

JUDICIAL ETHICS UPDATE

November 1985

This is the fourth annual Judicial Ethics Update from the Ethics Committee of the California Judges Association. The following is a summary of what we feel were items of the widest interest among the California bench during the last year. The following is a summary of unofficial opinions (by the Chair) and informal opinions (letter responses sent to inquiring judges).

It should be noted that questions are often presented to the Ethics Committee which we are unable to answer as they are legal in nature.

The Ethics Committee wishes to caution that the following are all informal opinions.

I. Civic and Charitable Activities.

- A. It is not improper to be the president of a local model railroading club.
- B. It is not improper to be on the board of a local bar association.
- C. When a judge is a member of an organization which begins to become involved in litigation before the court, then the judge should re-examine to assess the risk of conflict with judicial duties.

II. Political Activities.

- A. It is not improper to conduct the swearing in ceremony of officers of a political club if the judge is not being honored or giving a speech.
- B. It is not improper to endorse either a justice seeking retention or the campaign against same, or to contribute funds or to work on behalf of same considering that it is a judicial election with an issue being the administration of justice.

III. Conduct Outside the Courtroom.

- A. It is not improper for a judge to honor a subpoena to testify on behalf of a friend.
- B. It is not improper for a judge to appear on a T.V. program if the problems addressed in Opinions 8, 10 and 28 are considered.

IV. Conduct in the Courtroom.

- A. It is not improper for a judge to report to the responsible agency any evidence of a crime uncovered by testimony during a hearing; the judge's duty is not different than that of any other citizen.

V. Education

- A. It is not improper for a judge to receive an honorarium for teaching a once-only class in a legal subject for a private law-oriented educational group.