



**JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION COMMISSION**

City Center East - Suite 1200 A  
4700 MacCorkle Ave., SE  
Charleston, West Virginia 25304  
(304) 558-0169 • FAX (304) 558-0831

November 10, 2014

Re: JIC Advisory Opinion 2014-20.

Dear

Your recent request for an advisory opinion was reviewed by the Judicial Investigation Commission. The factual scenario giving rise to your request is as follows: You have been asked to participate in a Citizen's Law School during Winter 2015. Tentative plans call for six separate evening sessions dealing with Criminal Law, Family Law, Estate Planning and Elder Law, Real Estate and Property Law, Bankruptcy and Creditor's Rights, and Workers Compensation and Social Security disability. The programs will be sponsored by the County Commission and Newspapers, Inc. and is free to the public.

Each session will have two attorney presenters. The Office of Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel has approved their participation. Written materials will contain disclaimers regarding conflicts and will state that the programs do not create attorney/client relationships between lawyer participants and attendees.

Your role will be limited to welcoming the public and introducing the subject of the evening and the speakers. You will not answer any substantive questions. You also will not receive any remuneration for your participation.

To address your question, the Commission has reviewed Canon 4 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which directs that "[a] judge shall so conduct the judge's extra-judicial activities as to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial obligations." Subject to that overriding principle, Canon 4B permits a judge to "speak, write, lecture, teach and participate in other extra-judicial activities concerning the law, the legal system, the

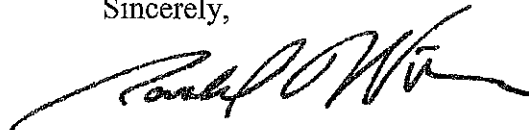
administration of justice, and non-legal subjects . . . ." The Commentary to the Canon further states:

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. . . . 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.

Based upon the foregoing, it is the opinion of the Commission that you may participate in the Citizen's Law School. *See also* JIC Advisory Opinion 6/15/2007 (judge may participate in ABA Workshop panel related to product liability trials that is open to the public as long as he does not discuss any specific pending or impending cases).

We hope this opinion fully addresses the issue which you have raised. If there is any further question regarding this matter do not hesitate to contact the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald E. Wilson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ronald E. Wilson, Chairperson  
Judicial Investigation Commission

REW/tat