



FLORIDA CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT CANON 4

CANON 4

A JUDGE IS ENCOURAGED TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE LAW,
THE LEGAL SYSTEM, AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS | CANON 4 | A JUDGE IS ENCOURAGED TO ENGAGE IN...

ID	Canon	Title	Page
401	[4A]	[Quasi-Judicial Activities]	4
402	[4B]	[Speaking & Writing]	5
403	[4C]	[Non-Judicial Interaction]	6
404	[4D]	[Serving]	7
-	n/a	Appendix	10



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DATE: January 15, 2023



[CANON 4A] | [QUASI-JUDICIAL ACTIVITIES]

A judge shall conduct all of the judge's quasi-judicial activities so that they do not:

- (1) cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge;
- (2) undermine the judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality;
- (3) demean the judicial office;
- (4) interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties;
- (5) lead to frequent disqualification of the judge; or
- (6) appear to a reasonable person to be coercive.

([Amended Feb. 20, 2003 (840 So. 2d 1023); May 22, 2008 (983 So. 2d 550).])

Commentary

Canon 4A. A judge is encouraged to participate in activities designed to improve the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice. In doing so, however, it must be understood that 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 and may undermine the independence and integrity of the judiciary. Expressions which may do so include jokes or other remarks demeaning individuals on the basis of their race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. See Canon 2C and accompanying Commentary.

[CANON 4B] | [SPEAKING & WRITING]

A judge is encouraged to speak, write, lecture, teach and participate in other quasi-judicial activities concerning the law, the legal system, the administration of justice, and the role of the judiciary as an independent branch within our system of government, subject to the requirements of this Code.

([Amended Feb. 20, 2003 (840 So. 2d 1023); May 22, 2008 (983 So. 2d 550).])

Commentary

Canon 4B. This canon was clarified in order to encourage judges to engage in activities to improve the law, the legal system, and the administration of justice. 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, but not limited to, the improvement of the role of the judiciary as an independent branch of government, the revision of substantive and procedural law, the improvement of criminal and juvenile justice, and the improvement of justice in the areas of civil, criminal, family, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, juvenile dependency, probate and motor vehicle law. To the extent that time permits, a judge is encouraged to do so, either independently or through a bar association, judicial conference or other organization dedicated to the improvement of the law. Support of pro bono legal services by members of the bench is an activity that relates to improvement of the administration of justice. Accordingly, a judge may engage in activities intended to encourage attorneys to perform pro bono services, including, but not limited to: participating in events to recognize attorneys who do pro bono work, establishing general procedural or scheduling accommodations for pro bono attorneys as feasible, and acting in an advisory capacity to pro bono programs. Judges are encouraged to participate in efforts to promote the fair administration of justice, the independence of the judiciary and the integrity of the legal profession, which may include the expression of opposition to the persecution of lawyers and judges in other countries.

The phrase “subject to the requirements of this Code” is included to remind judges that the use of permissive language in various sections of the Code does not relieve a judge from the other requirements of the Code that apply to the specific conduct.



[CANON 4C] | [NON-JUDICIAL INTERACTION]

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.

([Amended Feb. 20, 2003 (840 So. 2d 1023); May 22, 2008 (983 So. 2d 550).])

Commentary

Canon 4C. See Canon 2B regarding the obligation to avoid improper influence.



[CANON 4D] | [SERVING]

A judge is encouraged to serve as a member, officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor of an organization or governmental entity devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system, the judicial branch, or the administration of justice, subject to the following limitations and the other requirements of this Code.

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

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

(b) 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.

(2) A judge as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor, or as a member or otherwise:

(a) 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;

(b) may appear or speak at, receive an award or other recognition at, be featured on the program of, and permit the judge's title to be used in conjunction with an event of such an organization or entity, but if the event serves a fund-raising purpose, the judge may participate only if the event concerns the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice and the funds raised will be used for a law related purpose(s);

(c) may make recommendations to public and private fund-granting organizations on projects and programs concerning the law, the legal system or the administration of justice;

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



(e) shall not make use of court premises, staff, stationery, equipment, or other resources for fund-raising purposes, except for incidental use for activities that concern the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice, subject to the requirements of this Code.

([Amended Feb. 20, 2003 (840 So. 2d 1023); May 22, 2008 (983 So. 2d 550).])

Commentary

Canon 4D(1). The changing nature of some organizations and of their relationship to the law makes it necessary for a 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. For example, the boards of some legal aid organizations now make policy decisions that may have political significance or imply commitment to causes that may come before the courts for adjudication.

Canon 4D(2). 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 as long as the solicitation cannot reasonably be perceived as coercive. 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.

A judge may be a speaker or guest of honor at an organization's fund-raising event if the event concerns the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice, and the judge does not engage in the direct solicitation of funds. However, judges may not participate in or allow their titles to be used in connection with fund-raising activities on behalf of an organization engaging in advocacy if such participation would cast doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge.

Use of an organization letterhead for fund-raising or membership solicitation does not violate Canon 4D(2) 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.



APPENDIX



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