

**Seminole Tribe of Florida
Judicial Commission**



**Seminole Tribal Court
Code of Judicial Conduct**

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APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Anyone, whether or not a lawyer, who is an officer of a judicial system and who performs judicial functions, including an officer such as a magistrate, court director, special master or referee, is a judge within the meaning of this Code. All judges shall comply with this Code.

RULE 1 *A JUDGE SHALL UPHOLD THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY*

An independent and honorable judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society. A judge should participate in establishing, maintaining and enforcing high standards of conduct, and shall personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary will be preserved. The provisions of this Code are to be construed and applied to further that objective.

RULE 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 and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.
- B. A judge shall not allow family, social, political or other relationships to influence the judge's judicial conduct or judgment. A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance the private interests of the judge or others; nor shall a judge convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence the judge.
- C. A judge shall not testify voluntarily as a character witness.
- D. A judge shall not hold membership in any organization that practices invidious discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion or national origin.

RULE 3 *A JUDGE SHALL PERFORM THE DUTIES OF JUDICIAL OFFICE IMPARTIALLY AND DILIGENTLY*

- A. Judicial Duties in General. The judicial duties of a judge take precedence over all the judge's other activities. The judge's judicial duties include all the duties of the judge's office prescribed by law. In the performance of these duties, the standards in this Rule shall apply.
- B. Adjudicative Responsibilities.
 - (1) A judge shall hear and decide matters assigned to the judge except those in which disqualification is required.

- (2) A judge shall be faithful to the law and maintain professional competence in it. A judge shall not be swayed by partisan interests, public clamor or fear of criticism.
- (3) A judge shall require order and decorum in proceedings before the judge.
- (4) A judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity, and shall require similar conduct of lawyers, and of staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control.
- (5) A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, and shall not permit staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control to do so.
- (6) A judge shall require lawyers in proceedings before the judge to refrain from manifesting, by words or conduct, bias or prejudice based upon race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, against parties, witnesses, counselor others. This Section 3B(6) does not preclude legitimate advocacy when race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, or other similar factors, are issues in the proceeding.
- (7) A judge shall accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person's lawyer, the right to be heard according to law. A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding except that:
 - (a) Where circumstances require, ex parte communications for scheduling, administrative purposes or emergencies that do not deal with substantive matters or issues on the merits are authorized; provided:
 - (i) the judge reasonably believes that no party will gain a procedural or tactical advantage as a result of the ex parte communication, and
 - (ii) the judge makes provisions promptly to notify all other parties (or legal counsel) of the substance of the ex parte communication and allows an opportunity to respond.
 - (b) A judge may obtain the advice of a disinterested expert on the law applicable to a proceeding before the judge if the judge gives notice to the parties of the person consulted and the substance of the advice, and affords the parties reasonable opportunity to respond.

- (c) A judge may consult with court personnel whose function is to aid the judge in carrying out the judge's adjudicative responsibilities or with other judges.
 - (d) A judge may, with the consent of the parties, confer separately with the parties and their lawyers in an effort to mediate or settle matters pending before the judge.
 - (e) A judge may initiate or consider any ex parte communications when expressly authorized by law to do so.
- (8) A judge shall dispose of all judicial matters promptly, efficiently and fairly.
- (9) A judge shall not, while a proceeding is pending or impending in any court, make any public comment that might reasonably be expected to affect its outcome or impair its fairness or make any nonpublic comment that might substantially interfere with a fair trial or hearing. The judge shall require similar abstention on the part of court personnel subject to the judge's direction and control. This Section does not prohibit judges from making public statements in the course of their official duties or from explaining for public information the procedures of the court. This Section does not apply to proceedings in which the judge is a litigant in a personal capacity.
- (10) A judge shall not, with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court, make pledges, promises or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office.
- (11) A judge shall not commend or criticize jurors for their verdict other than in a court order or opinion in a proceeding, but may express appreciation to jurors for their service to the judicial system and the community.
- (12) A judge shall not disclose or use, for any purpose unrelated to judicial duties, nonpublic information acquired in a judicial capacity.

C. Administrative Responsibilities.

- (1) A judge shall diligently discharge the judge's administrative responsibilities without bias or prejudice and maintain professional competence in judicial administration, and should cooperate with other judges and court officials in the administration of court business.
- (2) A judge shall require staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to the judge and to refrain from manifesting bias or prejudice in the performance of their official duties.
- (3) A judge with supervisory authority for the judicial performance of other judges shall take reasonable measures to assure the prompt disposition of matters before them and the proper performance of their other judicial responsibilities.

- (4) A judge shall not make unnecessary appointments. A judge shall exercise the power of appointment impartially and on the basis of merit. A judge shall avoid nepotism and favoritism. A judge shall not approve compensation of appointees beyond the fair value of services rendered.

D. Disciplinary Responsibilities.

- (1) A judge who receives information indicating a substantial likelihood that another judge has committed a violation of this Code should take appropriate action. A judge having knowledge that another judge has committed a violation of this Code that raises a substantial question as to the other judge's fitness for office shall inform the appropriate authority.
- (2) A judge who receives information indicating a substantial likelihood that a lawyer (or advocate) has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct should take appropriate action. A judge having knowledge that a lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct that raises a substantial question as to the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects shall inform the appropriate authority.
- (3) Acts of a judge, in the discharge of disciplinary responsibilities, required or permitted by Sections 3D(1) and 3D(2) are part of a judge's judicial duties and shall be absolutely privileged, and no civil action predicated thereon may be instituted against the judge.

E. Disqualification.

- (1) A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in a proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to instances where:
 - (a) the judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's lawyer (advocate), or (has) personal (first-hand) knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;
 - (b) the judge served as a lawyer in the matter in controversy, or a lawyer with whom the judge previously practiced law served during such association as a lawyer concerning the matter, or the judge has been a material witness concerning it;
 - (c) the judge knows that he or she, individually or as a fiduciary, or the judge's spouse, parent or child wherever residing, or any other member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household, has an economic interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding or has any other more than de minimis (minimal) interest that could be substantially affected by the proceeding;
 - (d) the judge or the judge's spouse, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse of such a person:
 - (i) is a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director or trustee of a party;

- (ii) is acting as a lawyer in the proceeding;
- (iii) is known by the judge to have a more than de minimis interest that could be substantially affected by the proceeding; or
- (iv) is to the judge's knowledge, likely to be a material witness in the proceeding;
- (e) the judge, while a judge or a candidate for judicial office, has made a public statement that commits, or appears to commit, the judge with respect to:
 - (i) an issue in the proceeding; or
 - (ii) the controversy in the proceeding.

(2) A judge shall keep informed about the judge's personal and fiduciary economic interests, and make a reasonable effort to keep informed about the personal economic interests of the judge's spouse and minor children residing in the judge's household.

F. Remittal (Waiver) of Disqualification. A judge disqualified by the terms of Rule 3E may disclose on the record the basis of the judge's disqualification and may ask the parties and their lawyers (advocates) to consider, out of the presence of the judge, whether to waive disqualification. If following disclosure of any basis for disqualification other than personal bias or prejudice concerning a party, the parties and lawyers, without participation by the judge, all agree that the judge should not be disqualified, and the judge is then willing to participate, the judge may participate in the proceeding. The agreement shall be incorporated in the record of the proceeding.

RULE 4 *A JUDGE SHALL CONDUCT THE JUDGE'S EXTRA-JUDICIAL ACTIVITIES AS TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF CONFLICT WITH JUDICIAL OBLIGATIONS*

A. Extra-judicial Activities in General. A judge shall conduct all of the judge's extra-judicial activities so that they do not:

- (1) cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge;
- (2) demean the judicial office; or
- (3) interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.

B. Avocational Activities. A judge may speak, write, lecture, teach and participate in other extrajudicial activities concerning the law, the legal system, the administration of justice and nonlegal subjects, subject to the requirements of this Code.

C. 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 or the administration of justice. A judge may, however, represent a country, state, locality, or tribe 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 organization or governmental agency devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system or the administration of justice or of an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal 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 participate in the solicitation of funds or other fund-raising activities, except that a judge may solicit funds from other judges over whom the judge does not exercise supervisory or appellate authority;
 - (ii) 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;
 - (iii) shall not personally participate in membership solicitation if the solicitation might reasonably be perceived as coercive or, except as permitted in Section 4C(3)(b)(i), if the membership solicitation is essentially a fund-raising mechanism;
 - (iv) shall not use or permit the use of the prestige of judicial office for fund-raising or membership solicitation.

D. Financial Activities.

- (1) A judge shall not engage in financial and business dealings that:
 - (a) may reasonably be perceived to exploit the judge's judicial position, or

- (b) involve the judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with those lawyers or other persons likely to come before the court on which the judge serves.
- (2) A judge may, subject to the requirements of this Code, hold and manage investments of the judge and members of the judge's family, including real estate, and engage in other remunerative activity.
- (3) A judge shall not serve as an officer, director, manager, general partner, advisor or employee of any business entity that might require frequent disqualification, except that a judge may, subject to the requirements of this Code, manage and participate in:
- (a) a business closely held by the judge or members of the judge's family, or
 - (b) a business entity primarily engaged in investment of the financial resources of the judge or members of the judge's family.
- (4) A judge shall manage the judge's investments and other financial interests to minimize the number of cases in which the judge is disqualified. As soon as the judge can do so without serious financial detriment, the judge shall divest himself or herself of investments and other financial interests that might require frequent disqualification.
- (5) A judge shall not accept, and shall urge members of the judge's family residing in the judge's household not to accept, a gift, bequest, favor or loan from anyone except for:
- (a) a gift incident to a public testimonial, books, tapes and other resource materials supplied by publishers on a complimentary basis for official use, or an invitation to the judge and the judge's spouse or guest to attend a bar-related function or an activity devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system or the administration of justice;
 - (b) a gift, award or benefit incident to the business, profession or other separate activity of a spouse or other family member of a judge residing in the judge's household, including gifts, awards and benefits for the use of both the spouse or other family member and the judge (as spouse or family member), provided the gift, award or benefit could not reasonably be perceived as intended to influence the judge in the performance of judicial duties;
 - (c) ordinary social hospitality;
 - (d) a gift from a relative or friend, for a special occasion, such as a wedding, anniversary or birthday, if the gift is fairly commensurate with the occasion and the relationship;
 - (e) a gift, bequest, favor or loan from a relative or close personal friend whose appearance or interest in a case would in any event require disqualification under Section 3E;
 - (f) a loan from a lending institution in its regular course of business on the same terms generally available to persons who are not judges;

- (g) a scholarship or fellowship awarded on the same terms and based on the same criteria applied to other applicants; or
- (h) any other gift, bequest, favor or loan, only if: the donor is not a party or other person who has come or is likely to come or whose interests have come or are likely to come before the judge; and, if its value exceeds \$150.00, the judge reports it in the same manner as the judge reports compensation in Section 4H.

E. Fiduciary Activities.

- (1) A judge shall not serve as executor, administrator or other personal representative, trustee, guardian, attorney in fact or other fiduciary, except for the estate, trust or person of a member of the judge's family, and then only if such service will not interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.
- (2) A judge shall not serve as a fiduciary if it is likely that the judge as a fiduciary will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge, or if the estate, trust or ward becomes involved in adversary proceedings in the court on which the judge serves or one under its appellate jurisdiction.
- (3) The same restrictions on financial activities that apply to a judge personally also apply to the judge while acting in a fiduciary capacity.

G. Service as Arbitrator or Mediator. A judge shall not act as an arbitrator or mediator or otherwise perform judicial functions in a private capacity unless expressly authorized by law.

H. Practice of Law. A judge shall not practice law. Notwithstanding this prohibition, a judge may act pro se and may, without compensation, give legal advice to and draft or review documents for a member of the judge's family.

I. Compensation, Reimbursement and Reporting.

- (1) A judge may receive compensation and reimbursement of expenses for the extra-judicial activities permitted by this Code, if the source of such payments does not give the appearance of influencing the judge's performance of judicial duties or otherwise give the appearance of impropriety.
 - (a) Compensation shall not exceed a reasonable amount nor shall it exceed what a person who is not a judge would receive for the same activity.
 - (b) Expense reimbursement shall be limited to the actual cost of travel, food and lodging reasonably incurred by the judge and, where appropriate to the occasion, by the judge's spouse or guest. Any payment in excess of such an amount is compensation.
- (2) Public Reports. A judge shall report the date, place and nature of any activity for which the judge received compensation, and the name of the payor and the amount of

- compensation so received. Compensation or income of a spouse attributed to the judge by operation of a community property law is not extra-judicial compensation to the judge.
- (3) Disclosure of a judge's income, debts, investments or other assets is required only to the extent provided in this Canon or as otherwise required by law.

RULE 5 *A JUDGE OR JUDICIAL CANDIDATE SHALL REFRAIN FROM
INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITY*

A. All Judges and Judicial Candidates

- (1) A judge or a candidate for appointment to judicial office shall not:
- (a) act as a leader or hold an office in a political organization,
 - (b) publicly endorse or publicly oppose another candidate for public office;
 - (c) make speeches on behalf of a political organization;
 - (d) attend political gatherings; or
 - (e) solicit funds for, pay an assessment to or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, or purchase tickets for political party dinners or other functions.
- (2) A judge shall resign from judicial office upon becoming a candidate for a non-judicial tribal office either in a primary or in a general election.
- (3) A candidate for a judicial office:
- (a) shall maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and act in a manner consistent with the impartiality, integrity and independence of the judiciary, and shall encourage members of the candidate's family to adhere to the same standards of political conduct in support of the candidate as apply to the candidate;
 - (b) shall prohibit employees and officials who serve at the pleasure of the candidate, and shall discourage other employees and officials subject to the candidate's direction and control from doing on the candidate's behalf what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;
 - (c) except to the extent permitted by Section 5C(2), shall not authorize or knowingly permit any other person to do for the candidate what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;
 - (d) shall not:
 - (i) with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court, make pledges, promises or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office; or
 - (ii) knowingly misrepresent the identity, qualifications, present position or other fact concerning the candidate or an opponent;

(e) may respond to personal attacks or attacks on the candidate's record as long as the response does not violate Section 5A(3)(d).

B. Candidates Seeking Appointment to Judicial.

(1) A candidate for appointment to judicial office shall not solicit or accept funds, personally or through a committee or otherwise, to support his or her candidacy.

(2) A candidate for appointment to judicial office shall not engage in any political activity to secure the appointment except that:

(a) such persons may:

(i) communicate with the appointing authority, including any selection or nominating commission or other agency designated to screen candidates;

(ii) seek support or endorsement for the appointment from organizations that regularly make recommendations for reappointment or appointment to the office, and from individuals to the extent requested or required by those specified in Rule 5B(2)(a); and

(iii) provide to those specified in Rule 5B(2)(a)(i) and 5B(2)(a)(ii) information as to his or her qualifications for the office;

(b) a non-judge candidate for appointment to judicial office may, in addition, unless otherwise prohibited by law:

(i) retain an office in a political organization,

(ii) attend political gatherings, and

(iii) continue to pay ordinary assessments and ordinary contributions to a political organization or candidate and purchase tickets for political party dinners or other functions.