



JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION COMMISSION

212 Dickinson Street
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August 29, 1997

Re: JIC Advisory Opinion 1997-20

Dear

Your recent letter to Counsel to the Judicial Investigation Commission asking for an advisory opinion has been reviewed by the Commission. In that correspondence you stated that you had been asked to buy a ticket to, and attend, the annual County Crimestoppers Banquet which is billed as an "Annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner." You stated that the crimestoppers organization pays tips to anonymous callers who report crimes. You indicated that the local organizations are mostly composed of deputy sheriffs and members of various police organizations; however, many non-police members belong as well. The Sheriff seems to be the main proponent of the County group since he believes that the program is successful in fighting crime. At the annual dinner you stated there is usually a speaker who talks about crime prevention and awards are handed out to various police officers who display an exceptional devotion to duty. You asked if it would be an ethical violation for a circuit judge to attend the banquet.

The Commission, in addressing your inquiry, reviewed Canon 2A and Canon 4C(3) of the Code of Judicial Conduct. These Canons provide language which is relevant to addressing your request. These Canons state in relevant part:

Canon 2. A judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities.

A. A judge shall respect and comply with the law, shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities, and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

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Canon 4. A judge shall so conduct the judge's extra-judicial activities as to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial obligations.

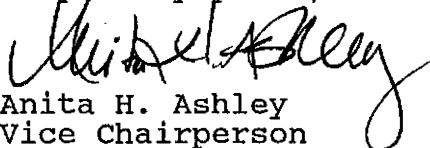
C. Governmental, civic, or charitable activities.

(3) Civic and charitable activities. - A judge may participate in civic and charitable activities that do not reflect adversely upon the judge's impartiality or interfere with the performance of the judge's judicial duties . . .

The organization which you have described in your letter to the Commission appears to represent one interest in a particular area; and based upon its activities as set forth, the members of the organization could appear in court on a fairly regular basis. Based on the language as set forth in the above-stated Canons and the nature of the organization which you have described in your inquiry, a majority of the Commission feels that it would not be proper for you to attend the function which you have described. See also JIC Advisory Opinion 4/24/97.

If you have any further questions regarding this matter, do not hesitate to contact the Commission.

Very truly yours,


Anita H. Ashley
Vice Chairperson

AHA/bl
Enclosure