

## **California Code of Judicial Ethics**

Amended by the Supreme Court of California effective April 29, 2009; previously amended March 4, 1999, December 13, 2000, December 30, 2002, June 18, 2003, December 22, 2003, January 1, 2005, June 1, 2005, July 1, 2006, January 1, 2007, and January 1, 2008.

### ***Preface***

### ***Preamble***

### ***Terminology***

***Canon 1. A judge shall uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.***

***Canon 2. A judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities.***

***Canon 3. A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently.***

***Canon 4. A judge shall so conduct the judge's quasi-judicial and extrajudicial activities as to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial obligations.***

***Canon 5. A judge or judicial candidate shall refrain from inappropriate political activity.***

***Canon 6. Compliance with the code of judicial ethics.***

## Preface

Formal standards of judicial conduct have existed for more than 50 years. The original Canons of Judicial Ethics promulgated by the American Bar Association were modified and adopted in 1949 for application in California by the Conference of California Judges (now the California Judges Association).

In 1969, the American Bar Association determined that current needs and problems warranted revision of the Canons. In the revision process, a special American Bar Association committee, headed by former California Chief Justice Roger Traynor, sought and considered the views of the bench and bar and other interested persons. The American Bar Association Code of Judicial Conduct was adopted by the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association August 16, 1972.

Effective January 5, 1975, the California Judges Association adopted a new California Code of Judicial Conduct adapted from the American Bar Association 1972 Model Code. The California code was recast in gender-neutral form in 1986.

In 1990, the American Bar Association Model Code was further revised after a lengthy study. The California Judges Association again reviewed the model code and adopted a revised California Code of Judicial Conduct on October 5, 1992.

Proposition 190 (amending Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18(m), effective March 1, 1995) created a new constitutional provision that states, "The Supreme Court shall make rules for the conduct of judges, both on and off the bench, and for judicial candidates\* in the conduct of their campaigns. These rules shall be referred to as the Code of Judicial Ethics."

The Supreme Court formally adopted the 1992 Code of Judicial Conduct in March 1995, as a transitional measure pending further review.

The Supreme Court formally adopted the Code of Judicial Ethics effective January 15, 1996.

The Supreme Court formally adopted amendments to the Code of Judicial Ethics, effective April 15, 1996. The *Advisory Committee Commentary* is published by the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics.

\* Terms with an asterisk (\*) are defined in the Terminology section.

## **PREAMBLE**

Our legal system is based on the principle that an independent, fair, and competent judiciary will interpret and apply the laws that govern us. The role of the judiciary is central to American concepts of justice and the rule of law. Intrinsic to this code are the precepts that judges, individually and collectively, must respect and honor the judicial office as a public trust and strive to enhance and maintain confidence in our legal system. The judge is an arbiter of facts and law for the resolution of disputes and a highly visible member of government under the rule of law.

The Code of Judicial Ethics (“Code”) establishes standards for ethical conduct of judges on and off the bench and for candidates for judicial office. The Code consists of broad declarations called Canons, with subparts, and a Terminology section. Following each Canon is a Commentary section prepared by the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on the Code of Judicial Ethics. The Commentary, by explanation and example, provides guidance as to the purpose and meaning of the Canons. The Commentary does not constitute additional rules and should not be so construed. All members of the judiciary must comply with the Code. Compliance is required to preserve the integrity of the bench and to ensure the confidence of the public.

The Canons should be read together as a whole, and each provision should be construed in context and consistent with every other provision. They are to be applied in conformance with constitutional requirements, statutes, other court rules, and decisional law. Nothing in the Code shall either impair the essential independence of judges in making judicial decisions or provide a separate basis for civil liability or criminal prosecution.

The Code governs the conduct of judges and judicial candidates\* and is binding upon them. Whether disciplinary action is appropriate, and the degree of discipline to be imposed, requires a reasoned application of the text and consideration of such factors as the seriousness of the transgression, whether there is a pattern of improper activity, and the effect of the improper activity on others or on the judicial system.

## TERMINOLOGY

Terms explained below are noted with an asterisk (\*) in the Canons where they appear. In addition, the Canons in which terms appear are cited after the explanation of each term below.

“Appropriate authority” denotes the authority with responsibility for initiation of the disciplinary process with respect to a violation to be reported. See Commentary to Canon 3D.

“Candidate.” A candidate is a person seeking election for or retention of judicial office by election. A person becomes a candidate for judicial office as soon as he or she makes a public announcement of candidacy, declares or files as a candidate with the election authority, or authorizes solicitation or acceptance of contributions or support. The term “candidate” has the same meaning when applied to a judge seeking election to nonjudicial office, unless on leave of absence. See Preamble and Canons 2B(3), the preliminary paragraph of 5, 5A, 5B, 5C, and 6E.

“Court personnel” does not include the lawyers in a proceeding before a judge. See Canons 3B(4), 3B(7)(b), 3B(9), and 3C(2).

“Fiduciary” includes such relationships as executor, administrator, trustee, and guardian. See Canons 4E, 6B, and 6F (Commentary).

“Law” denotes court rules as well as statutes, constitutional provisions, and decisional law. See Canons 1 (Commentary), 2A, 2C (Commentary), 3A, 3B(2), 3B(7), 3E, 4B (Commentary), 4C, 4D(6)(a)-(b), 4F, 4H, and 5D.

“Member of the judge’s family” denotes a spouse, registered domestic partner, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or other relative or person with whom the judge maintains a close familial relationship. See Canons 2B(2), 4D(1) (Commentary), 4D(2), 4E, 4G (Commentary), and 5A.

“Member of the judge’s family residing in the judge’s household” denotes a spouse or registered domestic partner and those persons who reside in the judge’s household who are relatives of the judge including relatives by marriage, or persons with whom the judge maintains a close familial relationship. See Canons 4D(5) and 4D(6).

“Nonprofit youth organization” is any nonprofit corporation or association, not organized for the private gain of any person, whose purposes are irrevocably dedicated to benefiting and serving the interests of minors and which maintains its nonprofit status in accordance with applicable state and federal tax laws. See Canon 2C.

“Nonpublic information” denotes information that, by law, is not available to the public. Nonpublic information may include but is not limited to information that is sealed by statute or court order, impounded, or communicated in camera; and information offered in grand jury proceedings, presentencing reports, dependency cases, or psychiatric reports. See Canon 3B(11).

“Political organization” denotes a political party, political action committee, or other group, the principal purpose of which is to further the election or appointment of candidates to nonjudicial office. See Canon 5A.

“Registered domestic partner” denotes a person who has registered for domestic partnership pursuant to state law or who is recognized as a domestic partner pursuant to Family Code section 299.2.

“Require.” Any Canon prescribing that a judge “require” certain conduct of others means that a judge is to exercise reasonable direction and control over the conduct of those persons subject to the judge's direction and control. See Canons 3B(3), 3B(4), 3B(6), 3B(8) (Commentary), 3B(9), and 3C(2).

“Subordinate judicial officer.” A subordinate judicial officer is, for the purposes of this Code, a person appointed pursuant to article VI, section 22 of the California Constitution, including, but not limited to, a commissioner, referee, and hearing officer. See Canon 6A.

“Temporary Judge.” A temporary judge is an active or inactive member of the bar who, pursuant to article VI, section 21 of the California Constitution, serves or expects to serve as a judge once, sporadically, or regularly on a part-time basis under a separate court appointment for each period of service or for each case heard. See Canons 4C(3)(d)(i), 6A, and 6D.

## CANON 1

### **A JUDGE SHALL 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 shall personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary will be preserved. The provisions of this Code are to be construed and applied to further that objective. A judicial decision or administrative act later determined to be incorrect legally is not itself a violation of this Code.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE 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 must comply with the law\* and 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, violations of this Code diminish public confidence in the judiciary and thereby do injury to the system of government under law.*

*The basic function of an independent and honorable judiciary is to maintain the utmost integrity in decision making, and this Code should be read and interpreted with that function in mind.*

## CANON 2

### **A JUDGE SHALL AVOID IMPROPRIETY AND THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY IN ALL OF THE JUDGE'S ACTIVITIES**

#### **A. Promoting Public Confidence**

**A judge shall respect and comply with the law\* and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Public confidence in the judiciary is eroded by irresponsible or improper conduct by judges. A judge must avoid all impropriety and appearance of impropriety. A judge must expect to be the subject of constant public scrutiny. A judge must therefore accept restrictions on the judge's conduct that might be viewed as burdensome by other members of the community and should do so freely and willingly.*

*The prohibition against behaving with impropriety or the appearance of impropriety applies to both the professional and personal conduct of a judge.*

*The test for the appearance of impropriety is whether a person aware of the facts might reasonably entertain a doubt that the judge would be able to act with integrity, impartiality, and competence.*

*See also Commentary under Canon 2C.*

#### **B. Use of the Prestige of Judicial Office**

**(1) A judge shall not allow family, social, political, or other relationships to influence the judge's judicial conduct or judgment, nor shall a judge convey or permit others to convey the impression that any individual is in a special position to influence the judge.**

**(2) A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office or use the judicial title in any manner, including any oral or written communication, to advance the pecuniary or personal interests of the judge or others. This Canon does not prohibit the following:**

**(a) A judge may testify as a character witness, provided the judge does so only when subpoenaed.**

**(b) A judge may, without a subpoena, provide the Commission on Judicial Performance with a written communication containing (i) factual information regarding a matter pending before the commission, or (ii) information related to the character of a judge who has a matter pending before the commission, provided that any such factual or character information is based on personal knowledge. In commission proceedings, a judge shall provide information responsive to a subpoena or when officially requested to do so by the commission.**

**(c) A judge may provide factual information in State Bar disciplinary proceedings and shall provide information responsive to a subpoena or when officially requested to do so by the State Bar.**

**(d) A judge may respond to judicial selection inquiries, provide recommendations (including a general character reference, relating to the evaluation of persons being considered for a judgeship), and otherwise participate in the process of judicial selection.**

**(e) A judge may serve as a reference or provide a letter of recommendation only if based on the judge's personal knowledge of the individual. These written communications may include the judge's title and be written on stationery that uses the judicial title.**

**(3) A judge shall not initiate communications with a sentencing judge or a probation or corrections officer, but may provide them with information for the record in response to an official request. A judge may initiate communications with a probation or corrections officer concerning a member of the judge's family,\* provided the judge is not identified as a judge in the communication.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*A strong judicial branch, based on the prestige which comes from effective and ethical performance, is essential to a system of government in which the judiciary functions independently of the executive and legislative branches. Judges should distinguish between proper and improper use of the prestige of office in all of their activities.*

*A judge must avoid lending the prestige of judicial office for the advancement of the private interests of the judge or others. For example, a judge must not use the judicial position to gain advantage in a civil suit involving a*



*member of the judge's family;\* or use his or her position to gain deferential treatment when stopped by a police officer for a traffic offense.*

*As to the use of a judge's title to identify a judge's role in the presentation and creation of legal education programs and materials, see Commentary to Canon 4B. In contracts for publication of a judge's writings, a judge should retain control over the advertising, to the extent feasible, to avoid exploitation of the judge's office. As to the acceptance of awards, see Canon 4D(6)(c) and Commentary.*

*This Canon does not afford judges a privilege against testifying in response to any official summons.*

*See also Canons 3D(1) and 3D(2) concerning a judge's obligation to take appropriate corrective action regarding other judges who violate any provision of the Code of Judicial Ethics and attorneys who violate any provision of the Rules of Professional Conduct.*

*This Canon does not preclude internal discussions among judges regarding the application of substantive or procedural provisions of law to any pending criminal or civil case.*

***(Canon 2B amended effective January 1, 2008.)***

### **C. Membership in Organizations**

**A judge shall not hold membership in any organization that practices invidious discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.**

**This Canon does not apply to membership in a religious organization or an official military organization of the United States. So long as membership does not violate Canon 4A, this Canon does not bar membership in a nonprofit youth organization.\***

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY**

*Membership of a judge in an organization that practices invidious discrimination gives rise to a perception that the judge's impartiality is impaired. This Canon exempts membership in religious and military organizations and, subject to Canon 4A, does not bar membership in nonprofit youth organizations.\* These exemptions are necessary because membership in United States military organizations is subject to current valid military regulations, and religious beliefs*

*are constitutionally protected. Membership in nonprofit youth organizations\* is not barred to accommodate individual rights of intimate association and free expression. See also Canon 3E and its Commentary concerning disqualification and disclosure.*

*Canon 2C refers to the current practices of the organization. Whether an organization practices invidious discrimination is often a complex question to which judges should be sensitive. 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 whether the organization is dedicated to the preservation of religious, ethnic, or cultural values of legitimate common interest to its members, or whether it is in fact and effect an intimate, purely private organization whose membership limitations could not be constitutionally prohibited. Absent such factors, an organization is generally said to discriminate invidiously if it arbitrarily excludes from membership on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, or sexual orientation persons who would otherwise be admitted to membership.*

*Although Canon 2C relates only to membership in organizations that invidiously discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation, a judge's membership in an organization that engages in any discriminatory membership practices prohibited by law\* also violates Canon 2 and Canon 2A and gives the appearance of impropriety. In addition, it would be a violation of Canon 2 and Canon 2A for a judge to arrange a meeting at a club that the judge knows practices such invidious discrimination or for the judge to use such a club regularly. Moreover, public manifestation by a judge of the judge's knowing approval of invidious discrimination on any basis gives the appearance of impropriety under Canon 2 and diminishes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary in violation of Canon 2A.*

***(Canon 2C amended effective June 18, 2003.)***

## CANON 3

### A JUDGE SHALL PERFORM THE DUTIES OF JUDICIAL OFFICE IMPARTIALLY AND DILIGENTLY

#### A. Judicial Duties in General

All of the judicial duties prescribed by law\* shall take precedence over all other activities of every judge. In the performance of these duties, the following standards apply.

#### B. Adjudicative Responsibilities

(1) A judge shall hear and decide all matters assigned to the judge except those in which he or she is disqualified.

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Canon 3B(1) is based upon the affirmative obligation contained in the Code of Civil Procedure.*

(2) A judge shall be faithful to the law\* regardless of partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism, and shall maintain professional competence in the law.\*

(3) A judge shall require\* order and decorum in proceedings before the judge.

(4) A judge shall be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity, and shall require\* similar conduct of lawyers and of all court staff and personnel\* under the judge's direction and control.

(5) A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, engage in speech, gestures, or other conduct that would reasonably be perceived as (1) bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, or (2) sexual harassment.

*(Canon 3B (5) amended effective December 22, 2003.)*

(6) A judge shall require\* lawyers in proceedings before the judge to refrain from manifesting, by words or conduct, bias or prejudice based upon

race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status against parties, witnesses, counsel, or others. This Canon does not preclude legitimate advocacy when race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or other similar factors are issues in the proceeding.

(7) A judge shall accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person's lawyer, full right to be heard according to law.\* A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding, except as follows:

(a) A judge may obtain the advice of a disinterested expert on the law\* applicable to a proceeding before the judge if the judge gives notice to the parties of the person consulted and the substance of the advice, and affords the parties reasonable opportunity to respond.

(b) A judge may consult with court personnel\* whose function is to aid the judge in carrying out the judge's adjudicative responsibilities or with other judges.

(c) A judge may, with the consent of the parties, confer separately with the parties and their lawyers in an effort to mediate or settle matters pending before the judge.

(d) A judge may initiate ex parte communications, where circumstances require, for scheduling, administrative purposes, or emergencies that do not deal with substantive matters provided:

(i) the judge reasonably believes that no party will gain a procedural or tactical advantage as a result of the ex parte communication, and

(ii) the judge makes provision promptly to notify all other parties of the substance of the ex parte communication and allows an opportunity to respond.

(e) A judge may initiate or consider any ex parte communication when expressly authorized by law\* to do so.

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*The proscription against communications concerning a proceeding includes communications from lawyers, law professors, and other persons who are not participants in the proceeding, except to the limited extent permitted by the exceptions noted in Canon 3B(7).*

*This Canon does not prohibit a judge from initiating or considering an ex parte communication when authorized to do so by stipulation of the parties.*

*This Canon does not prohibit court staff from communicating scheduling information or carrying out similar administrative functions.*

*An appropriate and often desirable procedure for a court to obtain the advice of a disinterested expert on legal issues is to invite the expert to file an amicus curiae brief.*

*A judge must not independently investigate facts in a case and must consider only the evidence presented, unless otherwise authorized by law.\* For example, a judge is statutorily authorized to investigate and consult witnesses informally in small claims cases.*

**(8) A judge shall dispose of all judicial matters fairly, promptly, and efficiently. A judge shall manage the courtroom in a manner that provides all litigants the opportunity to have their matters fairly adjudicated in accordance with the law.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY:*

*The obligation of a judge to dispose of matters promptly and efficiently must not take precedence over the judge's obligation to dispose of the matters fairly and with patience. For example, when a litigant is self-represented, a judge has the discretion to take reasonable steps, appropriate under the circumstances and consistent with the law and the canons, to enable the litigant to be heard. A judge should monitor and supervise cases so as to reduce or eliminate dilatory practices, avoidable delays, and unnecessary costs. A judge should encourage and seek to facilitate settlement, but parties should not feel coerced into surrendering the right to have their controversy resolved by the courts.*

*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 require that court officials, litigants, and their lawyers cooperate with the judge to that end.*

**(Canon 3B(8) amended effective January 1, 2008.)**

**(9) A judge shall not make any public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in any court, and shall not make any nonpublic comment that might substantially interfere with a fair trial or hearing. The judge shall require\* similar abstention on the part of court personnel\* subject to the judge's direction and control. This Canon does not prohibit judges from making statements in the course of their official duties or from explaining for public information the procedures of the court, and does not apply to proceedings in which the judge is a litigant in a personal capacity. Other than cases in which the judge has personally participated, this Canon does not prohibit judges from discussing in legal education programs and materials, cases and issues pending in appellate courts. This educational exemption does not apply to cases over which the judge has presided or to comments or discussions that might interfere with a fair hearing of the case.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*The requirement that judges abstain from public comment regarding a pending or impending proceeding continues during any appellate process and until final disposition. This Canon does not prohibit a judge from commenting on proceedings in which the judge is a litigant in a personal capacity, but in cases such as a writ of mandamus where the judge is a litigant in an official capacity, the judge must not comment publicly.*

**(10) A judge shall not commend or criticize jurors for their verdict other than in a court order or opinion in a proceeding, but may express appreciation to jurors for their service to the judicial system and the community.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Commending or criticizing jurors for their verdict may imply a judicial expectation in future cases and may impair a juror's ability to be fair and impartial in a subsequent case.*

**(11) A judge shall not disclose or use, for any purpose unrelated to judicial duties, nonpublic information\* acquired in a judicial capacity.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*This Canon makes it clear that judges cannot make use of information from affidavits, jury results, or court rulings, before they become public information, in order to gain a personal advantage.*

**C. Administrative Responsibilities**

**(1) A judge shall diligently discharge the judge's administrative responsibilities impartially, on the basis of merit, without bias or prejudice, free of conflict of interest, and in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary. A judge shall maintain professional competence in judicial administration, and shall cooperate with other judges and court officials in the administration of court business.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*In considering what constitutes a conflict of interest under this Canon, a judge should be informed by Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1(a)(6).*

*(Canon 3C(1) amended effective April 29, 2009.)*

**(2) A judge shall require\* staff and court personnel\* under the judge's direction and control to observe appropriate standards of conduct and to refrain from manifesting bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status in the performance of their official duties.**

**(3) A judge with supervisory authority for the judicial performance of other judges shall take reasonable measures to ensure the prompt disposition of matters before them and the proper performance of their other judicial responsibilities.**

**(4) A judge shall not make unnecessary court appointments. A judge shall exercise the power of appointment impartially and on the basis of merit. A judge shall avoid nepotism and favoritism. A judge shall not approve compensation of appointees above the reasonable value of services rendered.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

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

**(5) A judge shall perform administrative duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of administrative duties, engage in speech, gestures, or other conduct that would reasonably be perceived as (1) bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, or (2) sexual harassment.**

*(Canon 3C(5) adopted effective December 22, 2003.)*

#### **D. Disciplinary Responsibilities**

**(1) Whenever a judge has reliable information that another judge has violated any provision of the Code of Judicial Ethics, the judge shall take or initiate appropriate corrective action, which may include reporting the violation to the appropriate authority.\***

**(2) Whenever a judge has personal knowledge that a lawyer has violated any provision of the Rules of Professional Conduct, the judge shall take appropriate corrective action.**

**(3) A judge shall promptly report in writing to the Commission on Judicial Performance when he or she is charged in court by misdemeanor citation, prosecutorial complaint, information, or indictment, with any crime in the United States as specified below. Crimes that must be reported are: (1) all crimes, other than those that would be considered misdemeanors not involving moral turpitude or infractions under California law; and (2) all misdemeanors involving violence (including assaults), the use or possession of controlled substances, the misuse of prescriptions, or the personal use or furnishing of alcohol. A judge also shall promptly report in writing upon conviction of such crimes.**

**If the judge is a retired judge serving in the Assigned Judges Program, he or she shall promptly report such information in writing to the Chief Justice rather than to the Commission on Judicial Performance. If the judge is a subordinate judicial officer, he or she shall promptly report such information in writing to both the presiding judge of the court in which the subordinate judicial officer sits and the Commission on Judicial Performance.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY:*

*Appropriate corrective action could include direct communication with the judge or lawyer who has committed the violation, other direct action if available, or a report of the violation to the presiding judge, appropriate authority, or other agency or body. Judges should note that in addition to the action required by Canon 3D(2), California law imposes additional reporting requirements regarding lawyers.*

*(Canon 3D(3) amended effective January 1, 2008; previously amended effective June 19, 1997 and March 4, 1999; adopted effective January 15, 1996.)*

#### **E. Disqualification**



**(1) A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which disqualification is required by law.**

**(2) In all trial court proceedings, a judge shall disclose on the record information that is reasonably relevant to the question of disqualification under Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1, even if the judge believes there is no actual basis for disqualification.**

*(Canon 3E(2) amended effective January 1, 2008.)*

**(3) Ownership of a corporate bond issued by a party to a proceeding and having a fair market value exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars is disqualifying. Ownership of government bonds issued by a party to a proceeding is disqualifying only if the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the judge's bond. Ownership in a mutual or common investment fund that holds bonds is not a disqualifying financial interest.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY:*

*The distinction between corporate and government bonds is consistent with the Political Reform Act (see Gov. Code, § 82034), which requires disclosure of corporate bonds, but not government bonds. Canon 3E(3) is intended to assist judges in complying with Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1(a)(3) and Canon 3E(5)(d).*

*(Canon 3E(3) adopted effective December 22, 2003; renumbered effective January 1, 2005.)*

**(4) An appellate justice shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding if for any reason:**

**(a) the justice believes his or her recusal would further the interest of justice; or**

**(b) the justice substantially doubts his or her capacity to be impartial;**  
**or**

**(c) the circumstances are such that a reasonable person aware of the facts would doubt the justice's ability to be impartial.**

*(Canon 3E(4) renumbered effective January 1, 2005.)*

**(5) Disqualification of an appellate justice is also required in the following instances:**

**(a) The appellate justice has appeared or otherwise served as a lawyer in the pending matter, or has appeared or served as a lawyer in any other matter involving any of the same parties if that other matter related to the same contested issues of fact and law as the present matter.**

**(b) Within the last two years, (i) a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director or trustee thereof, either was a client of the justice when the justice was engaged in the private practice of law or was a client of a lawyer with whom the justice was associated in the private practice of law; or (ii) a lawyer in the proceeding was associated with the justice in the private practice of law.**

**(c) The appellate justice represented a public officer or entity and personally advised or in any way represented such officer or entity concerning the factual or legal issues in the present proceeding in which the public officer or entity now appears.**

**(d) The appellate justice, or his or her spouse or registered domestic partner, or a minor child residing in the household, has a financial interest or is a fiduciary who has a financial interest in the proceeding, or is a director, advisor, or other active participant in the affairs of a party. A financial interest is defined as ownership of more than a 1 percent legal or equitable interest in a party, or a legal or equitable interest in a party of a fair market value exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars. Ownership in a mutual or common investment fund that holds securities does not itself constitute a financial interest; holding office in an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal or civic organization does not confer a financial interest in the organization's securities; and a proprietary interest of a policyholder in a mutual insurance company or mutual savings association or similar interest is not a financial interest unless the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the interest. A justice shall make reasonable efforts to keep informed about his or her personal and fiduciary interests and those of his or her spouse or registered domestic partner and of minor children living in the household.**

**(e) The justice or his or her spouse or registered domestic partner, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse or registered domestic partner thereof, is a party or an officer, director or trustee of a party to the proceeding, or a lawyer or**

**spouse or registered domestic partner of a lawyer in the proceeding is the spouse, registered domestic partner, former spouse, former registered domestic partner, child, sibling, or parent of the justice or of the justice's spouse or registered domestic partner, or such a person is associated in the private practice of law with a lawyer in the proceeding.**

**(f) The justice (i) served as the judge before whom the proceeding was tried or heard in the lower court, (ii) has a personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding, or (iii) has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's lawyer.**

**(g) A temporary or permanent physical impairment renders the justice unable properly to perceive the evidence or conduct the proceedings.**

**(h) The justice has a current arrangement concerning prospective employment or other compensated service as a dispute resolution neutral or is participating in, or, within the last two years has participated in, discussions regarding prospective employment or service as a dispute resolution neutral, or has been engaged in such employment or service, and any of the following applies:**

**(i) The arrangement is, or the prior employment or discussion was, with a party to the proceeding;**

**(ii) The matter before the justice includes issues relating to the enforcement of either an agreement to submit a dispute to an alternative dispute resolution process or an award or other final decision by a dispute resolution neutral;**

**(iii) The justice directs the parties to participate in an alternative dispute resolution process in which the dispute resolution neutral will be an individual or entity with whom the justice has the arrangement, has previously been employed or served, or is discussing or has discussed the employment or service; or**

**(iv) The justice will select a dispute resolution neutral or entity to conduct an alternative dispute resolution process in the matter before the justice, and among those available for selection is an individual or entity with whom the justice has the arrangement, with whom the justice has previously been employed or served, or with whom the justice is discussing or has discussed the employment or service.**

**For purposes of this canon, "participating in discussions" or "has**

**participated in discussions” means that the justice solicited or otherwise indicated an interest in accepting or negotiating possible employment or service as an alternative dispute resolution neutral or responded to an unsolicited statement regarding, or an offer of, such employment or service by expressing an interest in that employment or service, making any inquiry regarding the employment or service, or encouraging the person making the statement or offer to provide additional information about that possible employment or service. If a justice’s response to an unsolicited statement regarding, a question about, or offer of, prospective employment or other compensated service as a dispute resolution neutral is limited to responding negatively, declining the offer, or declining to discuss such employment or service, that response does not constitute participating in discussions.**

**For purposes of this canon, “party” includes the parent, subsidiary, or other legal affiliate of any entity that is a party and is involved in the transaction, contract, or facts that gave rise to the issues subject to the proceeding.**

**For purposes of this canon, “dispute resolution neutral” means an arbitrator, a mediator, a temporary judge appointed under section 21 of article VI of the California Constitution, a referee appointed under Code of Civil Procedure section 638 or 639, a special master, a neutral evaluator, a settlement officer, or a settlement facilitator.**

**(i) The justice’s spouse or registered domestic partner or a person within the third degree of relationship to the justice or his or her spouse or registered domestic partner, or the person’s spouse or registered domestic partner, was a witness in the proceeding.**

*(Canon 3E(5) amended effective January 1, 2008; previously renumbered effective January 1, 2005.)*

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY**

*Canon 3(E)(1) sets forth the general duty to disqualify applicable to a judge of any court. Sources for determining when recusal or disqualification is appropriate may include the applicable provisions of the Code of Civil Procedure, other provisions of the Code of Judicial Ethics, the Code of Conduct for United States Judges, the American Bar Association’s Model Code of Judicial Conduct, and related case law.*

*The decision whether to disclose information under Canon 3E(2) is a decision based on the facts of the case before the judge. A judge is required to*

*disclose only information that is related to the grounds for disqualification set forth in Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1.*

*Canon 3E(4) sets forth the general standards for recusal of an appellate justice. The term “appellate justice” includes justices of both the Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court. Generally, the provisions concerning disqualification of an appellate justice are intended to assist justices in determining whether recusal is appropriate and to inform the public why recusal may occur.*

*However, the rule of necessity may override the rule of disqualification. For example, a judge might be required to participate in judicial review of a judicial salary statute, or might be the only judge available in a matter requiring judicial action, such as a hearing on probable cause or a temporary restraining order. In the latter case, the judge must promptly disclose on the record the basis for possible disqualification and use reasonable efforts to transfer the matter to another judge as soon as practicable.*

*In some instances, membership in certain organizations may have the potential to give an appearance of partiality, although membership in the organization generally may not be barred by Canon 2C, Canon 4, or any other specific canon. A judge holding membership in an organization should disqualify himself or herself whenever doing so would be appropriate in accordance with Canon 3E(1), 3E(4), or 3E(5) or statutory requirements. In addition, in some circumstances, the parties or their lawyers may consider a judge’s membership in an organization relevant to the question of disqualification, even if the judge believes there is no actual basis for disqualification. In accordance with this Canon, a judge should disclose to the parties his or her membership in an organization, in any proceeding in which that information is reasonably relevant to the question of disqualification under Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1, even if the judge concludes there is no actual basis for disqualification.*

***(Canon 3E amended effective January 1, 2008; adopted effective January 15, 1996; previously amended effective April 15, 1996, June 19, 1997, March 4, 1999, December 13, 2000, June 18, 2003, December 22, 2003, January 1, 2005, and January 1, 2007.)***

## CANON 4

### **A JUDGE SHALL SO CONDUCT THE JUDGE'S QUASI-JUDICIAL AND EXTRAJUDICIAL ACTIVITIES AS TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF CONFLICT WITH JUDICIAL OBLIGATIONS**

#### **A. Extrajudicial Activities in General**

**A judge shall conduct all of the judge's extrajudicial activities so that they do not**

- (1) cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially;**
- (2) demean the judicial office; or**
- (3) interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Complete separation of a judge from extrajudicial activities is neither possible nor wise; a judge should not become isolated from the community in which the judge lives.*

*Expressions of bias or prejudice by a judge, even outside the judge's judicial activities, may cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge. Expressions which may do so include jokes or other remarks demeaning individuals on the basis of a classification such as their race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. See Canon 2C and accompanying Commentary.*

#### **B. Quasi-judicial and Avocational Activities**

**A judge may speak, write, lecture, teach, and participate in activities concerning legal and nonlegal subject matters, subject to the requirements of this Code.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*As a judicial officer and person specially learned in the law,\* a judge is in a unique position to contribute to the improvement of 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 time permits, a judge may do so, either independently or through a bar or judicial association or other group dedicated to the improvement of the law.\**

*It may be necessary to promote legal education programs and materials by identifying authors and speakers by judicial title. This is permissible, provided such use of the judicial title does not contravene Canons 2A and 2B.*

*Judges are not precluded by their office from engaging in other social, community, and intellectual endeavors so long as they do not interfere with the obligations under Canons 2C and 4A.*

### **C. Governmental, Civic, or Charitable Activities**

**(1) A judge shall not appear at a public hearing or officially consult with an executive or legislative body or public official except on matters concerning the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice or in matters involving the judge's private economic or personal interests.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*See Canon 2B regarding the obligation to avoid improper influence.*

**(2) A judge shall not accept appointment to a governmental committee or commission or other governmental position that is concerned with issues of fact or policy on matters other than the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice. A judge may, however, serve in the military reserve or represent a national, state, or local government on ceremonial occasions or in connection with historical, educational, or cultural activities.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Canon 4C(2) prohibits a judge from accepting any governmental position except one relating to the law,\* legal system, or administration of justice as authorized by Canon 4C(3). The appropriateness of accepting extrajudicial assignments must be assessed in light of the demands on judicial resources and the need to protect the courts from involvement in extrajudicial matters that may prove to be controversial. Judges shall not accept governmental appointments that are likely to interfere with the effectiveness and independence of the judiciary, or which constitute a public office within the meaning of the California Constitution, article VI, section 17.*

*Canon 4C(2) does not govern a judge's service in a nongovernmental position. See Canon 4C(3) permitting service by a judge with organizations devoted to the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice and with educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organizations not conducted for profit. For example, service on the board of a public educational institution, other than a law school, would be prohibited under*

*Canon 4C(2), but service on the board of a public law school or any private educational institution would generally be permitted under Canon 4C(3).*

**(3) Subject to the following limitations and the other requirements of this Code,**

**(a) a judge may serve as an officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor of an organization or governmental agency devoted to the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice provided that such position does not constitute a public office within the meaning of the California Constitution, article VI, section 17;**

**(b) a judge may serve as an officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor of an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization not conducted for profit;**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Canon 4C(3) does not apply to a judge's service in a governmental position unconnected with the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice. See Canon 4C(2).*

*Canon 4C(3) uses the phrase, "Subject to the following limitations and the other requirements of this Code." As an example of the meaning of the phrase, a judge permitted by Canon 4C(3) to serve on the board of a fraternal institution may be prohibited from such service by Canon 2C or 4A if the institution practices invidious discrimination or if service on the board otherwise casts reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge.*

*Service by a judge on behalf of a civic or charitable organization may be governed by other provisions of Canon 4 in addition to Canon 4C. For example, a judge is prohibited by Canon 4G from serving as a legal advisor to a civic or charitable organization.*

*Service on the board of a homeowners' association or a neighborhood protective group is proper if it is related to the protection of the judge's own economic interests. See Canons 4D(2) and 4D(4). See Canon 2B regarding the obligation to avoid improper use of the prestige of a judge's office.*

**(c) a judge shall not serve as an officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor if it is likely that the organization**

**(i) will be engaged in judicial proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge, or**



**(ii) will be engaged frequently in adversary proceedings in the court of which the judge is a member or in any court subject to the appellate jurisdiction of the court of which the judge is a member.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*The changing nature of some organizations and of their relationship to the law\* makes it necessary for the judge regularly to reexamine the activities of each organization with which the judge is affiliated to determine if it is proper for the judge to continue the affiliation. Some organizations regularly engage in litigation to achieve their goals or fulfill their purposes. Judges should avoid a leadership role in such organizations as it could compromise the appearance of impartiality.*

**(d) a judge as an officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor, or as a member or otherwise**

**(i) may assist such an organization in planning fund raising and may participate in the management and investment of the organization's funds, but shall not personally participate in the solicitation of funds or other fund-raising activities, except that a judge may privately solicit funds for such an organization from other judges (excluding court commissioners, referees, retired judges, and temporary judges\*);**

**(ii) may make recommendations to public and private fundgranting organizations on projects and programs concerning the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice;**

**(iii) shall not personally participate in membership solicitation if the solicitation might reasonably be perceived as coercive or if the membership solicitation is essentially a fund-raising mechanism, except as permitted in Canon 4C(3)(d)(i);**

**(iv) shall not permit the use of the prestige of his or her judicial office for fund raising or membership solicitation but may be a speaker, guest of honor, or recipient of an award for public or charitable service provided the judge does not personally solicit funds and complies with Canon 4A(1), (2), and (3).**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*A judge may solicit membership or endorse or encourage membership efforts for an organization devoted to the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice, or a nonprofit educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization as long as the solicitation cannot*

*reasonably be perceived as coercive and is not essentially a fund-raising mechanism. Solicitation of funds for an organization and solicitation of memberships similarly involve the danger that the person solicited will feel obligated to respond favorably to the solicitor if the solicitor is in a position of influence or control. A judge must not engage in direct, individual solicitation of funds or memberships in person, in writing, or by telephone except in the following cases: (1) a judge may solicit other judges (excluding court commissioners, referees, retired judges, court-appointed arbitrators, and temporary judges\*) for funds or memberships; (2) a judge may solicit other persons for membership in the organizations described above if neither those persons nor persons with whom they are affiliated are likely ever to appear before the court on which the judge serves; and (3) a judge who is an officer of such an organization may send a general membership solicitation mailing over the judge's signature.*

*Use of an organization letterhead for fund raising or membership solicitation does not violate Canon 4C(3)(d), provided the letterhead lists only the judge's name and office or other position in the organization, and designates the judge's judicial title only if other persons whose names appear on the letterhead have comparable designations. In addition, a judge must also make reasonable efforts to ensure that the judge's staff, court officials, and others subject to the judge's direction and control do not solicit funds on the judge's behalf for any purpose, charitable or otherwise.*

#### **D. Financial Activities**

**(1) A judge shall not engage in financial and business dealings that**

**(a) may reasonably be perceived to exploit the judge's judicial position,**  
**or**

**(b) involve the judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with lawyers or other persons likely to appear before the court on which the judge serves.**

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY**

*The Time for Compliance provision of this Code (Canon 6F) postpones the time for compliance with certain provisions of this Canon in some cases.*

*A judge must avoid financial and business dealings that involve the judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with persons likely to appear either before the judge personally or before other judges on the judge's court. A judge shall discourage members of the judge's family\* from engaging in*

*dealings that would reasonably appear to exploit the judge's judicial position or that involve family members in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with persons likely to appear before the judge. This rule is necessary to avoid creating an appearance of exploitation of office or favoritism and to minimize the potential for disqualification.*

*Participation by a judge in financial and business dealings is subject to the general prohibitions in Canon 4A against activities that tend to reflect adversely on impartiality, demean the judicial office, or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties. Such participation is also subject to the general prohibition in Canon 2 against activities involving impropriety or the appearance of impropriety and the prohibition in Canon 2B against the misuse of the prestige of judicial office.*

*In addition, a judge must maintain high standards of conduct in all of the judge's activities, as set forth in Canon 1.*

**(2) A judge may, subject to the requirements of this Code, hold and manage investments of the judge and members of the judge's family,\* including real estate, and engage in other remunerative activities. A judge shall not participate in, nor permit the judge's name to be used in connection with, any business venture or commercial advertising that indicates the judge's title or affiliation with the judiciary or otherwise lend the power or prestige of his or her office to promote a business or any commercial venture.**

**(3) A judge shall not serve as an officer, director, manager, or employee of a business affected with a public interest, including, without limitation, a financial institution, insurance company, or public utility.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Although participation by a judge in business activities might otherwise be permitted by Canon 4D, a judge may be prohibited from participation by other provisions of this Code when, for example, the business entity frequently appears before the judge's court or the participation requires significant time away from judicial duties. Similarly, a judge must avoid participating in any business activity if the judge's participation would involve misuse of the prestige of judicial office. See Canon 2B.*

**(4) A judge shall manage personal investments and financial activities so as to minimize the necessity for disqualification. As soon as reasonably possible, a judge shall divest himself or herself of investments and other financial interests that would require frequent disqualification.**

**(5) Under no circumstance shall a judge accept a gift, bequest, or favor if the donor is a party whose interests have come or are reasonably likely to come before the judge. A judge shall discourage members of the judge's family residing in the judge's household\* from accepting similar benefits from parties who have come or are reasonably likely to come before the judge.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*In addition to the prohibitions set forth in Canon 4D(5) regarding gifts, other laws may be applicable to judges, including, for example, Code of Civil Procedure section 170.9 and the Political Reform Act of 1974 (Gov. Code, § 81000 et seq.).*

*Canon 4D(5) does not apply to contributions to a judge's campaign for judicial office, a matter governed by Canon 5.*

*Because a gift, bequest, or favor to a member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household\* might be viewed as intended to influence the judge, a judge must inform those family members of the relevant ethical constraints upon the judge in this regard and discourage those family members from violating them. A judge cannot, however, reasonably be expected to know or control all of the financial or business activities of all family members residing in the judge's household.\**

*The application of Canon 4D(5) requires recognition that a judge cannot reasonably be expected to anticipate all persons or interests that may come before the court.*

**(6) A judge shall not accept and shall discourage members of the judge's family residing in the judge's household\* from accepting a gift, bequest, favor, or loan from anyone except as hereinafter provided:**

**(a) any gift incidental to a public testimonial, books, tapes, and other resource materials supplied by publishers on a complimentary basis for official use, or an invitation to the judge and the judge's spouse or registered domestic partner or guest to attend a bar-related function or an activity devoted to the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice;**

**(b) advances or reimbursement for the reasonable cost of travel, transportation, lodging, and subsistence which is directly related to participation in any judicial, educational, civic, or governmental program or**

**bar-related function or activity, devoted to the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice;**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Acceptance of an invitation to a law-related function is governed by Canon 4D(6)(a); acceptance of an invitation paid for by an individual lawyer or group of lawyers is governed by Canon 4D(6)(d).*

**(c) a gift, award, or benefit incident to the business, profession, or other separate activity of a spouse or registered domestic partner or other member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household,\* including gifts, awards, and benefits for the use of both the spouse or registered domestic partner or other family member and the judge, provided the gift, award, or benefit could not reasonably be perceived as intended to influence the judge in the performance of judicial duties;**

**(d) ordinary social hospitality;**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Although Canon 4D(6)(d) does not preclude ordinary social hospitality between members of the bench and bar, a judge should carefully weigh acceptance of such hospitality to avoid any appearance of bias. See Canon 2B.*

**(e) a gift for a special occasion from a relative or friend, if the gift is fairly commensurate with the occasion and the relationship;**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*A gift to a judge, or to a member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household,\* that is excessive in value raises questions about the judge's impartiality and the integrity of the judicial office and might require disqualification of the judge where disqualification would not otherwise be required. See, however, Canon 4D(6)(f).*

**(f) a gift, bequest, favor, or loan from a relative or close personal friend whose appearance or interest in a case would in any event require disqualification under Canon 3E;**

**(g) a loan in the regular course of business on the same terms generally available to persons who are not judges;**

**(h) a scholarship or fellowship awarded on the same terms and based on the same criteria applied to other applicants.**

*(Canon 4D amended effective January 1, 2007.)*

#### **E. Fiduciary Activities**

**1) A judge shall not serve as executor, administrator, or other personal representative, trustee, guardian, attorney in fact, or other fiduciary,\* except for the estate, trust, or person of a member of the judge's family,\* and then only if such service will not interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.**

**(2) A judge shall not serve as a fiduciary\* if it is likely that the judge as a fiduciary\* will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge, or if the estate, trust, or minor or conservatee becomes engaged in contested proceedings in the court on which the judge serves or one under its appellate jurisdiction.**

**(3) The same restrictions on financial activities that apply to a judge personally also apply to the judge while acting in a fiduciary\* capacity.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*The Time for Compliance provision of this Code (Canon 6F) postpones the time for compliance with certain provisions of this Canon in some cases.*

*The restrictions imposed by this Canon may conflict with the judge's obligation as a fiduciary.\* For example, a judge shall resign as trustee if detriment to the trust would result from divestiture of trust holdings the retention of which would place the judge in violation of Canon 4D(4).*

#### **F. Service as Arbitrator or Mediator**

**A judge shall not act as an arbitrator or mediator or otherwise perform judicial functions in a private capacity unless expressly authorized by law.\***

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Canon 4F does not prohibit a judge from participating in arbitration, mediation, or settlement conferences performed as part of his or her judicial duties.*

#### **G. Practice of Law**

**A judge shall not practice law.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*This prohibition refers to the practice of law in a representative capacity and not in a pro se capacity. A judge may act for himself or herself in all legal matters, including matters involving litigation and matters involving appearances before or other dealings with legislative and other governmental bodies. However, in so doing, a judge must not abuse the prestige of office to advance the interests of the judge or member of the judge's family. \* See Canon 2B.*

*This prohibition applies to subordinate judicial officers, magistrates, special masters, and judges of the State Bar Court.*

*(Canon 4G amended effective January 1, 2005.)*

**H. Compensation and Reimbursement**

**A judge may receive compensation and reimbursement of expenses as provided by law\* for the extrajudicial activities permitted by this Code, if the source of such payments does not give the appearance of influencing the judge's performance of judicial duties or otherwise give the appearance of impropriety.**

**(1) Compensation shall not exceed a reasonable amount nor shall it exceed what a person who is not a judge would receive for the same activity.**

**(2) Expense reimbursement shall be limited to the actual cost of travel, food, lodging, and other costs reasonably incurred by the judge and, where appropriate to the occasion, by the judge's spouse or registered domestic partner or guest. Any payment in excess of such an amount is compensation.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Judges should be aware of the statutory limitations on accepting gifts, including honoraria.*

*(Canon H amended effective January 1, 2007.)*

## CANON 5

### A JUDGE OR JUDICIAL CANDIDATE\* SHALL REFRAIN FROM INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Judges are entitled to entertain their personal views on political questions. They are not required to surrender their rights or opinions as citizens. They shall, however, avoid political activity that may create the appearance of political bias or impropriety. Judicial independence and impartiality should dictate the conduct of judges and candidates\* for judicial office.

#### A. Political Organizations

Judges and candidates\* for judicial office shall not

(1) act as leaders or hold any office in a political organization;\*

(2) make speeches for a political organization\* or candidate\* for nonjudicial office or publicly endorse or publicly oppose a candidate for nonjudicial office; or

(3) personally solicit funds for a political organization\* or nonjudicial candidate;\* or make contributions to a political party or political organization\* or to a nonjudicial candidate in excess of five hundred dollars in any calendar year per political party or political organization\* or candidate,\* or in excess of an aggregate of one thousand dollars in any calendar year for all political parties or political organizations\* or nonjudicial candidates.\*

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*The term "political activity" should not be construed so narrowly as to prevent private comment.*

*This provision does not prohibit a judge from signing a petition to qualify a measure for the ballot without the use of the judge's official title.*

*In judicial elections, judges are neither required to shield themselves from campaign contributions nor are they prohibited from soliciting contributions from anyone including attorneys. Nevertheless, there are necessary limits on judges facing election if the appearance of impropriety is to be avoided. Although it is improper for a judge to receive a gift from an attorney subject to exceptions noted*



*in Canon 4D(6), a judge's campaign may receive attorney contributions.*

*Although attendance at political gatherings is not prohibited, any such attendance should be restricted so that it would not constitute an express public endorsement of a nonjudicial candidate\* or a measure not directly affecting the administration of justice otherwise prohibited by this Canon.*

*Subject to the monetary limitation herein to political contributions, a judge may purchase tickets for political dinners or other similar dinner functions. Any admission price to such a political dinner or function in excess of the actual cost of the meal shall be considered a political contribution. The prohibition in Canon 5A(3) does not preclude judges from contributing to a campaign fund for distribution among judges who are candidates for reelection or retention, nor does it apply to contributions to any judge or candidate\* for judicial office.*

*Under this Canon, a judge may publicly endorse another judicial candidate.\* Such endorsements are permitted because judicial officers have a special obligation to uphold the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary and are in a unique position to know the qualifications necessary to serve as a competent judicial officer.*

*Although members of the judge's family\* are not subject to the provisions of this Code, a judge shall not avoid compliance with this Code by making contributions through a spouse or registered domestic partner or other family member.*

*(Canon 5A amended effective January 1, 2007.)*

## **B. Conduct During Judicial Campaigns**

**A candidate\* for election or appointment to judicial office shall not (1) make statements to the electorate or the appointing authority that commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that could come before the courts, or (2) knowingly, or with reckless disregard for the truth, misrepresent the identity, qualifications, present position, or any other fact concerning the candidate or his or her opponent.**

### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*This code does not contain the “announce clause” that was the subject of the United States Supreme Court’s decision in Republican Party of Minnesota v. White (2002) 536 U.S. 765. That opinion did not address the “commit clause,” which is contained in Canon 5B(1). The phrase “appear to commit” has been deleted because, although judicial candidates cannot promise to take a particular*

*position on cases, controversies, or issues prior to taking the bench and presiding over individual cases, the phrase may have been overinclusive.*

*Canon 5B(2) prohibits making knowing misrepresentations, including false or misleading statements, during an election campaign because doing so would violate Canons 1 and 2A, and may violate other canons.*

*(Canon 5B amended effective December 22, 2003.)*

### **C. Speaking at Political Gatherings**

**Candidates\* for judicial office may speak to political gatherings only on their own behalf or on behalf of another candidate for judicial office.**

### **D. Measures to Improve the Law**

**Except as otherwise permitted in this Code, judges shall not engage in any political activity, other than in relation to measures concerning the improvement of the law,\* the legal system, or the administration of justice.**

## CANON 6

### COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF JUDICIAL ETHICS

#### A. Judges

**Anyone who is an officer of the state judicial system and who performs judicial functions, including, but not limited to, a subordinate judicial officer, magistrate, court-appointed arbitrator, judge of the State Bar Court, temporary judge, and special master, is a judge within the meaning of this Code. All judges shall comply with this Code except as provided below.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*For the purposes of this Canon, if a retired judge is serving in the assigned judges program, the judge is considered to "perform judicial functions." Because retired judges who are privately retained may perform judicial functions, their conduct while performing those functions should be guided by this Code.*

*(Canon 6A amended effective January 1, 2005.)*

#### B. Retired Judge Serving in the Assigned Judges Program

**A retired judge who has filed an application to serve on assignment, meets the eligibility requirements set by the Chief Justice for service, and has received an acknowledgment of participation in the assigned judges program shall comply with all provisions of this Code, except for the following:**

**4C(2) Appointment to governmental positions  
4E Fiduciary\* activities**

*(Canon 6B amended effective January 1, 2005.)*

#### C. Retired Judge as Arbitrator or Mediator

**A retired judge serving in the assigned judges program is not required to comply with Canon 4F of this Code relating to serving as an arbitrator or mediator, or performing judicial functions in a private capacity, except as otherwise provided in the *Standards and Guidelines for Judges Serving on Assignment* promulgated by the Chief Justice.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*In California, article VI, section 6 of the California Constitution provides that a "retired judge who consents may be assigned to any court" by the Chief*

*Justice. Retired judges who are serving in the assigned judges program pursuant to the above provision are bound by Canon 6B, including the requirement of Canon 4G barring the practice of law. Other provisions of California law, and standards and guidelines for eligibility and service set by the Chief Justice, further define the limitations on who may serve on assignment.*

#### **D. Temporary Judge\*, Referee, or Court-Appointed Arbitrator<sup>1</sup>**

**A temporary judge, a person serving as a referee pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 638 or 639, or a court-appointed arbitrator shall comply only with the following Code provisions:**

**(1) A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall comply with Canons 1 [integrity and independence of the judiciary], 2A [promoting public confidence], 3B(3) [order and decorum] and (4) [patient, dignified, and courteous treatment], 3B(6) [require lawyers to refrain from manifestations of any form of bias or prejudice], 3D(1) [action regarding misconduct by another judge] and (2) [action regarding misconduct by a lawyer], when the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator is actually presiding in a proceeding or communicating with the parties, counsel, or court personnel while serving in the capacity of a temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator in the case.**

**(2) A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall, from the time of notice and acceptance of appointment until termination of the appointment:**

**(a) Comply with Canons 2B(1) [not allow family or other relationships to influence judicial conduct], 3B(1) [hear and decide all matters unless disqualified] and (2) [be faithful to and maintain competence in the law], 3B(5) [perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice], 3B(7) [accord full right to be heard to those entitled; avoid ex parte communications, except as specified] and (8) [dispose of matters fairly and promptly], 3C(1)[discharge administrative responsibilities without bias and with competence and cooperatively], (2) [require staff and personnel to observe standards of conduct and refrain from bias and prejudice] and (4) [make only fair, necessary, and appropriate appointments];**

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<sup>1</sup> Reference should be made to relevant commentary to analogous or individual Canons cited or described in this Canon and appearing elsewhere in this Code.

**(b) Not personally solicit memberships or donations for religious, fraternal, educational, civic, or charitable organizations from the parties and lawyers appearing before the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator;**

**(c) Under no circumstance accept a gift, bequest, or favor if the donor is a party, person, or entity whose interests are reasonably likely to come before the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator. A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall discourage members of the judge's family residing in the judge's household from accepting benefits from parties who are reasonably likely to come before the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator.**

**(3) A temporary judge shall, from the time of notice and acceptance of appointment until termination of the appointment, disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding as follows:**

**(a) A temporary judge—other than a temporary judge solely conducting settlement conferences—is disqualified to serve in a proceeding if any one or more of the following is true:**

**(i) the temporary judge has personal knowledge (as defined in Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1(a)(1)) of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;**

**(ii) the temporary judge has served as a lawyer (as defined in Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1(a)(2)) in the proceeding;**

**(iii) the temporary judge, within the past five years, has given legal advice to, or served as a lawyer (as defined in Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1(a)(2)), except that this provision requires disqualification if the temporary judge represented a party in the past five years rather than the two-year period specified in section 170.1(a)(2)) for a party in the present proceeding;**

**(iv) the temporary judge has a financial interest (as defined in Code of Civil Procedure sections 170.1(a)(3) and 170.5) in the subject matter in the proceeding or in a party to the proceeding;**

**(v) the temporary judge, or the spouse or registered domestic partner of the temporary judge, or a person within the third degree of relationship to**

**either of them, or the spouse or registered domestic partner of such a person is a party to the proceeding or is an officer, director, or trustee of a party;**

**(vi) a lawyer or a spouse or registered domestic partner of a lawyer in the proceeding is the spouse, former spouse, registered domestic partner, former registered domestic partner, child, sibling, or parent of the temporary judge or the temporary judge's spouse or registered domestic partner, or if such a person is associated in the private practice of law with a lawyer in the proceeding; or**

**(vii) for any reason:**

**(A) the temporary judge believes his or her recusal would further the interests of justice;**

**(B) the temporary judge believes there is a substantial doubt as to his or her capacity to be impartial; or**

**(C) a person aware of the facts might reasonably entertain a doubt that the temporary judge would be able to be impartial. Bias or prejudice toward an attorney in the proceeding may be grounds for disqualification;**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*The application of Canon 6D(3)(a)(iii), providing that a temporary judge is disqualified if he or she has given legal advice or served as a lawyer for a party to the proceeding in the past five years, may depend on the type of assignment and the amount of time available to investigate whether the temporary judge has previously represented a party. If time permits, the temporary judge must conduct such an investigation. Thus, if a temporary judge is privately compensated by the parties or is presiding over a particular matter known in advance of the hearing, the temporary judge is presumed to have adequate time to investigate. If, however, a temporary judge is assigned to a high volume calendar, such as traffic or small claims, and has not been provided with the names of the parties prior to the assignment, the temporary judge may rely on his or her memory to determine whether he or she has previously represented a party.*

**(b) A temporary judge before whom a proceeding was tried or heard is disqualified from participating in any appellate review of that proceeding.**

**(c) If the temporary judge has a current arrangement concerning prospective employment or other compensated service as a dispute resolution neutral or is participating in, or, within the last two years has participated in,**

**discussions regarding prospective employment or service as a dispute resolution neutral, or has been engaged in such employment or service, and any of the following applies:**

**(i) The arrangement or current employment is, or the prior employment or discussion was, with a party to the proceeding.**

**(ii) The temporary judge directs the parties to participate in an alternative dispute resolution process in which the dispute resolution neutral will be an individual or entity with whom the temporary judge has the arrangement, is currently employed or serves, has previously been employed or served, or is discussing or has discussed the employment or service.**

**(iii) The temporary judge will select a dispute resolution neutral or entity to conduct an alternative dispute resolution process in the matter before the temporary judge, and among those available for selection is an individual or entity with whom the temporary judge has the arrangement, is currently employed or serves, has previously been employed or served, or is discussing or has discussed the employment or service.**

**For the purposes of canon 6D(3)(c), the definitions of “participating in discussions,” “has participated in discussions,” “party,” and “dispute resolution neutral” are set forth in Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1(a)(8), except that the words “temporary judge” shall be substituted for the word “judge” in such definitions.**

**(d) A lawyer is disqualified from serving as a temporary judge in a family law or unlawful detainer proceeding if in the same type of proceeding:**

**(i) the lawyer holds himself or herself out to the public as representing exclusively one side; or**

**(ii) the lawyer represents one side in 90 percent or more of the cases in which he or she appears.**

***ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY***

***Under Canon 6D(3)(d), “one side” means a category of persons such as landlords, tenants, or litigants exclusively of one gender.***

**(4) After a temporary judge who has determined himself or herself to be disqualified from serving under Canon 6D(3)(a)–(d) has disclosed the basis for his or her disqualification on the record, the parties and their lawyers may agree to waive the disqualification and the temporary judge may accept**

**the waiver. The temporary judge shall not seek to induce a waiver and shall avoid any effort to discover which lawyers or parties favored or opposed a waiver.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Provisions addressing waiver of mandatory disqualifications or limitations, late discovery of grounds for disqualification or limitation, notification of the court when a disqualification or limitation applies, and requests for disqualification by the parties are located in rule 2.818 of the California Rules of Court. Rule 2.818 states that the waiver must be in writing, must recite the basis for the disqualification or limitation, and must state that it was knowingly made. It also states that the waiver is effective only when signed by all parties and their attorneys and filed in the record.*

**(5) A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall, from the time of notice and acceptance of appointment until termination of the appointment:**

**(a) In all proceedings, disclose in writing or on the record information as required by law, or information that is reasonably relevant to the question of disqualification under Canon 6D(3), including personal or professional relationships known to the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator, that he or she or his or her law firm has had with a party, lawyer, or law firm in the current proceeding, even though the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator concludes that there is no actual basis for disqualification; and**

**(b) In all proceedings, disclose in writing or on the record membership of the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator, in any organization that practices invidious discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation, except for membership in a religious or an official military organization of the United States and membership in a nonprofit youth organization so long as membership does not violate Canon 4A [conduct of extrajudicial activities].**

**(6) A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator, from the time of notice and acceptance of appointment until the case is no longer pending in any court, shall not make any public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in which the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator has been engaged, and shall not make any nonpublic comment that might substantially interfere with such proceeding. The temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall require similar**



**abstention on the part of court personnel subject to his or her control. This Canon does not prohibit the following:**

**(a) Statements made in the course of the official duties of the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator; and**

**(b) Explanations for public information about the procedures of the court.**

**(7) From the time of appointment and continuing for two years after the case is no longer pending in any court, a temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall under no circumstances accept a gift, bequest, or favor from a party, person, or entity whose interests have come before the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator in the matter. The temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall discourage family members residing in the household of the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator from accepting any benefits from such parties, persons or entities during the time period stated in this subdivision. The demand for or receipt by a temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator of a fee for his or her services rendered or to be rendered shall not be a violation of this Canon.**

**(8) A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall, from time of notice and acceptance of appointment and continuing indefinitely after the termination of the appointment:**

**(a) Comply with Canons 3(B)(11) [no disclosure of nonpublic information acquired in a judicial capacity] (except as required by law);**

**(b) Not commend or criticize jurors sitting in a proceeding before the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator for their verdict other than in a court order or opinion in such proceeding, but may express appreciation to jurors for their service to the judicial system and the community; and**

**(c) Not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance his, her, or another person's pecuniary or personal interests and not use his or her judicial title in any written communication intended to advance his, her, or another person's pecuniary or personal interests, except to show his, her, or another person's qualifications.**

**(9)(a) A temporary judge appointed under rule 2.810 of the California**

**Rules of Court, from the time of appointment and continuing indefinitely after the termination of the appointment, shall not use his or her title or service as a temporary judge as a description of the lawyer's current or former principal profession, vocation, or occupation on a ballot designation for judicial or other elected office, in an advertisement about the lawyer's law firm or business, or on a letterhead, business card, or other document that is distributed to the public identifying the lawyer or the lawyer's law firm.**

**(b) This Canon does not prohibit a temporary judge appointed under rule 2.810 of the California Rules of Court from using his or her title or service as a temporary judge on an application to serve as a temporary judge, including an application in other courts, on an application for employment or for an appointment to a judicial position, on an individual resume or a descriptive statement submitted in connection with an application for employment or for appointment or election to a judicial position, or in response to a request for information about the public service in which the lawyer has engaged.**

**(10) A temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator shall comply with Canon 6D(2) until the appointment has been terminated formally or until there is no reasonable probability that the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator will further participate in the matter. A rebuttable presumption that the appointment has been formally terminated shall arise if, within one year from the appointment or from the date of the last hearing scheduled in the matter, whichever is later, neither the appointing court nor counsel for any party in the matter has informed the temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator that the appointment remains in effect.**

**(11) A lawyer who has been a temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator in a matter shall not accept any representation relating to the matter without the informed written consent of all parties.**

**(12) When by reason of serving as a temporary judge, referee, or court-appointed arbitrator in a matter, he or she has received confidential information from a party, the person shall not, without the informed written consent of the party, accept employment in another matter in which the confidential information is material.**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*Any exceptions to the Canons do not excuse a judicial officer's separate statutory duty to disclose information that may result in the judicial officer's recusal or disqualification.*

*(Canon 6D amended effective January 1, 2008; adopted effective January 15, 1996; previously amended effective April 15, 1996, March 4, 1999, July 1, 2006, and January 1, 2007.)*

#### **E. Judicial Candidate**

**A candidate\* for judicial office shall comply with the provisions of Canon 5.**

#### **F. Time for Compliance**

**A person to whom this Code becomes applicable shall comply immediately with all provisions of this Code except Canons 4D(2) and 4F and shall comply with these Canons as soon as reasonably possible and shall do so in any event within a period of one year.**

#### *ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY*

*If serving as a fiduciary\* when selected as a judge, a new judge may, notwithstanding the prohibitions in Canon 4F, continue to serve as fiduciary\* but only for that period of time necessary to avoid adverse consequences to the beneficiary of the fiduciary relationship and in no event longer than one year. Similarly, if engaged at the time of judicial selection in a business activity, a new judge may, notwithstanding the prohibitions in Canon 4D(2), continue in that activity for a reasonable period but in no event longer than one year.*

*(Canon 6G repealed effective June 1, 2005; adopted December 30, 2002.)*

#### **H. Judges on Leave Running for Other Public Office**

**A judge who is on leave while running for other public office pursuant to article VI, section 17 of the California Constitution shall comply with all provisions of this Code, except for the following, insofar as the conduct relates to the campaign for public office for which the judge is on leave:**

**2B(2)—Lending the prestige of judicial office to advance the judge’s personal interest**  
**2B(4)—Using the judicial title in written communications intended to advance the judge’s personal interest**

**4C(1)—Appearing at public hearings**

**5—Engaging in political activity (including soliciting and accepting campaign contributions for the other public office)**

*ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTARY:*

*These exceptions are applicable only during the time the judge is on leave while running for other public office. All of the provisions of this Code will become applicable at the time a judge resumes his or her position as a judge.*

*Conduct during elections for judicial office is governed by Canon 5.*

*(Canon 6H adopted effective January 1, 2005.)*