

**CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT**  
**(Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:09)**

**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, and should himself observe, high standards of conduct 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 without any limitation upon the Supreme Judicial Court in the exercise of its power of general superintendence, whether statutory or inherent, in areas not delineated in the Code.

**CANON 2**

**A Judge Should Avoid Impropriety and the Appearance  
of Impropriety in All His Activities**

(A) A judge should respect and comply with the law and should conduct himself at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

(B) A judge should not allow his family, social, or other relationships to influence his judicial conduct or judgment. He should not lend the prestige of his office to advance the private interests of others; nor should he convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence him. He should not testify voluntarily as a character witness.

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

Amended effective Jan. 1, 1992.

**CANON 3**

**A Judge Should Perform the Duties of His Office  
Impartially and Diligently**

The judicial duties of a judge take precedence over all his other activities. His judicial duties include all the duties of his office prescribed by law. In the performance of these duties, the following standards apply:

**(A) Adjudicative Responsibilities.**

(1) A judge should be faithful to the law and maintain professional competence in it. He should be unswayed by partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism.

(2) A judge should maintain order and decorum in proceedings before him.

(3) A judge should be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom he deals in his official capacity, and should require similar conduct of lawyers,

and of his staff, court officials, and others subject to his direction and control.

(4) A judge should accord to every person who is legally interested in a proceeding, or his lawyer, full right to be heard according to law. He should not permit private interviews, arguments or communications designed to influence his judicial action, where interests to be affected thereby are not represented before him, except in cases where provision is made by law for ex parte application.

(5) A judge should dispose promptly of the business of the court.

(6) A judge should abstain from public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in any court, and should require similar abstention on the part of court personnel subject to his direction and control. This subsection does not prohibit judges from making public statements in the course of their official duties or from explaining for public information the procedures of the court.

**(B) Administrative Responsibilities.**

(1) A judge should diligently discharge his 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 his staff and court officials subject to his direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to him.

(3) If a judge shall become aware of unprofessional conduct by a judge or a lawyer

(a) he shall, in the instance of a judge, report his knowledge to the Chief Justices of this court and of the court of which the judge in question is a member, and

(b) in the instance of a lawyer, he shall initiate appropriate investigative or disciplinary measures.

(4) A judge should not make unnecessary appointments. He should exercise his power of appointment only on the basis of merit, avoiding nepotism and favoritism. He should not approve compensation of appointees beyond the fair value of service rendered.

(5) A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest 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, and shall not permit staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control to do so.

(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 Section 3B(6) does not preclude legitimate advocacy when race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, or similar factors, are issues in the proceeding.

**(C) Disqualification.**

(1) A judge should disqualify himself in a proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to instances where:

(a) he has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party, or personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;

(b) he served as a lawyer in the matter of controversy, or a lawyer with whom he previously practiced law served during such association as a lawyer concerning the matter, or the judge or such lawyer has been a material witness concerning it;

(c) he knows that he, individually or as a fiduciary, or his spouse or minor child residing in his household, has a financial or other property interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, which interest could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceedings;

(d) he or his spouse, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse of such a person:

(i) is a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director, or trustee of a party;

(ii) is acting as a lawyer in the proceeding;

(iii) is known by the judge to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;

(iv) is to the judge's knowledge likely to be a material witness in the proceeding.

(2) A judge should inform himself about his personal and fiduciary financial interests, and make a reasonable effort to inform himself about the personal financial interest of his spouse and minor children residing in his household.

(3) For the purposes of this section:

(a) the degree of relationship is calculated according to the civil law system;

(b) "fiduciary" includes such relationships as executor, administrator, trustee, and guardian;

(c) "financial interest" means ownership of a substantial legal or equitable interest, 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 policyholder in a mutual insurance company, of 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 or of less than one-hundredth of one percent of the total shares issued and outstanding of any corporation or of its parent or subsidiary corporations is a "financial interest" in the issuer of such securities or its parent or subsidiaries only if the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the securities.

#### **(D) Remittal of Disqualification.**

A judge disqualified by the terms of Canon 3(C)(1)(c) or Canon 3(C)(1)(d) may, instead of withdrawing from the proceeding, disclose on the record the basis of his disqualification. If, based on such disclosure,

the lawyers, after consultation with their clients independently of the judge's participation, agree in writing that the judge's relationship is immaterial or that his financial interest is insubstantial, the judge is no longer disqualified, and may participate in the proceeding. The agreement, signed by all lawyers, shall be incorporated in the record of the proceeding.

Amended Nov.10, 1982, effective Jan. 1, 1983; amended effective Jan.1, 1992; Feb.11, 1992; amended October 1, 1998, effective November 2, 1998.

#### **CANON 4**

##### **A Judge May Engage in Activities to Improve the Law, the Legal System, and the Administration of Justice**

A judge, subject to the proper performance of his judicial duties, may engage in the following quasi-judicial activities, if in doing so he does not cast doubt on his capacity to decide impartially any issue that may come before him:

(A) He may speak, write, lecture, teach, and participate in other activities concerning the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice.

(B) He may appear at a public hearing before an executive or legislative body or official on matters concerning the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice, and he may otherwise consult with an executive or legislative body or official, but only on matters concerning the administration of justice.

(C) He may serve as member, officer, or director of an organization devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice. He may assist such an organization in raising funds and may participate in their management and investment, but should not personally participate in public fund raising activities. He may make recommendations to public and private fund granting agencies on projects and programs concerning the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice.

#### **CANON 5**

##### **A Judge Should Regulate His Extra-Judicial Activities to Minimize the Risk of Conflict with His Judicial Duties**

###### **(A) Avocational Activities.**

A judge may write, lecture, teach, and speak on nonlegal subjects, and engage in the arts, sports, and other social and recreational activities, if such avocational activities do not detract from the dignity of his office or interfere with the performance of his judicial duties.

###### **(B) Civic and Charitable Activities.**

A judge may participate in civic and charitable activities that do not reflect adversely upon his impartiality or interfere with the performance of his judicial duties. A judge may serve as an officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor of an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization not conducted for the economic or political advantage of its members, 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 him or will be regularly engaged in adversary proceedings in any court.

(2) A judge should not solicit funds for any educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civil organization, or use or permit the use of the prestige of his office for that purpose, but he may be listed as an officer, director, or trustee of such an organization. He should not be a speaker or the guest of honor at an organization's fund raising events, but he may attend such events.

(3) A judge should not give investment advice to such an organization, but he may serve on its board of directors or trustees even though it has the responsibility for approving investment decisions.

**(C) Financial Activities.**

(1) A judge should refrain from financial and business dealings that tend to reflect adversely on his impartiality, interfere with the proper performance of his judicial position, or involve him in frequent transactions with lawyers or persons likely to come before the court on which he serves.

(2) Subject to the requirements of subsection (1), a judge may hold and manage investments, including real estate, and engage in other remunerative activity permitted by Canon 4, but should not serve as an officer, director, manager, advisor, or employee of any business.

(3) A judge should manage his investments and other financial interests to minimize the number of cases in which he is disqualified. As soon as he can do so without serious financial detriment, he should divest himself of investments and other financial interests that might require frequent disqualification.

(4) Neither a judge nor a member of his family residing in his household should accept a gift, bequest, favor, or loan from anyone except as follows:

(a) A judge may accept a gift of nominal value incident to public recognition of him; books supplied by publishers on a complimentary basis for official use; or an invitation to the judge and his spouse to attend a bar-related function or activity devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice;

(b) a judge or a member of his family residing in his household may accept ordinary social hospitality; a gift, bequest, favor, or loan from a relative; a gift from a wedding, engagement, confirmation, or like traditional ceremonial occasion; a loan from a lending institution in its regular course of business on the same terms generally available to persons who are not judges; or a scholarship or fellowship awarded on the same terms applied to other applicants;

(c) a judge or a member of his family residing in his household may accept any other gift, bequest, favor, or loan only if the donor is not a party or other person whose interests have come or are likely to come before him, and, if its value exceeds \$350, the judge reports it in the same manner as he reports compensation in Canon 6(C).

(5) For the purposes of this section "member of his family residing in his household" means any relative of a judge by blood or marriage, or a person treated by a judge as a member of his family, who resides in his household.

(6) A judge is not required by this Code to disclose his income, debts, or investments, except as provided in this Canon and Canons 3 and 6.

(7) Information acquired by a judge in his judicial capacity should not be used or disclosed by him in financial dealings or for any other purpose not related to his judicial duties.

**(D) Fiduciary Activities.**

A judge should not serve as the executor, administrator, trustee, guardian, or other fiduciary, except for the estate, trust, or person of a member of his family, and then only if such service will not then interfere with the proper performance of his judicial duties. "Member of his family" includes a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or other relative or person with whom the judge maintains a close familial relationship. As a family fiduciary a judge is subject to the following restrictions:

(1) He should not serve if it is likely that as a fiduciary he will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before him, or if the estate, trust, or ward becomes involved in adversary proceedings in the court on which he 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 him in his personal capacity.

**(E) Arbitration.**

A judge should not act as an arbitrator or mediator.

**(F) Practice of Law.**

A judge should not practice law

**(G) Extra-Judicial Appointments.**

A judge should not accept appointment to a governmental committee, commission, or other 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. The foregoing is subject to any limitations imposed by the Constitution of the Commonwealth with respect to any such appointment. A judge, however, may represent his country, state, or locality on ceremonial occasions or in connection with historical, educational, and cultural activities.

Amended March 26, 1997, effective April 16, 1997; amended effective May 26, 1998.

## **CANON 6**

### **A Judge Should Regularly File Reports of Compensation Received for Quasi-Judicial and Extra-Judicial Activities**

A judge may receive compensation and reimbursement of expenses for the quasi-judicial and extra-judicial activities permitted by this Code, if the source of such payments does not give the appearance of influencing the judge in his judicial duties or otherwise give the appearance of impropriety, subject to the following restrictions:

**(A) Compensation.**

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.

**(B) Expense Reimbursement.**

Expense reimbursement should be limited to the actual cost of travel, food, and lodging reasonably incurred by the judge and, where appropriate to the occasion, by his spouse. Any payment in excess of such an amount is compensation.

**(C) Public Reports.**

A judge should report on or before April 15 of each year, with respect to the previous calendar year, the date, place, and nature of any activity for which he received compensation, and the name of the

payor and the amount of compensation so received. Compensation or income of a spouse attributed to the judge by operation of a community property law is not extra-judicial compensation to the judge. His report should be made and should be filed as a public document in the office of the Administrative Assistant to the Supreme Judicial Court (G.L. c. 211, §3A).

## **CANON 7**

### **A Judge Should Refrain from Political Activity**

#### **(A) Political Conduct in General.**

(1) A judge should not:

(a) act as a leader or hold any office in a political organization;

(b) make speeches for a political organization or candidate or publicly endorse a candidate for public office;

(c) solicit funds for or pay an assessment or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, attend political gatherings, or purchase tickets for political party dinners, for functions conducted to raise money for incumbents of or for candidates for election to any political office, or for any other type of political function.

(2) A judge should resign his office when he becomes a candidate either in a primary or in a general election for elective office. On assuming his judicial position, a judge shall resign any elective public office he then holds.

(3) A judge may engage in activity in support or on behalf of measures to improve the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice.

Amended June 7, 1985, effective July 1, 1985.

## **CANON 8**

### **Compliance with the Code of Judicial Conduct**

#### **(A) Retired Judges.**

(1) A judge whose name has been placed upon the list of retired judges eligible to perform judicial duties, pursuant to G.L. c. 32, §§ 65E-65G, should comply with all provisions of this Code of Judicial Conduct during the term of such eligibility.

(2) A judge who has retired or resigned from judicial office should not perform court-connected dispute resolution services except on a pro bono publico basis, enter an appearance, nor accept an appointment to represent any party in any court of the Commonwealth for a period of six months following the date of retirement, resignation or most recent service as a retired judge pursuant to G.L. c. 32, §§ 65E-65G.

Amended Dec. 2, 1983, effective Jan. 1, 1984; Oct. 24, 1989, effective Jan. 1, 1990; May 1, 1998, effective June 1, 1998.

**Effective Date of Compliance**

The effective date of compliance of this Code is January 1, 1973.