

CANON 5C | GOVERNMENTAL, CIVIC OR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

(1) A judge shall not appear at a public hearing before, or otherwise consult with, an executive or legislative body or official except on matters concerning the law, the legal system or the administration of justice or except when acting pro se in a matter involving the judge or the judge's interests.

(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, the judicial branch, or the administration of justice. A judge may, however, represent a country, state or locality on ceremonial occasions or in connection with historical, educational or cultural activities.

(3) A judge may serve as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor of an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, sororal or civic organization not conducted for profit, subject to the following limitations and the other requirements of this Code.

(a) A judge shall not serve as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor if it is likely that the organization

(i) will be engaged in 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.

(b) A judge as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal 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 or directly participate in the solicitation of funds, except that a judge may solicit funds from other judges over whom the judge

does not exercise supervisory or appellate authority;

(ii) shall not personally or directly participate in membership solicitation if the solicitation might reasonably be perceived as coercive;

(iii) shall not use or permit the use of the prestige of judicial office for fund-raising or membership solicitation.

([Amended Jan. 10, 2002 (816 So. 2d 1084); Feb. 20, 2003 (840 So. 2d 1023); Nov. 3, 2005, effective Jan. 1, 2006 (915 So. 2d 145); May 22, 2008 (983 So. 2d 550); June 19, 2014 (141 So. 3d 1172); July 7, 2016, effective Oct. 1, 2016 (194 So. 3d 1015) ; May 18, 2017, effective Jan. 1, 2017 (218 So. 3d 432); amended effective May 21, 2021 (317 So.3d 1090).])

Commentary

Canon 5C(1). See Canon 2B regarding the obligation to avoid improper influence.

Canon 5C(2). Canon 5C(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 4D. The appropriateness of accepting extrajudicial assignments must be assessed in light of the demands on judicial resources created by crowded dockets and the need to protect the courts from involvement in extrajudicial matters that may prove to be controversial. Judges should not accept governmental appointments that are likely to interfere with the effectiveness and independence of the judiciary.

Canon 5C(2) does not govern a judge's service in a nongovernmental position. See Canon 5C(3) permitting service by a judge with educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, sororal or civic organizations not conducted for profit. For example, service on the board of a public educational institution, unless it were a law school, would be prohibited under Canon 5C(2), but service on the board of a public law school or any private educational institution would generally be permitted under Canon 5C(3).

Canon 5C(3). Canon 5C(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 5C(2).



See Commentary to Canon 5B regarding use of 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 5C(3) to serve on the board of a fraternal institution may be prohibited from such service by Canons 2C or 5A 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 5 in addition to Canon 5C. For example, Canon 5G prohibits a judge from serving as a legal advisor to a civic or charitable organization.

Canon 5C(3)(a). The changing nature of some organizations and of their relationship to the law makes it necessary for a judge to regularly reexamine the activities of each organization with which the judge is affiliated in order to determine if it is proper for the judge to continue the affiliation. For example, in many jurisdictions charitable hospitals are now more frequently in court than in the past.

Canon 5C(3)(b). A judge may solicit membership or endorse or encourage membership efforts for a nonprofit educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, sororal or civic organization as long as the solicitation cannot reasonably be perceived as coercive and is not essentially a fund-raising mechanism. Personal or direct solicitation of funds for an organization and personal or direct solicitation of memberships 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 for funds or memberships other judges over whom the judge does not exercise supervisory or appellate authority,
- 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.

Mere attendance at an event, whether or not the event serves a fund-raising purpose, does not constitute a violation of Canon 5C(3)(b). It is also generally permissible for a judge to pass a collection plate at a place of worship or for a judge to serve as an usher or food server or preparer, or to perform similar subsidiary and unadvertised functions at fund-raising events sponsored by educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organizations, so long as they do not entail direct or personal solicitation. However, a judge may not be a speaker, guest of honor, or otherwise be featured at an organization’s fund-raising event, unless the event concerns the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice as authorized by Canon 4D(2)(b).

Use of an organization letterhead for fund-raising or membership solicitation does not violate Canon 5C(3)(b) provided the letterhead lists only the judge's name and office or other position in the organization, and, if comparable designations are listed for other persons, the judge's judicial designation. 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.

