

4-3.5 | IMPARTIALITY AND DECORUM OF THE TRIBUNAL

(a) Influencing Decision Maker. A lawyer shall not seek to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror, or other decision maker except as permitted by law or the rules of court.

(b) Communication with Judge or Official. In an adversary proceeding a lawyer shall not communicate or cause another to communicate as to the merits of the cause with a judge or an official before whom the proceeding is pending except:

- (1) in the course of the official proceeding in the cause;
- (2) in writing if the lawyer promptly delivers a copy of the writing to the opposing counsel or to the adverse party if not represented by a lawyer;
- (3) orally upon notice to opposing counsel or to the adverse party if not represented by a lawyer; or
- (4) as otherwise authorized by law.

(c) Disruption of Tribunal. A lawyer shall not engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.

(d) Communication With Jurors. A lawyer shall not:

- (1) before the trial of a case with which the lawyer is connected, communicate or cause another to communicate with anyone the lawyer knows to be a member of the venire from which the jury will be selected;
- (2) during the trial of a case with which the lawyer is connected, communicate or cause another to communicate with any member of the jury;
- (3) during the trial of a case with which the lawyer is not connected, communicate or cause another to communicate with a juror concerning the case;



(4) after dismissal of the jury in a case with which the lawyer is connected, initiate communication with or cause another to initiate communication with any juror regarding the trial except to determine whether the verdict may be subject to legal challenge; provided, a lawyer may not interview jurors for this purpose unless the lawyer has reason to believe that grounds for such challenge may exist; and provided further, before conducting any such interview the lawyer must file in the cause a notice of intention to interview setting forth the name of the juror or jurors to be interviewed. A copy of the notice must be delivered to the trial judge and opposing counsel a reasonable time before such interview. The provisions of this rule do not prohibit a lawyer from communicating with members of the venire or jurors in the course of official proceedings or as authorized by court rule or written order of the court.

(Amended July 23, 1992, effective Jan. 1, 1993 (605 So.2d 252).)

Comments

Many forms of improper influence upon a tribunal are proscribed by criminal law. Others are specified in Florida's Code of Judicial Conduct, with which an advocate should be familiar. A lawyer is required to avoid contributing to a violation of such provisions.

The advocate's function is to present evidence and argument so that the cause may be decided according to law. Refraining from abusive or obstreperous conduct is a corollary of the advocate's right to speak on behalf of litigants. A lawyer may stand firm against abuse by a judge but should avoid reciprocation; the judge's default is no justification for similar dereliction by an advocate. An advocate can present the cause, protect the record for subsequent review, and preserve professional integrity by patient firmness no less effectively than by belligerence or theatrics.

