard include violations of law, court rules or other specific provisions of this Code. An appearance of impropriety occurs when reasonable minds, with knowledge of all the relevant circumstances disclosed by a reasonable inquiry, would perceive that the judge's honesty, integrity, impartiality, temperament, or fitness to serve as a judge is impaired.

**Canon 2B.** The testimony of a judge as a character witness injects the prestige of the judicial office into the proceeding in which the judge testifies and may be misunderstood to be an official testimonial. This Canon, however, does not afford the judge a privilege against testifying in response to an official summons. Except in unusual circumstances where the demands of justice require, a judge should discourage a party from requiring the judge to testify as a character witness.

A judge should avoid lending the prestige of judicial office for the advancement of the private interests of the judge or others. For example, a judge should not use the judge's judicial position to gain advantage in litigation involving a friend or a member of the judge's family. Nor should a judge use judicial letterhead to gain an advantage in conducting personal business. In contracts for publication of a judge's writings, a judge should retain control over the advertising to avoid exploitation of the judge's office.

A judge should be sensitive to possible abuse of the prestige of office. A judge should not initiate the communication of information to a sentencing judge or a probation or corrections officer but may provide to such persons information in response to a formal request. Judges may participate in the process of judicial selection by cooperating with appointing authorities and screening committees seeking names for consideration, and by responding to official inquiries concerning a person being considered for a judgeship.

**Canon 2C.** A judge's public manifestation of approval of invidious discrimination gives rise to the appearance of impropriety under Canon 2 and diminishes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary in violation of Canon 2A. Membership of a judge in an

organization that practices invidious discrimination creates a perception that the judge's impartiality is impaired. Invidious discrimination will generally be demonstrated if an organization's exclusionary membership practices are arbitrary, irrational, or the result of hostility or animus toward an identifiable group.

Whether an organization practices invidious discrimination is often a complex question. The answer cannot be determined from a mere examination of an organization's current membership rolls but rather depends on how the organization selects members and other relevant factors, such as the organization's purpose, size, and nature, including whether the organization is dedicated to preserving religious, ethnic or cultural values of legitimate common interest to members, or is an intimate, purely private association entitled to constitutional protection. The mere absence of diverse membership does not by itself demonstrate invidious discrimination. A judge's membership in a religious organization as a lawful exercise of the freedom of religion does not violate this Canon. This Canon does not apply to national or state military service.

It would also violate Canons 2 and 2A for a judge to arrange an event at a club that the judge knows practices invidious discrimination in its membership or other policies, or for the judge to use such a club regularly. However, attendance at an event in a facility of such an organization is not a violation when the judge's attendance is an isolated occurrence that could not reasonably be perceived as an endorsement of the organization's practices.

When a judge determines that an organization to which the judge belongs engages in invidious discrimination that would preclude membership under this Canon, the judge should resign immediately from the organization.

### **CANON 3: A JUDGE SHOULD PERFORM THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE FAIRLY, IMPARTIALLY AND DILIGENTLY**

The duties of judicial office take precedence over all other activities. In performing the duties prescribed by law, the judge should adhere to the following standards:

#### **A. Adjudicative Responsibilities.**

- (1) A judge should be faithful to and maintain professional competence in the law, and should not be swayed by partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism.
- (2) A judge should hear and decide matters assigned, unless disqualified, and should maintain order and decorum in all judicial proceedings.
- (3) A judge should be patient, dignified, respectful, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity, and should require similar conduct of those subject to the judge's control, including lawyers to the extent consistent with their role in the adversary process. The duty to be respectful includes the responsibility to avoid comment or

behavior that can reasonably be interpreted as harassing or manifesting prejudice or bias.

- (4) A judge should accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or the person's lawyer, full right to be heard according to law. A judge may:
  - (a) initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications as authorized by law;
  - (b) when circumstances require it, permit ex parte communication for scheduling, administrative, or emergency purposes, not addressing substantive matters, provided the judge reasonably believes that no party will gain a procedural, substantive, or tactical advantage as a result of the ex parte communication;
  - (c) obtain the written advice of a disinterested expert on the law if the judge gives advance notice to the parties of the person to be consulted and the subject matter of the advice, and affords the parties reasonable opportunity to object and respond to the notice and to the advice received; or
  - (d) with consent of the parties, confer separately with the parties and their counsel in an effort to mediate or settle pending matters.

Otherwise, a judge should not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers, concerning a pending or impending matter. If a judge receives an unauthorized ex parte communication bearing on the substance of a matter, the judge should promptly notify the parties of the subject matter of the communication and allow the parties an opportunity to respond, if requested.

- (5) A judge should dispose promptly of the business of the court.
- (6) A judge should not make public comment on the merits of a matter pending or impending in any court or any public comment that might reasonably be expected to affect the outcome or impair the fairness of a matter pending or impending in any court. A judge should require similar restraint by court personnel subject to the judge's direction and control. The proscription on public comment on the merits does not extend to public statements made in the course of the judge's official duties, to the explanation of court procedures, or to a scholarly presentation made for purposes of legal education.

## **B. Administrative Responsibilities.**

- (1) A judge should diligently discharge the judge's administrative responsibilities, maintain professional competence in judicial administration, and facilitate the performance of the administrative responsibilities of other judges and court officials.

- (2) A judge should require court officials, court personnel, and others subject to the judge's direction and control to act in a manner consistent with the judge's obligations under this Code.
- (3) A judge should take appropriate action when the judge becomes aware of reliable evidence indicating the likelihood of unprofessional conduct by a judge or lawyer.
- (4) A judge should exercise the power of appointment fairly and only on the basis of merit, avoiding unnecessary appointments, nepotism, and favoritism. A judge should not approve compensation of appointees beyond the fair value of services rendered.
- (5) A judge with supervisory authority over other judges should take reasonable measures to assure the timely and effective performance of their duties.

**C. Disqualification.**

- (1) A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in a proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to instances in which:
  - (a) the judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's lawyer, or personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;
  - (b) the judge served as lawyer in the matter in controversy, or a lawyer with whom the judge previously practiced law served during such association as a lawyer concerning the matter, or the judge or such lawyer has been a material witness;
  - (c) the judge knows that the judge, individually or as a fiduciary, or the judge's spouse or minor child residing in the judge's household, has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, or any other interest that could be affected substantially by the outcome of the proceeding;
  - (d) the judge or the judge's spouse, or a person related to either within the third degree of relationship, or the spouse of such a person is:
    - (i) a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director, or trustee of a party;
    - (ii) acting as a lawyer in the proceeding;
    - (iii) known by the judge to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding; or

- (iv) to the judge's knowledge likely to be a material witness in the proceeding;
  - (e) the judge has served in governmental employment and in such capacity participated as a judge (in a previous judicial position), counsel, advisor, or material witness concerning the proceeding or has expressed an opinion concerning the merits of the particular case in controversy.
- (2) A judge should keep informed about the judge's personal and fiduciary financial interests, and make a reasonable effort to keep informed about the personal financial interests of the judge's spouse and minor children residing in the judge's household.
- (3) For the purposes of this section:
- (a) the degree of relationship is calculated according to the civil law system; the following relatives are within the third degree of relationship: parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, great grandparent, great grandchild, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, niece and nephew; the listed relatives include whole and half blood relatives and most step relatives;
  - (b) "fiduciary" includes such relationships as executor, administrator, trustee, and guardian;
  - (c) "financial interest" means ownership of a legal or equitable interest, however small, or a relationship as director, advisor, or other active participant in the affairs of a party, except that:
    - (i) ownership in a mutual or common investment fund that holds securities is not a "financial interest" in such securities unless the judge participates in the management of the fund;
    - (ii) an office in an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization is not a "financial interest" in securities held by the organization;
    - (iii) the proprietary interest of a policy holder in a mutual insurance company, or a depositor in a mutual savings association, or a similar proprietary interest, is a "financial interest" in the organization only if the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the interest;
    - (iv) ownership of government securities is a "financial interest" in the issuer only if the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the securities;

(d) “proceeding” includes pretrial, trial, appellate review, or other stages of litigation.

- (4) Notwithstanding the preceding provisions of this Canon, if a judge to whom a matter has been assigned would be disqualified, after substantial judicial time has been devoted to the matter, because of the appearance or discovery, after the matter was assigned to him or her, that he or she individually or as a fiduciary, or his or her spouse or minor child residing in his or her household, has a financial interest in a party (other than an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome), disqualification is not required if the judge, spouse or minor child, as the case may be, divests himself or herself of the interest that provides the grounds for the disqualification.

**D. Remittal of Disqualification.** A judge disqualified by the terms of Canon 3C(1), except in the circumstances specifically set out in subsections (a) through (e), may, instead of withdrawing from the proceeding, disclose on the record the basis of disqualification. If the parties and their lawyers after such disclosure and an opportunity to confer outside of the presence of the judge, all agree in writing or on the record that the judge should not be disqualified, and the judge is then willing to participate, the judge may participate in the proceeding. The agreement should be incorporated in the record of the proceeding.

#### COMMENTARY

**Canon 3A(2).** Unwarranted disqualification may bring public disfavor to the court and to the judge personally. The dignity of the court, the judge’s respect for fulfillment of judicial duties, and a proper concern for the burdens that may be imposed upon the judge’s colleagues require that a judge not use disqualification to avoid cases that present difficult, controversial, or unpopular issues.

**Canon 3A(3).** The duty to hear all proceedings fairly and with patience is not inconsistent with the duty to dispose promptly of the business of the court. Courts can be efficient and businesslike while being patient and deliberate.

The duty under Canon 2 to act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary applies to all the judge’s activities, including the discharge of the judge’s adjudicative and administrative responsibilities.

**Canon 3A(4).** The proscription against communications concerning a proceeding includes communications from lawyers, law teachers, and other persons who are not participants in the proceeding, except to the limited extent permitted. It does not preclude a judge from consulting with other judges, or with court personnel whose function is to aid the judge in carrying out adjudicative responsibilities. A judge should make reasonable efforts to ensure that this provision is not violated through law clerks or other court personnel.

A judge may encourage and seek to facilitate settlement but should not act in a manner that coerces any party into surrendering the right to have the controversy resolved by the courts.



**Canon 3A(5).** In disposing of matters promptly, efficiently and fairly, a judge must demonstrate due regard for the rights of the parties to be heard and to have issues resolved without unnecessary cost or delay. A judge should monitor and supervise cases so as to reduce or eliminate dilatory practices, avoidable delays and unnecessary costs.

Prompt disposition of the court's business requires a judge to devote adequate time to judicial duties, to be punctual in attending court and expeditious in determining matters under submission, and to take reasonable measures to ensure that court officials, litigants and their lawyers cooperate with the judge to that end.

**Canon 3A(6).** The admonition against public comment about the merits of a pending or impending matter continues until completion of the appellate process. If the public comment involves a case from the judge's own court, particular care should be taken that the comment does not denigrate public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary in violation of Canon 2A. This provision does not restrict comments about proceedings in which the judge is a litigant in a personal capacity, but in mandamus proceedings when the judge is a litigant in an official capacity, the judge should not comment publicly.

**Canon 3B(2).** A judge is responsible for his or her own conduct and for the conduct of others, such as court personnel, when those persons are acting under the judge's direction or control. A judge may not direct court personnel to engage in conduct on the judge's behalf or as the judge's representative when such conduct would violate the Code if undertaken by the judge.

**Canon 3B(3).** Appropriate action may include direct communication with the judge or lawyer who has engaged in unprofessional conduct, other direct action if available, reporting the misconduct to the appropriate authorities, or a confidential referral to an assistance program when the judge believes that a judge or lawyer's misconduct is caused by drugs, alcohol, or a medical condition. Appropriate action may also include responding to a subpoena to testify or otherwise participating in judicial or lawyer disciplinary proceedings; a judge should be candid and honest with such disciplinary authorities.

**Canon 3B(4).** Appointees of the judge include assigned counsel, officials such as referees, commissioners, special masters, receivers, guardians, and personnel such as clerks, secretaries, and bailiffs. Consent by the parties to an appointment or an award of compensation does not relieve the judge of the obligation prescribed by this subsection.

**Canon 3C.** Recusal considerations applicable to a judge's spouse should also be considered with respect to a person other than a spouse with whom the judge maintains both a household and an intimate relationship.

**Canon 3C(1)(c).** In a criminal proceeding, a victim entitled to restitution is not, within the meaning of this Canon, a party to the proceeding or the subject matter in controversy. A judge who has a financial interest in a criminal victim is not required by Canon 3C(1)(c) to disqualify from the criminal proceeding but the judge must disqualify if the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned under Canon 3C(1) or if he or she has an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding under Canon 3C(1)(d)(iii).

**Canon 3C(1)(d)(ii).** The fact that a lawyer in a proceeding is affiliated with a law firm with which a relative of the judge is affiliated does not of itself disqualify the judge. However, if “the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned” under Canon 3C(1), or the relative is known by the judge to have an interest in the law firm that could be “substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding” under Canon 3C(1)(d)(iii), the judge’s disqualification is required.

**Canon 3C(4).** If a judge has not devoted substantial judicial time to a matter, such as newly-assigned cases, divestiture is nevertheless available to avoid recusal.

**CANON 4: A JUDGE MAY ENGAGE IN EXTRA-JUDICIAL ACTIVITIES THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE OBLIGATIONS OF JUDICIAL OFFICE**

A judge may engage in extra-judicial activities, including law-related pursuits and civic, charitable, educational, religious, social, financial, fiduciary, and governmental activities, and may speak, write, lecture and teach on both law-related and non-legal subjects. However, a judge should not participate in extra-judicial activities that detract from the dignity of the judge’s office, interfere with the performance of the judge’s official duties, reflect adversely on the judge’s impartiality, lead to frequent disqualification, or violate the specific limitations set forth below.

A. *Law-related Activities.*

- (1) *Speaking, Writing and Teaching.* A judge may speak, write, lecture, teach, and participate in other activities concerning the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice.
- (2) *Consultation.* A judge may appear at a public hearing before, or otherwise consult with, an executive or legislative body or official:
  - (a) on matters concerning the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice;
  - (b) to the extent that it would generally be perceived that a judge’s judicial experience provides special expertise in the area; or
  - (c) when the judge is acting pro se in a matter involving the judge or the judge’s interest.
- (3) *Organizations.* A judge may participate in and serve as a member, officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor of a nonprofit organization devoted to the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice and may assist such an organization in the management and investment of funds. A judge may make recommendations to public and private fund-granting agencies about projects and programs concerning the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice.

- (4) *Arbitration and Mediation.* A judge should not act as an arbitrator or mediator or otherwise perform judicial functions apart from the judge's official duties unless expressly authorized by law.
  - (5) *Practice of Law.* A judge should not practice law and should not serve as a family member's lawyer in any forum. Notwithstanding this prohibition, a judge may act pro se and may, without compensation, give legal advice to and draft or review documents for a member of the judge's family.
- B. *Civic and Charitable Activities.* A judge may participate in and may serve as an officer, director, trustee, or non-legal advisor of a nonprofit civic, charitable, educational, religious, or social organization, subject to the following limitations:
- (1) A judge should not serve if it is likely that the organization will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge or will be regularly engaged in adversary proceedings in any court.
  - (2) A judge should not give investment advice to such an organization, but may serve on its board of directors or trustees even though it has the responsibility for approving investment decisions.
- C. *Fund Raising.* A judge may assist nonprofit law-related, civic, charitable, educational, religious, or social organizations in planning fund-raising activities and may be listed as an officer, director, or trustee of such an organization but should not personally participate in public fund-raising activities. A judge may solicit funds from other judges over whom the judge does not exercise supervisory or appellate authority and from members of the judge's family. Except as described above, a judge should not solicit funds for any organization and should not use or permit the use of the prestige of the judicial office for that purpose. A judge should not personally participate in membership solicitation if the solicitation might reasonably be perceived as coercive or is essentially a fund-raising mechanism.
- D. *Financial Activities.*
- (1) A judge may hold and manage investments, including real estate, and engage in other remunerative activity, but should refrain from financial and business dealings that exploit the judicial position or involve the judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with lawyers or other persons likely to come before the court on which the judge serves.
  - (2) A judge may serve as an officer, director, active partner, manager, advisor, or employee of a business only if the business is closely held and controlled by members of the judge's family. For this purpose, "members of the judge's family" means persons related to the judge or the judge's spouse within the third degree of relationship calculated according to the civil law system, any other

relatives with whom the judge or the judge's spouse maintains a close familial relationship, and the spouse of any of the foregoing.

- (3) As soon as the judge can do so without serious financial detriment, the judge should divest himself or herself of investments and other financial interests that might require frequent disqualification.
- (4) A judge should comply with the restrictions on acceptance of gifts and the prohibition on solicitation of gifts set forth in the Judicial Conference Gift Regulations. A judge should endeavor to prevent a member of the judge's family residing in the household from soliciting or accepting a gift except to the extent that a judge would be permitted to do so by the Judicial Conference Gift Regulations. For purposes of this section and Canon 4E, "members of the judge's family" means any relative of a judge by blood, adoption, or marriage, or a person treated by a judge as a member of the judge's family.
- (5) A judge should not disclose or use nonpublic information acquired in a judicial capacity for any purpose unrelated to the judge's official duties.

E. *Fiduciary Activities.* A judge may serve as the executor, administrator, trustee, guardian, or other fiduciary only for the estate, trust, or person of a member of the judge's family. As a family fiduciary a judge is subjected to the following restrictions:

- (1) The judge should not serve if it is likely that as a fiduciary the judge will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge or if the estate, trust or ward becomes involved in adversary proceedings in the court on which the judge serves or one under its appellate jurisdiction.
- (2) While acting as a fiduciary a judge is subject to the same restrictions on financial activities that apply to the judge in his or her personal capacity.

F. *Governmental Appointments.* A judge may accept appointment to a governmental committee, commission, or other position only if it is one that concerns the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice or appointment of a judge is required by Act of Congress. A judge should not, in any event, accept such an appointment if the judge's governmental duties would tend to undermine the public confidence in the integrity, impartiality, or independence of the judiciary. A judge may represent the judge's country, state, or locality on ceremonial occasions or in connection with historical, educational, and cultural activities.

G. *Chambers, Resources, and Staff.* A judge should not use to any substantial degree judicial chambers, resources, or staff to engage in law-related activities permitted by this Canon. A judge should not use judicial chambers, resources, or staff to engage in other activities permitted by this Canon, except for uses that are *de minimis*.

H. *Compensation, Reimbursement, and Financial Reporting.* A judge may accept compensation and reimbursement of expenses for the law-related and extra-judicial activities permitted by this Code, if the source of such payments does not give the appearance of influencing the judge in the judge's judicial duties or otherwise give the appearance of impropriety, subject to the following restrictions:

- (1) Compensation should not exceed a reasonable amount nor should it exceed what a person who is not a judge would receive for the same activity.
- (2) Expense reimbursement should be limited to the actual costs of travel, food, and lodging reasonably incurred by the judge and, where appropriate to the occasion, by the judge's spouse or relative. Any payment in excess of such an amount is compensation.
- (3) A judge should make required financial disclosures, including disclosures of gifts and other things of value, in compliance with applicable statutes and Judicial Conference regulations and directives.

#### COMMENTARY

**Canon 4.** Complete separation of a judge from extra-judicial activities is neither possible nor wise; a judge should not become isolated from the society in which the judge lives. As a judicial officer and person specially learned in the law, a judge is in a unique position to contribute to the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice, including revision of substantive and procedural law and improvement of criminal and juvenile justice. To the extent that the judge's time permits and impartiality is not compromised, the judge is encouraged to do so, either independently or through a bar association, judicial conference, or other organization dedicated to the law. Subject to the same limitations, judges are also permitted to engage in a wide range of non-law-related activities.

Within the boundaries of applicable law, *see, e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 953, a judge may express opposition to the persecution of lawyers and judges anywhere in the world if the judge has ascertained, after reasonable inquiry, that the persecution is occasioned by conflict between the professional responsibilities of the persecuted judge or lawyer and the policies or practices of the relevant government.

A person other than a spouse with whom the judge maintains both a household and an intimate relationship should be considered a member of the judge's family for purposes of legal assistance, under Canon 4A(5), fund raising, under Canon 4C, and family business activities and gift solicitation and acceptance, under Canon 4D.

**Canon 4A.** Teaching and service on the board of a law school are permissible, but in the case of a for-profit law school, board service is limited to a nongoverning, advisory board.

Consistent with this Canon, a judge may encourage lawyers to provide pro bono legal services.

**Canon 4A(5).** A judge may act pro se in all legal matters, including matters involving litigation and matters involving appearances before or other dealings with governmental bodies. However, in so doing, a judge must not abuse the prestige of office to advance the interests of the judge or the judge's family.

**Canon 4B.** The changing nature of some organizations and their exposure to litigation makes it necessary for a judge regularly to reexamine the activities of each organization with which the judge is affiliated to determine if the judge's continued association is appropriate. For example, in many jurisdictions, charitable hospitals are in court more frequently now than in the past.

**Canon 4C.** A judge may attend fund-raising activities of law-related and other organizations although the judge may not be a speaker, a guest of honor, or featured on the program of such an event. Use of a judge's name, position in the organization, and judicial designation on an organization's letterhead, including when used for purposes of fund-raising or membership solicitation, does not violate Canon 4C provided comparable information and designations are listed for others

**Canon 4D(1), (2) and (3).** Canon 3 requires disqualification of a judge in any proceeding in which the judge has a financial interest, however small. Canon 4D requires a judge to refrain from engaging in business and from financial activities that might interfere with the impartial performance of the judge's judicial duties; Canon 4H requires a judge to report compensation received for activities outside the judicial office. A judge has the rights of an ordinary citizen with respect to financial affairs, except for limitations required to safeguard the proper performance of the judge's duties. A judge's participation in a closely held family business, while generally permissible, may be prohibited if it takes too much time or involves misuse of judicial prestige or if the business is likely to come before the judge's court. Owning and receiving income from investments do not as such affect the performance of a judge's duties.

**Canon 4D(4).** A judge may accept as a gift travel expense reimbursement including the cost of transportation, lodging, and meals, for the judge and a relative incident to the judge's attendance at a bar-related function or at an activity devoted to the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice.

**Canon 4D(5).** The restriction on use of nonpublic information is not intended to affect a judge's ability to act on information as necessary to protect the health or safety of the judge or a member of a judge's family, court personnel, or other judicial officers if consistent with other provisions of this Code.

**Canon 4E.** Mere residence in the household of a judge is insufficient for a person to be considered a member of the judge's family for purposes of this Canon. The person must be treated by the judge as a member of the judge's family.

The Applicable Date of Compliance provision of this Code addresses continued service as a fiduciary.

A judge's obligation under this Code and the judge's obligation as a fiduciary may come into conflict. For example, a judge should resign as trustee if it would result in detriment to the trust to divest it of holdings whose retention would require frequent disqualification of the judge in violation of Canon 4D(3).

**Canon 4F.** The appropriateness of accepting extra-judicial assignments must be assessed in light of the demands on judicial resources and the need to protect the courts from involvement in matters that may prove to be controversial. Judges should not accept governmental appointments that could interfere with the effectiveness and independence of the judiciary, interfere with the performance of the judge's judicial responsibilities, or tend to undermine public confidence in the judiciary.

**Canon 4H.** A judge is not required by this Code to disclose his or her income, debts, or investments, except as provided in this Canon. Additional restrictions on the receipt of compensation by judges are imposed by the Ethics Reform Act of 1989 and regulations promulgated by the Judicial Conference thereunder. That Act and those regulations should be consulted before a judge enters into any arrangement involving the receipt of compensation. The restrictions so imposed include, but are not limited to: (1) a prohibition against receiving "honoraria" (defined as anything of value received for a speech, appearance, or article), (2) a prohibition against receiving compensation for service as a director, trustee, or officer of a profit or nonprofit organization, (3) a requirement that compensated teaching activities receive prior approval, and (4) a limitation on the receipt of "outside earned income."

## **CANON 5: A JUDGE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

- A.** A judge should not:
- (1) act as a leader or hold any office in a political organization;
  - (2) make speeches for a political organization or candidate or publicly endorse or oppose a candidate for public office;
  - (3) solicit funds for or pay an assessment or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, or attend or purchase tickets for dinners or other events sponsored by a political organization or candidate.
- B.** A judge should resign the judicial office when the judge becomes a candidate either in a primary or in a general election for any office.
- C.** A judge should not engage in any other political activity; provided, however, this should not prevent a judge from engaging in the activities described in Canon 4.

## COMMENTARY

The term “political organization” refers to a political party, a group affiliated with a political party or candidate for public office, or an entity whose principal purpose is to advocate for or against political candidates or parties in connection with elections for public office.

### COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Anyone who is an officer of the federal judicial system authorized to perform judicial functions is a judge for the purpose of this Code. All judges should comply with this Code except as provided below.

**A. Part-time Judge.** A part-time judge is a judge who serves part-time on a continuing or periodic basis, but is permitted by law to devote time to some other profession or occupation and whose compensation for that reason is less than that of a full-time judge. A part-time judge:

- (1) is not required to comply with Canons 4A(4), 4A(5), 4D(2), 4E, 4F, and 4H(3);
- (2) except as provided in the Conflict-of-Interest Rules for Part-time Magistrate Judges, should not practice law in the court on which the judge serves or in any court subject to the appellate jurisdiction of the court on which the judge serves, or act as a lawyer in a proceeding in which the judge has served as a judge or in any other proceeding related thereto.

**B. Judge Pro Tempore.** A judge *pro tempore* is a person who is appointed to act temporarily as a judge or as a special master.

- (1) While acting as such, a judge *pro tempore* is not required to comply with Canons 4A(4), 4A(5), 4D(2), 4D(3), 4E, 4F, and 4H(3); further, one who acts solely as a special master is not required to comply with Canons 4A(3), 4B, 4C, 4D(4), and 5.
- (2) A person who has been a judge *pro tempore* should not act as a lawyer in a proceeding in which the judge has served as a judge or in any other proceeding related thereto.

**C. Retired Judge.** A retired judge who is retired under 28 U.S.C. §§ 371(b) or 372(a), or who is subject to recall under § 178(d), or who is recalled to judicial service, should comply with all the provisions of this Code except Canon 4F, but the judge should refrain from judicial service during the period of an extra-judicial appointment not sanctioned by Canon 4F. All other retired judges who are eligible for recall to judicial service (except those in Territories and Possessions) should comply with the provisions of this Code governing part-time judges. A senior judge in the Territories and Possessions must comply with this Code as prescribed by 28 U.S.C. § 373(c)(5) and (d).



## APPLICABLE DATE OF COMPLIANCE

Persons to whom this Code applies should arrange their financial and fiduciary affairs as soon as reasonably possible to comply with it and should do so in any event within one year following appointment. If, however, the demands on the person's time and the possibility of conflicts of interest are not substantial, such a person may continue to act, without compensation, as an executor, administrator, trustee, or other fiduciary for the estate or person of one who is not a member of the person's family, if terminating such relationship would unnecessarily jeopardize any substantial interest of the estate or person and the judicial council of the circuit approves.