



Developments Following *Republican Party of  
Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002)

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- \* In 2002, the United States Supreme Court held unconstitutional a clause in the Minnesota code of judicial conduct that prohibited judicial candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002).
  
- \* In 2003, the **American Bar Association** House of Delegates amended portions of the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct in light of the *White* decision.
  - The amended section on campaign speech prohibits a judicial candidate from making “with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court . . . pledges, promises or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office.”
  - The amendments add a new section 10 to Canon 3B that provides: “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,” with commentary that explains that some restrictions on judicial speech “are essential to the maintenance of the integrity, impartiality, and independence of the judiciary.”
  - The amendments add the following definition of “impartiality” to the terminology section of the code: “‘Impartiality’ denotes absence of bias or prejudice in favor of, or against, particular parties or classes of parties, as well as maintaining an open mind in considering issues that may come before the judge.”
  - The amendments include a new section requiring disqualification if 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.”
  - The amendments eliminate the prohibition on judicial candidates making statements that “appear to commit” the candidate.

These changes and the prohibition on judicial candidates personally soliciting campaign contributions were maintained in the model code by the ABA House of Delegates when it adopted a revised model code in February 2007.

Fourteen states -- **Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota,** and **Wisconsin** – have adopted the ABA restrictions on speech and the disqualification rule. **North Dakota** has adopted the restrictions on speech by judges and judicial candidates, but not the disqualification rule.

In addition, the 2007 revised ABA model code retains most of the restrictions on campaign and political conduct, including the prohibition on personally soliciting campaign contributions and endorsing other candidates, with substantial re-structuring of the rules. The revised model code does eliminate the prohibition on candidates personally soliciting publicly stated support. In addition, several new comments were added:

The role of a judge is different from that of a legislator or executive branch official, even when the judge is subject to public election. Campaigns for judicial office must be conducted differently from campaigns for other offices. The narrowly drafted restrictions upon political and campaign activities of judicial candidates provided in Canon 4 allow candidates to conduct campaigns that provide voters with sufficient information to permit them to distinguish between candidates and make informed electoral choices.

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A judicial candidate may make campaign promises related to judicial organization, administration, and court management, such as a promise to dispose of a backlog of cases, start court sessions on time, or avoid favoritism in appointments and hiring. A candidate may also pledge to take action outside the courtroom, such as working toward an improved jury selection system, or lobbying for more funds to improve the physical plant and amenities of the courthouse.

Judicial candidates may receive questionnaires or requests for interviews from the media and from issue advocacy or other community organizations that seek to learn their views on disputed or controversial legal or political issues. Paragraph (A)(13) does not specifically address judicial responses to such inquiries. Depending upon the wording and format of such questionnaires, candidates' responses might be viewed as pledges, promises, or commitments to perform the adjudicative duties of office other than in an impartial way. To avoid violating paragraph (A)(13), therefore, candidates who respond to media and other inquiries should also give assurances that they will keep an open mind and will carry out their adjudicative duties faithfully and impartially if elected. Candidates who do not respond may state their reasons for not responding, such as the danger that answering might be perceived by a reasonable person as undermining a successful

candidate's independence or impartiality, or that it might lead to frequent disqualification.

\* In light of the decision in *White*, the **Alabama** Judicial Inquiry Commission withdrew a judicial ethics opinion that had advised judicial candidates not to respond to a questionnaire from the Christian Coalition. *Alabama Advisory Opinion 00-763* ([www.alalinc.net/jic/](http://www.alalinc.net/jic/)).

\* The **Alabama** Supreme Court amended the state's canons of judicial ethics in September 2004. The Alabama code did not have the "announce clause" even before *White*, and the court did not amend the existing provision prohibiting a candidate from making "any promise of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office" or announcing "in advance the candidate's conclusions of law on pending litigation." The court added the word "knowingly" so that judicial candidates are prohibited from "knowingly misrepresent[ing] his or her identity, qualification, present position, or other fact." The court deleted a clause prohibiting a candidate from distributing "true information about a judicial candidate or an opponent that would be deceiving or misleading to a reasonable person." The court changed the clause on campaign financing from a strict prohibition to "a candidate is strongly discouraged from personally soliciting campaign contributions. It is highly recommended that a candidate establish committees of responsible persons to solicit and accept campaign contributions . . . ."

\* The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit held that the Alaska Right to Life Political Action Committee's challenge to provisions in the **Alaska** code of judicial conduct was not ripe. *Alaska Right to Life Political Action Committee v. Feldman*, 504 F.3d 840 (2007), *vacating Alaska Right to Life Political Action Committee v. Feldman*, 380 F. Supp. 2d 1080 (2005). When 10 judges seeking retention failed to answer a questionnaire, the plaintiff had challenged code provisions requiring disqualification from any proceeding in which a judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned and prohibiting judicial candidates from making pledges or promises of particular conduct in judicial office or making statements that commit or appear to commit a judicial candidate to a particular view or decision regarding a case likely to come. The court concluded: "The factual record does not show that even one judge who was subject to the challenged canons' enforcement in 2004 had a clear intention to violate them, that the Commission plans to enforce these canons, or that the Alaska Supreme Court would interpret them in a way that would restrict the speech [the plaintiffs] hope to solicit."

\* In June 2004, the **Arizona** Supreme Court amended the state's code of judicial conduct to adopt the changes made by the ABA to the model code in 2003.

\* The **Arizona** Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee issued an advisory opinion stating that a judge standing for retention or election may respond to a political interest group questionnaire seeking the candidate's views on disputed political and legal issues or judicial philosophy if the responses do not constitute commitments and that a judicial candidate may publicly discuss an initiative measure to amend the Arizona Constitution also appearing on the ballot. However, the Committee stated that a sitting judge who is

not campaigning for election or retention may not publicly express his or her views on disputed political or legal issues. *Arizona Advisory Opinion 06-5* ([www.supreme.state.az.us/ethics/Judicial\\_Ethics\\_Advisory\\_Committee.htm](http://www.supreme.state.az.us/ethics/Judicial_Ethics_Advisory_Committee.htm)).

\* The U.S. District Court for the District of **Arizona** dismissed a lawsuit challenging several provisions regarding campaign and political conduct in the state's code of judicial conduct, finding that the plaintiff "faces insufficient hardship to warrant the exercise of jurisdiction given the lack of any real or imminent threat of enforcement." *Wolfson v. Brammer*, Order (August 8, 2007). In May 2008, the same judicial candidate filed another complaint and motion for preliminary injunction in federal court challenging Canons 3E(1)(e) (disqualification), 5A(1)(b) (prohibiting endorsements of political candidates), 5A(1)(c) (prohibiting contributions to political candidates), 5A(1)(d) (prohibiting taking part in another campaign), 5B(d)(i) (pledges, promises, commitments clause), and 5B(2) (prohibiting personal solicitation of campaign contributions) of the code of judicial conduct. The court denied the motion for a preliminary injunction. *Wolfson v. Brammer*, Order (September 23, 2008). Subsequently, the court dismissed the second lawsuit, finding that case was moot because the plaintiff had lost his election bid and stated that he did not intend to be a candidate in the next election. *Wolfson v. Brammer* (January 14, 2009).

\* The **Arkansas** Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee declined to consider whether the prohibition on a judge publicly endorsing or opposing candidates for public office was unconstitutional, noting its guidelines state that opinions "shall not address issues of law" and that its role is to interpret the Code of Judicial Conduct and to apply it to factual patterns not previously considered, not hold that a provision of the code is unconstitutional or rewrite the code, which is the task of the judiciary. *Arkansas Advisory Opinion 06-2* ([www.state.ar.us/jecac/summaries.html](http://www.state.ar.us/jecac/summaries.html)).

\* Denying a judge's request to issue a writ of *certiorari*, the **Arkansas** Supreme Court held that the prohibition on judicial candidates personally soliciting campaign contributions is constitutional and upheld an admonishment issued by the Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission to a judge who had personally solicited campaign contributions from two attorneys who appeared before him. *Simes v. Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission*, 247 S.W.3d 876 (2007). The court concluded:

Allowing a judge to personally solicit or accept campaign contributions, especially from attorneys who may practice in his or her court, not only has the possibility of making a judge feel obligated to favor certain parties in a case, it inevitably places the solicited individuals in a position to fear retaliation if they fail to financially support that candidate. Attorneys ought not feel pressured to support certain judicial candidates in order to represent their clients. In addition, the public should be protected from fearing that the integrity of the judicial system has been compromised, forcing them to search for an attorney in part based upon the criteria of which attorneys have made the obligatory contributions.

\* Granting the judge's motion for summary judgment, the **Arkansas** Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission dismissed charges against a court of appeal judge based on statements he made in speeches and articles on controversial public issues. *In the Matter of Griffen*, Final Decision and Order (September 27, 2007). The charges had cited, for example, a statement by the judge, quoted in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, telling a public meeting of the state chapter of the NAACP that the Katrina disaster revealed the scab of racism and classism and criticizing President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, the Christian right, Justice Clarence Thomas, the late President Ronald Reagan, and others. The Commission concluded that the judge's speech was protected under the 1st Amendment and that "there is no Arkansas Canon that expressly prohibits a judge or judicial candidate from publicly discussing disputed political or legal issues" and the "Canons cited in the Formal Statement of Charges cannot be used as a basis for a finding of judicial misconduct if the alleged misconduct is solely related to a public discussion of disputed political or legal issues."

\* After reviewing the *White* decision, the **California** Commission on Judicial Performance, without explanation, dismissed formal charges it had filed against a former judge. *Inquiry Concerning Former Judge Gray*, Decision and Order of Dismissal (August 27, 2002) (cjp.ca.gov/pubdisc.htm). The formal charges had been based on a mailer distributed during Judge Gray's re-election campaign (which she lost). In the mailer, the judge had made several statements in reference to her opponent Elliot Daum, a criminal defense attorney claiming, for example, that "Elliot Daum Cares About the Rights of Violent Criminals. Judge Patricia Gray Cares About the Rights of Crime Victims."

\* In December 2003, the **California** Supreme Court amended its code of judicial ethics to delete the phrase "appear to commit" from the restriction on speech by judicial candidates because, as commentary explains, it could have made the prohibition against judicial candidates making promises "overinclusive." After the amendments, the California code also includes a prohibition on a judicial candidate "knowingly or *with reckless disregard for the truth*, misrepresent[ing] the identity, qualifications, present position or any other facts concerning the candidate or his or her opponent" (the italicized phrase was added) and new commentary clarifying that "making knowing misrepresentations, including false statements or misleading statements, during an election campaign" is prohibited.

\* Rejecting a judge's argument that her campaign speech was protected by the 1st Amendment following *White*, the **Florida** Supreme Court publicly reprimanded the judge and fined her \$50,000 for, during her election campaign, (1) making pro-prosecutorial statements; (2) knowingly misrepresenting that her opponent, the incumbent, had not revoked a defendant's bond at an emergency bond hearing; and (3) knowingly giving the false and misleading impression that her opponent had granted bond to a defendant charged with attempted murder and burglary. *Inquiry Concerning Kinsey*, 842 So. 2d 77 (Florida), *cert. denied*, 540 U.S. 825 (2003). One justice would have publicly reprimanded the judge only for her misrepresentations and dismissed the other findings as protected by the 1st Amendment.

\* In January 2006, the **Florida** Supreme Court amended the state's code of judicial conduct to adopt most of the changes made by the ABA to the model code in 2003.

\* The **Florida** Supreme Court removed a judge from office for "flagrant misrepresentations made to the voting public" during his judicial campaign coupled with serious campaign financial misconduct and violations of law." *Inquiry Concerning Renke*, 933 So. 2d 482 (Florida 2006).

\* The **Florida** Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee issued an advisory opinion stating that a judicial candidate may respond to questionnaires that cover such subjects as same-sex marriage, parental notification, and school vouchers and whether the candidate agrees or disagrees with recent court decisions as long as the candidate clearly indicates that the answers do not constitute a promise to rule a certain way, clearly acknowledges the obligation to follow binding legal precedent, and does not appear to endorse another candidate or any platform of a political party, and any commentary on past judicial decisions is analytical, informed, respectful, and dignified. *Florida Advisory Opinion 06-18* ([www.jud6.org/LegalCommunity/LegalPractice/opinions/jecopinions/jecac.html](http://www.jud6.org/LegalCommunity/LegalPractice/opinions/jecopinions/jecac.html)).

\* Granting the defendants' motion to dismiss, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of **Florida** upheld the validity of a provision of the code of judicial conduct requiring disqualification when a judge, while a judge or candidate for judicial office, made or appeared to make a commitment with respect to the parties or issues or controversy in the proceeding. *Florida Family Policy Council v. Freeman* (September 11, 2007). The plaintiffs have appealed to the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit.

\* In July 2008, the **Florida** Supreme Court amended the state code of judicial conduct to incorporate the requirements of Canon 3B(2) and Canon 3B(11) into Canon 7A, thereby making applicable to all judicial candidates the requirement to be "faithful to the law and maintain professional competence in it, and . . . not [to] be swayed by partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism" and the prohibition on commending or criticizing jurors for their verdict, "other than in a court pleading, filing, or hearing in which the candidate represents a party in the proceeding in which the verdict was rendered." One justice wrote an opinion expressing concerns about the constitutionality of the amendment prohibiting judicial candidates from criticizing jurors.

\* The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit held unconstitutional two provisions in the **Georgia** code of judicial conduct prohibiting judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign funds and from using or participating "in the use of any form of public communication which the candidate knows or reasonably should know is false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, or which contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law or omits a fact necessary to make the communication considered as a whole not materially misleading or which is likely to create an unjustified expectation about results the candidate can achieve." The court also held unconstitutional a rule allowing the Judicial Qualifications Commission to issue cease and desist orders regarding campaign speech. *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11<sup>th</sup> Circuit 2002).

\* In January 2004, the **Georgia** Supreme Court amended the state’s canon on campaign speech and fund-raising and the rule governing complaints about judicial campaign conduct. The court deleted provisions in the code requiring candidates to maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and prohibiting pledges or promises of conduct in office. The new campaign speech provision states that judicial candidates “shall not make statements that commit the candidate with respect to issues likely to come before the court” and “shall not use or participate in the publication of a false statement of fact concerning themselves or their candidacies, or concerning any opposing candidate or candidacy, with knowledge of the statement’s falsity or with reckless disregard for the statement’s truth or falsity.” New commentary states:

This Canon does not prohibit a judge or candidate from publicly stating his or her personal views on disputed issues, see *Republican Party v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). To ensure that voters understand a judge’s duty to uphold the constitution and laws of Georgia where the law differs from his or her personal belief, however, judges and candidates are encouraged to emphasize in any public statement their duty to uphold the law regardless of their personal views.

The determination of whether a candidate knows of falsity or recklessly disregards the truth or falsity of his or her public communication is an objective one, from the viewpoint of a “reasonable attorney,” using the standard of “objective malice.” See *In re Chmura*, 608 N.W.2d 31 (Mich. 2000).

The amended canon regarding campaign fund-raising provides that candidates “may personally solicit campaign contributions and publicly stated support.” Commentary explains:

Although judges and judicial candidates are free to personally solicit campaign contributions and publicly stated support, see *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002), they are encouraged to establish campaign committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for their campaigns and to obtain public statements of support of their candidacies. The use of campaign committees is encouraged because they may better maintain campaign decorum and reduce campaign activity that may cause requests for recusal or the appearance of partisanship with respect to issues or the parties which require recusal.

The court also added the following language to the preamble to the code:

Every judge should strive to maintain the dignity appropriate to the judicial office.  
. . . As a result, judges should be held to a higher standard, and should aspire to conduct themselves with the dignity accorded their esteemed position.

\* \* \*

The Code is to be construed so as not to impinge on the essential independence of judges in making judicial decisions, or on judges' First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and association.

\* \* \*

The mandatory provisions of the Canons and Sections describe the basic minimal ethical requirements of judicial conduct. Judges and candidates should strive to achieve the highest ethical standards, even if not required by this Code. As an example, a judge or candidate is permitted under Canon 7, Section B, to solicit campaign funds directly from potential donors. The Commentary, however, makes clear that the judge or candidate who wishes to exceed the minimal ethical requirements would choose to set up a campaign committee to raise and solicit contributions.

\* Vacating a decision enjoining enforcement of the pledges, promises, and commits clauses, the U.S. Court of the Appeals for the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit held that the plaintiff organization had not proven that there were any judicial candidates who were willing to answer its questionnaire who felt constrained by the clauses and, therefore, the organization lacked standing and the suit should be dismissed. *Indiana Right to Life v. Shepard*, 507 F.3d 545 (7<sup>th</sup> Circuit 2007). In April 2008, Indiana Right to Life filed a new federal lawsuit and concurrently a motion for a temporary restraining order challenging on 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment grounds challenging the pledges, promises, and commits clauses in the Indiana code of judicial conduct. Entering a preliminary injunction, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana enjoined enforcement of the pledges, promises, and commits clauses. *Bauer v. Shepard* (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana May 6, 2008).

\* In May 2006, the **Iowa** Supreme Court adopted some of the amendments to the model code enacted by the ABA in 2003. As amended, the Iowa code prohibits both judges and judicial candidates from making “with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court, . . . pledges, promises or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office.” The court also adopted a variation of the 2003 disqualification change; the Iowa code now disqualifies a judge from a case if the judge “while seeking appointment for a judicial vacancy or serving as a judge, . . . made a public statement, other than in a prior judicial decision or opinion, that commits, or appears to commit, the judge to reach a particular result with respect to an issue in the proceeding or a controversy in the proceeding.” The Iowa court did not adopt the commentary, amendments to Canon 1, or definition of impartiality included in the 2003 ABA amendments.

\* The **Kansas** Supreme Court has answered 5 questions certified to it by the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals.

1. Does a judicial candidate violate Canon 5A(3)(d)(i) and (ii) by answering a questionnaire asking for his or her views on disputed legal and political issues?  
Answer: Perhaps, depending on the questions asked.

2. Does a judicial candidate solicit “publicly stated support” in violation of Canon 5C by personally collecting signatures for his or her nomination petition?

Answer: Yes.

3. Does the definition of “the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office” in Canon 5A(3)(d)(i) include all conduct relevant to the candidate’s performance in office?

Answer: Yes.

4. Is the definition of “appear to commit” in Canon 5A(3)(d)(ii) limited to an objective appearance of a candidate’s intent to commit himself or herself?

Answer: Yes.

5. Does the definition of “publicly stated support” in Canon 5C(2) include endorsements of a candidate?

Answer: Yes.

*Kansas Judicial Review v. Stout*, 196 P.3d 1162 (Kansas 2008). The 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit had certified the questions in an appeal from a preliminary injunction against enforcement of the pledges and commits clauses and the “publicly stated support” portion of the solicitation clause in the state code of judicial conduct. *Kansas Judicial Watch v. Stout*, 519 F.3d 1107 (10<sup>th</sup> Circuit 2008).

\* In a judge’s challenge to several provisions in the Kansas code of judicial conduct, the U.S. District Court for the District of **Kansas** held that the clause prohibiting judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions is unconstitutional but upheld the clause prohibiting a judge or judicial candidate from publicly endorsing or opposing another candidate for public office. *Yost v. Stout* (November 16, 2008).

\* The **Kansas** Commission on Judicial Qualifications ordered a judicial candidate to cease and desist from publicly soliciting campaign contributions. *Inquiry Concerning Davis*, Order (July 18, 2008). The candidate admitted that he sent a cell phone text message to attorneys that stated, “If you are truly my friend then you would cut a check to the campaign! If you do not then its time I checked you. Either you are with me or against me!” In addition, a video posted on YouTube, titled “Reginald Davis for District Court Judge,” shows the candidate at a public event. Near the end of the video, the candidate asks the crowd to support him in 4 ways, one of which is to make a donation to his campaign. The candidate, who is not an incumbent judge, accepted the order.

\* In a suit arising from the refusal of judicial candidates to answer questionnaires from a right-to-life group, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of **Kentucky** entered a preliminary injunction prohibiting the enforcement of the canon providing that a judicial candidate “shall not make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; [and] shall not make statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues

that are likely to come before the court.” *Family Trust Foundation of Kentucky v. Wolnitzek*, 345 F. Supp. 2d 672 (2004), *motion for stay denied*, 388 F.3d 224 (6<sup>th</sup> Circuit 2004). However, the court held that the plaintiffs were not likely to prevail on their claim that the state’s recusal statute and canon chill protected speech by requiring judicial candidates to decline to announce their views on various issues for fear they may have to recuse themselves if that issue later arises in a case before them. The federal court held that “to the extent that the promises and commit clauses attempt to prevent judicial candidates from promising to rule a certain way on cases, controversies or issues likely to come before the court, the state has a compelling interest in such a restriction.” However, the court concluded that “Kentucky is simply using the promises and commit clauses as a *de facto* announce clause.”

On September 15, 2005, the Kentucky Supreme Court amended the state’s code of judicial conduct to provide:

A judge or candidate for election to judicial office shall not intentionally or recklessly make a statement that a reasonable person would perceive as committing the judge or candidate to rule a certain way on a case, controversy, or issue that is likely to come before the court; and shall not misrepresent any candidate’s identity, qualifications, present position, or other facts.

\* The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of **Kentucky** held that the Kentucky version of the commit clause is constitutional but held unconstitutional the solicitation clause and restrictions on partisan activity by judges and judicial candidates. *Carey v. Wolnitzek*, Opinion and order (October 15, 2008).

\* In 2002, the **Louisiana** Supreme Court amended its code to provide that a judicial candidate “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.” Commentary explains that that amendment “is not intended to apply to in-court comments by lawyer candidates, or comments regarding a case or proceeding that the lawyer candidate is participating in.” Effective February 1, 2005, the Louisiana Supreme Court adopted the 2003 amendments to the ABA model code of judicial conduct.

\* The **Maine** Supreme Judicial Court rejected a judge’s argument that the prohibition on soliciting funds has a chilling effect on a candidate’s ability to speak to potential contributors about their contributions and endorsements and that the restriction was impermissibly designed to make judicial elections different from legislative elections. *In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Maine 2003). The judge had run for the state senate without first resigning his judicial position and solicited contributions to qualify for public campaign funding from the Maine Clean Elections Fund. The court agreed with the Committee on Judicial Responsibility that the judge had violated the code of judicial conduct but imposed no discipline.

\* Rejecting the judge’s argument that his speech was protected by the 1st Amendment, the **Maine** Supreme Judicial Court censured and reprimanded a judge and suspended him from office for 30 calendar days without pay for making a knowing misrepresentation about one of his opponents in the primary election. *In the Matter of Nadeau*, 914 A.2d 714 (Maine 2007).

\* Effective July 1, 2005, the **Maryland** Court of Appeals amended the state’s code of judicial conduct to adopt the changes made by the ABA to the model code in 2003. The court also deleted the announce clause (Maryland was one of the 9 states with the clause in its code when it was declared unconstitutional) and qualified the prohibition on misrepresentations so that it applies only to misrepresentations “knowingly” made. As before the changes, the Maryland code omits the prohibition on a judicial candidate personally soliciting campaign contributions and publicly stated support.

\* Reviewing several previously issued opinions in light of the decision in *White*, the Ethics Committee of the State Bar of **Michigan** stated that, although the “pledge or promise” clause in the Michigan code “is presumed constitutionally valid and enforceable,” it must be “narrowly construed and cautiously applied to campaign speech.” *Michigan Advisory Opinion JI-131* (2005) ([michbar.org/opinions/ethicsopinions.cfm](http://michbar.org/opinions/ethicsopinions.cfm)). Thus, the committee advised, a judicial candidate may use a campaign slogan such as “A strict sentencing philosophy! A hard working man!” or other expression of philosophy. Similarly, the committee stated that judicial candidates may respond to questionnaires eliciting the candidates’ opinions on matters pending or impending in any court and criticizing the majority opinion of a divided court of last resort and the legal philosophy that underlies it.

\* In the remand of *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit held (1) that the clause prohibiting a judicial candidate from personally soliciting campaign contributions is unconstitutional insofar as it prohibits a judicial candidate from soliciting contributions from large groups and transmitting solicitations above their personal signatures (the extent of the plaintiffs’ challenge) and (2) that the clauses in the **Minnesota** code of judicial conduct prohibiting judges or judicial candidates from identifying themselves “as members of a political organization,” attending political gatherings, and seeking, accepting, or using endorsements from a political organization are unconstitutional. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738 (2005), *cert. denied sub nom., Dimick v. Republican Party of Minnesota*, 546 U.S. 1157 (2006).

\* On March 29, 2006, the **Minnesota** Supreme Court adopted revisions to conform its code of judicial conduct to the remand decision in *White*. As required by the decision, the changes delete the prohibitions on a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office identifying himself or herself as a member of a political organization, attending and speaking at political gatherings, seeking, accepting, or using endorsements from a political organization. The court also adopted the following version of the campaign solicitation clause:

A candidate shall not personally solicit campaign contributions, except as expressly authorized herein, and shall not personally accept campaign contributions. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation. A candidate may (a) make a general request for campaign contributions when speaking to an audience of 20 or more people, and (b) sign letters, for distribution by the candidate's campaign committee, soliciting campaign contributions, if the letters direct contributions to be sent to the address of the candidate's campaign committee and not that of the candidate. The candidate must take reasonable measures to ensure that the names and responses, or lack thereof, of those solicited will not be disclosed to the candidate, except that the candidate may be advised of aggregate contribution information in a manner that does not reveal the source(s) of the contributions. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

\* On February 29, 2008, a former judicial candidate filed a complaint in federal court challenging provisions of the **Minnesota** code of judicial conduct that prohibit a judge or judicial candidate from “publicly endors[ing] or, except for the judge or candidate's opponent, publicly oppos[ing] another candidate for public office,” from “solicit[ing] funds for . . . a political organization,” and from “personally solicit[ing] or accept[ing] campaign contributions” except for a general request for campaign contributions when speaking to an audience of 20 or more people or signing letters for distribution by the candidate's campaign committee. Finding no threat of irreparable harm, on July 22, 2008, the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota denied a motion for preliminary injunction because the plaintiff did not file candidacy papers by the deadline and, therefore, is not a candidate in the 2008 election. *Wersal v. Sexton* (July 22, 2008).

\* Missouri was one of only approximately 9 states that had the “announce clause” in its code at the time of the *White* decision. In an order, the **Missouri** Supreme stated that, in consideration of the *White* decision, the “announce clause” would not be enforced but that the other campaign speech provisions (the pledges and promises rule and the prohibition on misrepresentations) in the code “shall otherwise remain in full force and effect.” The court also stated, “recusal, or other remedial action, may nonetheless be required of any judge in cases that involve an issue about which the judge has announced his or her views as otherwise may be appropriate under the Code of Judicial Conduct.”

In May 2006, the Missouri Supreme Court amended the state's code of judicial conduct to delete the prohibition on judicial candidates announcing views on disputed legal

issues, to allow candidates to solicit and accept campaign funds (except in a courthouse or on courthouse grounds), and to make a written campaign solicitation for campaign funds of any person or group, but to prohibit candidates from soliciting in person campaign funds from persons likely to appear before the judge. The new provision on campaign fund-raising provides:

A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates shall not solicit or accept campaign funds in a courthouse or on courthouse grounds. Such candidate shall not solicit in person campaign funds from persons likely to appear before the judge. A candidate may make a written campaign solicitation for campaign funds of any person or group, including any person or group likely to appear before the judge.

\* In September 2004, the **Nevada** Supreme Court amended the state's code of judicial conduct to adopt the changes made by the ABA to the model code in 2003.

\* On December 5, 2006, the **Nevada** Supreme Court denied a petition by a district judge that would have amended the state code of judicial conduct to add the model code provision prohibiting judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions, finding that the proposed limitation was unconstitutional.

\* In September 2007, the **Nevada** Supreme Court amended the code of judicial conduct to prohibit a judicial candidate from raising funds if he or she is not opposed and to make other changes. As amended, Canon 5C now provides:

A candidate who is not opposed in an election must not solicit or accept contributions for the candidate's campaign, either personally or through a candidate's committee, at any time. A candidate becomes opposed in an election when, at the close of filing, another candidate has filed a declaration of candidacy or acceptance of candidacy for the same judicial office. If a candidate's opponent files a withdrawal of candidacy, the candidate is deemed unopposed as of the effective date of the withdrawal of candidacy and must not solicit or accept campaign contributions after that date.

The amendments also added the clause "a candidate is not prohibited from accepting or soliciting contributions from attorneys who appear before the court or from parties with matters pending before the court," and deleted the statement that "though not prohibited, campaign contributions of which a judge has knowledge, made by lawyers or others who appear before the judge, may be relevant to disqualification under Section 3E."

In addition, the amendments allow a judge subject to public election *at any time* to be a member of a political organization, make a public declaration of candidacy, make a public speech or appearance or speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf, and appear in newspaper, television, and other media. Moreover, following the amendments, a judge when a candidate for judicial office or a judicial candidate may "seek, accept or use

endorsements or publicly stated support for his or her candidacy from any person or organization other than a partisan political organization.”

In a subsequent advisory opinion, the Nevada Standing Committee on Judicial Ethics & Election Practices stated that the changes to the code of judicial conduct “suggest that, in matters related to judicial campaigns where there is no direct violation of a relevant Canon . . . the Committee should be reluctant to conclude that otherwise permissible conduct is an implied violation of the relevant Canon.” *Nevada Advisory Opinion JE07-013*.

\* In August 2004, the **New Mexico** Supreme Court amended the state’s code of judicial conduct to adopt the 2003 revisions to the ABA model code of judicial conduct. In addition, the court created an action allowing a candidate to challenge a violation by the candidate’s opponent in a judicial election campaign by filing a complaint in a state district court.

\* The **New Mexico** Supreme Court ordered that a judge be formally reprimanded for endorsing a mayor for re-election and authorizing the use of his name in an endorsement that was published in the local newspaper, granting a petition filed by the Commission on Judicial Standards based on stipulated findings of fact. *Inquiry Concerning Vincent*, 172 P.3d 605 (New Mexico 2007). Rejecting the judge’s argument that his endorsement was constitutionally protected speech, the court concluded that, “taken as a whole, our Code of Judicial Conduct, which includes the endorsement clause . . . , is carefully and narrowly drawn to serve the compelling state interest in a judiciary that is impartial in fact and in appearance.”

\* Rejecting a 1st Amendment challenge to the New York code based on *White*, the **New York** Court of Appeals censured a judge for pro-prosecutorial rhetoric in his campaign statements. *In the Matter of Watson*, 794 N.E.2d 1 (New York 2003).

\* Rejecting a 1st Amendment challenge to the New York code based on *White*, the **New York** Court of Appeals accepted the censure of a judge who had, among other misconduct, participated as a panelist in a political party’s screening interviews of political candidates; appeared at the party’s “phone bank” for a candidate for the county legislature and made phone calls on behalf of the candidate; and made a lump sum payment to a political party. *In the Matter of Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287 (New York 2003).

\* The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit vacated the judgment of the District Court for the Northern District of New York holding several provisions of the **New York** code of judicial conduct unconstitutional, and remanded with instructions that the district court abstain from exercising jurisdiction over the plaintiff’s action. *Spargo v. State Commission on Judicial Conduct*, 351 F.3d 65 (2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit 2003).

\* In February 2006, the Chief Administrator of the **New York** Courts, with the approval of the Court of Appeals, adopted amendments and additions to the Rules of the Chief Administrator of the Courts (in other words, the code of judicial conduct) addressing

judicial campaign conduct and campaign ethics, judicial qualifications commissions, and electronic campaign finance disclosure filings. Among other amendments, both judges and judicial candidates are prohibited from making “pledges or promises of conduct in office that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office” and “with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court, mak[ing] commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office.” If a judge, while a judge or candidate, violated that prohibition, the judge would be disqualified from a case.

\* In April 2003, the **North Carolina** Supreme Court adopted a new Canon 7 to govern the political and campaign conduct of judges and judicial candidates. The only restriction remaining a prohibition on a candidate “intentionally and knowingly misrepresent[ing] his identity or qualifications.” The amended canon eliminated the restriction on personal solicitation of campaign contributions and expressly allows candidates to personally solicit campaign funds and request public support from anyone for his or her own campaign. The court has appointed a 36-member Advisory Committee on Permissible Political Conduct to advise the court on establishing and enforcing rules on judicial campaigning and other conduct.

\* Dismissing a complaint, the **North Carolina** Judicial Standards Commission found that a judge’s solicitation of an endorsement from an attorney in his chambers during a break in court proceedings did not warrant a recommendation that the judge be sanctioned. The Commission found, and the judge admitted, that during a recess of a session of court over which he was presiding, the judge called assistant district attorney Charles Edwin Reece into his chambers and requested that Reece support and “endorse” him in the 2004 election in which the judge was a candidate for re-election. Reece declined the request. The judge returned to the courtroom and resumed the business of the court. The judge believed his actions were expressly permitted pursuant to Canon 7B of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which provides a judge or candidate for judicial office to “personally solicit campaign funds and request public support from anyone for his own campaign . . . .” Noting that Canon 7B(4) contains no limitations upon the manner and place where such solicitations may be made, the Commission stated that it appears that the broad permission granted by Canon 7B(4) can be inconsistent with the provisions of Canon 1, Canon 2A, and Canon 2B because the judge’s conduct could be reasonably interpreted as an attempt to secure Reece’s endorsement of the judge’s candidacy through the improper use of his judicial position. Stating it “strongly disapproves” of the judge’s conduct, the Commission concluded that the judge’s conduct did not warrant a recommendation that the judge be censured or removed from office. *In re Graham*, Order (North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission October 2005).

\* Granting the plaintiffs’ motion for summary judgment, a judge in the U.S. District Court for the District of **North Dakota** held that the pledges, promises, and commits clauses of the state’s code of judicial conduct were unconstitutional. However, the court rejected the plaintiffs’ argument that the code’s recusal requirement was unconstitutional. *North Dakota Family Alliance v. Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021 (2005). The judge stated he was “of the opinion that there is little, if any, distinction between the ‘announce

clause’ which was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in *White*, and the ‘commitment clause’ and ‘pledges and promises clause’ contained in Canon 5A(3)(d)(i) and (ii) of the North Dakota Code of Judicial Conduct.”

\* Effective January 2006, the **North Dakota** Supreme Court adopted the definition of “impartiality” and the restrictions on speech by judges and judicial candidates from the 2003 amendments in the ABA model code and deleted the restriction on statements that “appear to commit” candidates from its code of judicial conduct. In addition, the court adopted commentary that states:

[2] The compelling interests of the state supporting the restrictions imposed under Section 5A(3)(d) are recognized and supported by several provisions of the North Dakota Constitution, specifically with respect to ensuring the citizens of this state due process of law, N.D. Const. art. I, §§ 9 and 12; equal protection of the law, N.D. Const. art. I, § 21; open courts, N.D. Const. art. I, § 9; and justice without sale, denial, or delay, N.D. Const. art. I, § 9. Further, because of circumstances found in this state, it is necessary to protect those interests by placing the least restrictive limits on the free speech of candidates and judges possible. North Dakota is a geographically large state with a largely rural, sparse population and a small number of appellate judges and general jurisdiction trial judges. North Dakota also has a very liberal statute providing for a change of judge upon demand, N.D. Cent. Code § 29-15-21. Within a relative short period of time, each of these judges will have been subject to election. Without Section 5A(3)(d), it is reasonably foreseeable that on a particular issue every judge in the state could have pledged, promised, or made a commitment that may be considered inconsistent with the impartial performance of the judge’s adjudicative duties. The limitations imposed under Section 5A(3)(d) are necessary as disqualification under Canon 3E alone may not sufficiently protect the interests described in this comment. See also the limitations imposed under Canon 3B(10).

[3] The state also has a compelling interest in maintaining the integrity, independence, and impartiality of the judiciary, thus enhancing public confidence in the justice system. In furtherance of this interest, judges and candidates for judicial office should be free from political influence, taking into account the methods of selecting judges and the constitutional provisions governing free speech and expressive association. In order to advance the state’s compelling interests, Canon 5A imposes restrictions on the political and campaign activities of all sitting judges and all candidates for judicial office. In all events, a candidate for judicial office should maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office.

[4] A judge’s obligation to avoid prejudgment is well established. Under the First Amendment and in light of the voters’ right to have information about an elective candidate’s views, judicial ethics provisions may not prohibit judicial candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal and political questions. Canon 5A(3)(d), which applies the prohibitions of Canon 3B(10) to all candidates for

judicial office, does not proscribe a candidate's public expression of personal views on disputed issues. To ensure that voters understand a judge's duty to uphold the Constitution and laws of this state where the law differs from the candidate's personal belief, however, candidates are encouraged to emphasize their duty to uphold the law regardless of their personal views.

[5] Some speech restrictions are indispensable to maintaining the integrity, impartiality, and independence of the judiciary. The state has a compelling interest in enforcing these restrictions. Thus, under this Canon it remains improper for a judicial candidate to make pledges, promises, or commitments regarding specific classes of cases, specific litigants or classes of litigants, or specific propositions of law that would reasonably lead to the conclusion that the candidate has prejudged a decision or ruling in cases that would fall within the scope of the pledge, promise, or commitment. To fall within the proscription of this Canon the statement by the candidate must pertain to matters likely to come before the court on which the candidate would serve, if elected. Statements by a candidate that would have this effect are inconsistent with the obligation of all judges to perform impartially the adjudicative duties of the office.

[6] Candidates for judicial office often receive questionnaires or requests for interviews from the media and from issue advocacy or other community organizations seeking to learn the candidates' views on disputed or controversial legal or political issues. Section 5A(3)(d) does not generally prohibit candidates from responding to this kind of inquiry, but candidates should proceed with caution if they choose to respond. Depending on the wording of the questions and the format provided for answering, a candidate's response might constitute pledges, promises, or commitments to perform the adjudicative duties of the office other than in an impartial way. In order to avoid violating Section 5A(3)(d), therefore, candidates who choose to respond should make clear their commitment to keeping an open mind while on the bench, regardless of their own personal views.

\* The **Ohio** Supreme Court Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline issued an advisory opinion about the effect of *White*. In *Ohio Advisory Opinion 02-8* ([www.sconet.state.oh.us/boc/Advisory\\_Opinions/](http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/boc/Advisory_Opinions/)), the Board noted that the Ohio code does not contain the "announce clause" and that the Court in *White* did not directly address the pledges and promises provision or the commitments provision. The Board issued 11 campaign speech guidelines for judicial candidates.

\* Dissolving an injunction that enjoined enforcement of three provisions of the Ohio code of judicial conduct related to judicial campaign conduct, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit held that the district court should have refrained from exercising its jurisdiction in this case. *O'Neil v. Coughlan*, 511 F.3d 638 (2008). The challenged canons provide that "after the day of the primary election, a judicial candidate shall not identify himself or herself in advertising as a member of or affiliated with a political party," that judicial campaign materials and ads may not "use the term 'judge' when a

judge is a candidate for another judicial office and does not indicate the court on which the judge currently serves,” and that judges and judicial candidates shall “maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office.” In a new code of judicial conduct adopted in December 2008 and effective March 1, 2009, the Ohio Supreme Court eliminated the rule and expressly allows judges and candidates to “state, in person or in advertising, that he or she is a member of, affiliated with, nominee of, or endorsed by a political party.” However, on January 20, the court reinstated the rule.

\* The **Oklahoma** Supreme Court adopted some of the amendments to the model code enacted by the ABA in 2003. As amended, the Oklahoma code, effective March 1, 2006, will prohibit both judges and judicial candidates from making “with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court, . . . pledges, promises or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office” and will disqualify a judge from a case if the judge “while a judge or candidate for judicial office, . . . made a public statement that commits, or appears to commit, the judge with respect to an issue in the proceeding or the controversy in the proceeding.” The Oklahoma court did not adopt the commentary, amendments to Canon 1, or definition of impartiality included in the 2003 ABA amendments.

\* In November 2002, the **Pennsylvania** Supreme Court deleted the “announce clause” from the state code of judicial conduct and substituted the “commit clause” from the ABA 1990 model code. In March 2008, the court amended the commit clause to delete the phrase “appear to commit.” Thus, Canon 7B(1)(c) now reads: “Candidates, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled either by public election between competing candidates or on the basis of a merit system election should not make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; make statements that commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court; or misrepresent their identity, qualifications, present position, or other fact.”

\* Vacating a preliminary injunction, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of **Pennsylvania** held that the pledges, promises, and commits clauses, narrowly construed, were not unconstitutional under the 1st Amendment. *Pennsylvania Family Institute v. Celluci*, 521 F. Supp. 2d 351 (2007). Under the narrow construction adopted by the court, which had been proposed by the defendants, none of the questions in the plaintiffs’ questionnaires asked candidates to pledge, promise, or commit as prohibited by the code of judicial conduct. The court concluded that “Pennsylvania has compelling interests in preserving an openminded judiciary and in protecting the due process rights of future litigants (by preventing judicial candidates from pledging, promising, or committing to the adjudication of particular results), and the narrowly construed pledges and promises and commits clauses are narrowly tailored to serve those interests.”

\* Affirming an order dismissing a challenge to campaign speech restrictions, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit held that an organization that sent questionnaires to judicial candidates lacked standing to challenge provisions of the Pennsylvania code of

judicial conduct because it has not established the presence of a willing speaker. *Pennsylvania Family Institute v. Black*, 489 F.3d 156 (3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit 2007).

\* In December 2005, the **South Dakota** Supreme Court adopted the changes to the model code adopted by the ABA in 2003. In addition, the South Dakota court amended a sentence in the preamble to read “the Code is not to be construed so as to impinge on the essential independence of judges in making judicial decisions or on judge’s or candidates’ First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and association but should be construed to protect the due process rights of litigants to impartial courts and to promote public confidence in the judiciary.” The state court also added commentary warning that “the promises and commitments clause must be narrowly construed and cautiously applied to campaign speech” and that “the conduct of a judicial campaign and the manner of presentation of any material in any connection with a campaign for judicial office should comport with the dignity and integrity required of that office.” Commentary added to the South Dakota code states:

Candidates for judicial office often receive questionnaires or requests for interviews from the media and from issue advocacy or other community organizations, seeking to learn their views on disputed or controversial legal or political issues. Expressing such views may require a judge’s recusal or disqualification. Candidates are generally not prohibited from responding to this kind of inquiry, but candidates should proceed with caution if they choose to respond. Depending on the wording of the questions and the format provided for answering, a candidate’s responses might constitute pledges, promises or commitments to perform the adjudicative duties of office other than in an impartial way. In order to avoid violating Canon 3, therefore, candidates who choose to respond should make clear their commitment to keeping an open mind while on the bench, regardless of their own personal views. If elected, such candidate shall be recused from cases where a candidate’s responses constitute pledges, promises or commitments to perform the adjudicative duties of office other than in an impartial way.

The amended code does require that “a judge or a candidate who answers a written questionnaire seeking the judge’s or candidate’s views on disputed or controversial legal or political issues shall file a copy of any response with the Clerk of the Supreme Court within ten days of the submission of the questionnaire.”

Based on the remand decision by the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, the South Dakota Supreme Court amended the code to expressly allow a judge or candidate to identify himself or herself as a member of a political party at any time and to speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf at any time. Further, the court eliminated the prohibitions on a judge or judicial candidate acting as a leader in a political organization, attending political gatherings, paying an assessment to or making a contribution to a political organization or candidate, or purchasing tickets for political party dinners or other functions.

Also based on the remand decision, the state court eliminated the prohibition on personally soliciting campaign contributions, now expressly allowing candidates to do so, although it encourages candidates to establish campaign committees. The court did establish a \$1,000 limit on individual campaign contributions (not including the candidate, the candidate's spouse, or any relative within the third degree of kinship) and a time limit for fund-raising to between January 1 and December 31 of an election year. Commentary provides that contributions "should not be knowingly solicited or accepted from a party . . . to litigation that (a) is before the candidate, (b) may reasonably be expected to come before the candidate if elected, or (c) has come before the candidate so recently that the knowing solicitation or acceptance of funds may give the appearance of improper use of the power or prestige of judicial office," or from anyone "employed by, affiliated with or a member of the immediate family of a party" to such litigation. In addition, commentary states that "contributions may not be knowingly solicited or accepted from any firm, corporation or other organization that has as one of its purposes the promotion of one side of a legal issue which may reasonably be expected to come before the candidate if elected." However, commentary allow the solicitation of contributions "from lawyers (including lawyers having cases before, or which may come before, the candidate), provided that the solicitation makes no reference, direct or indirect, to any particular pending or potential litigation."

\* In October 2005, the **Tennessee** Supreme Court replaced the previous commentary to Canon 5A(3)(d) with the following:

A judge's obligation to avoid prejudgment is well established. Under the First Amendment and in light of the voters' right to have information about an elective candidate's views, judicial ethics rules may not prohibit judicial candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues. Canon 5(A)(3)(d) does not proscribe a candidate's public expression of personal views on disputed issues. To ensure that voters understand a judge's duty to uphold the Constitution and laws of Tennessee where the law differs from the candidate's personal beliefs, however, candidates are encouraged to emphasize their duty to uphold the law regardless of personal views.

Some speech restrictions are indispensable to maintaining the integrity, impartiality, and independence of the judiciary. The state has a compelling interest in enforcing these restrictions. Thus, under Canon 5(A)(3)(d) it remains improper for a judicial candidate to make pledges, promises or commitments regarding pending or impending cases, specific classes of cases, specific litigants or classes of litigants, or specific positions of law, that would reasonably lead to the conclusion that the candidate has prejudged a decision or ruling in cases that would fall within the scope of the pledge, promise or commitment. To fall within the proscription of this rule the statement by the candidate must pertain to matters likely to come before the court on which the candidate would serve, if elected. Statements by a candidate that would have this effect are

inconsistent with the obligation of all judges to perform impartially the adjudicative duties of office.

Candidates for judicial office often receive questionnaires or requests for interviews from the media and from issue advocacy or other community organizations seeking to learn their views on disputed or controversial legal or political issues. Canon 5(A)(3)(d) does not generally prohibit candidates from responding to this kind of inquiry, but candidates should proceed with caution if they choose to respond. Depending on the wording of the questions and the format provided for answering, a candidate's responses might constitute pledges, promises or commitments to perform the adjudicative duties of office other than in an impartial way. In order to avoid violating Canon 5(A)(3)(d), therefore, candidates who choose to respond should make clear their commitment to keeping an open mind while on the bench, regardless of their own personal views.

Additionally, judicial candidates must keep in mind that, in stating their position as to an issue, they may later be required to disqualify themselves pursuant to Canon 3(E)(1) should that issue subsequently arise in a proceeding before them and, because of the position taken by the judge while a candidate, the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

Canon 5(A)(3)(d) does not prohibit a candidate for judicial office from making public statements concerning improvements to the legal system or to the administration of justice.

\* In August 2002, the **Texas** Supreme Court amended its code of judicial conduct in light of the decision in *White*. The revisions struck a provision prohibiting statements indicating an opinion "on any issue that may be subject to judicial interpretation" by the office a judge holds or a candidate seeks (which had been held unconstitutional by a federal court in *Smith v. Phillips* (U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas August 6, 2002)), extended the prohibition on public comments on pending cases to apply to judicial candidates as well as judges, and revised the pledges and promises provision. The new version of the pledges and promises canon states:

A judge or judicial candidate shall not make pledges or promises of conduct in office regarding pending or impending cases, specific classes of cases, specific classes of litigants, or specific propositions of law that would suggest to a reasonable person that the judge is predisposed to a probable decision in cases within the scope of the pledge.

The court noted that a more extensive study of the rules would be undertaken. One justice joined in approving the amendments but filed a statement noting his doubt that they were sufficient to comply with the 1st Amendment.

\* Dismissing a public admonishment issued by the State Commission on Judicial Conduct, a Special Court of Review appointed by the **Texas** Supreme Court found that Supreme Court Justice Nathan Hecht did not violate the code of judicial conduct by allowing his name and title to be used by the press and the White House in support of the nomination of Harriet Miers for the office of United States Supreme Court Justice. *In re Hecht*, 213 S.W.3d 547 (2006). Because it determined that Justice Hecht did not violate the canons, the court did not undertake a constitutional analysis. A concurring opinion concluded that the justice did violate the code but that the canons violated the 1st Amendment.

\* The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit held that the **Texas** State Commission on Judicial Conduct could sanction a judge for using the courtroom, his robe, and state electronic equipment when he held a press conference and sent e-mails about a pending matter in another court, allegations of judicial corruption, and allegations of infidelity against his wife but that the Commission must expunge the censure insofar as it reached the content of the judge's message. *Jenevein v. Willing*, 493 F.3d 551 (5<sup>th</sup> Circuit 2007). Citing *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, the court held that the Commission's interest in preserving the public's faith in the judiciary and litigants' rights to a fair hearing was not advanced by completely shutting down such speech.

\* The **Vermont** judicial ethics committee issued an advisory opinion allowing a judge to participate in a peace march, hold an anti-war sign, and sign a petition to the congressional delegation or the town board on issues such as energy independence and funding for a local anti-poverty agency. *Vermont Advisory Opinion 2827-6* (2003) ([www.vermontjudiciary.org/Committees/boards/vtjudethicsadcomm.htm](http://www.vermontjudiciary.org/Committees/boards/vtjudethicsadcomm.htm)). The opinion relied on *White* and *In the Matter of Sanders*, 955 P.2d 369 (Washington 1998), which held that a supreme court justice could not, consistent with a judge's legitimate expectations under the state and federal constitutions, be sanctioned for his appearance at a March for Life rally and his statements at the rally. Based on those decisions, the committee stated it "must . . . apply strict scrutiny to an application of the Code which would restrict the free speech rights of a Vermont judge."

\* The **West Virginia** Judicial Investigation Commission publicly admonished a candidate for magistrate for personally soliciting campaign contributions in a letter. *In the Matter of Sheehan* (June 10, 2008). The candidate has objected to the admonishment, arguing before the Supreme Court of Appeals that the restriction on personal solicitation of contributions is unconstitutional.

\* In October 2004, the **Wisconsin** Supreme Court adopted new provisions regarding judicial campaign conduct and other political activities by judges. Adopting the 2003 ABA version, the new Wisconsin code prohibits judicial candidates from making "with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court, pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office." The new Wisconsin provision also includes an aspirational section (using "should" instead of "shall") on campaign conduct and rhetoric in general that states:

While holding the office of judge or while a candidate for judicial office or a judge-elect, every judge, candidate for judicial office, or judge-elect should maintain, in campaign conduct, the dignity appropriate to judicial office and the integrity and independence of the judiciary. A judge, candidate for judicial office, or judge-elect should not manifest bias or prejudice inappropriate to the judicial office. Every judge, candidate for judicial office, or judge-elect should always bear in mind the need for scrupulous adherence to the rules of fair play while engaged in a campaign for judicial office.

The section on misrepresentations includes both aspirational and mandatory provisions.

A candidate for a judicial office shall not knowingly or with reckless disregard for the statement's truth or falsity misrepresent the identity, qualifications, present position, or other fact concerning the candidate or an opponent. A candidate for judicial office should not knowingly make representations that, although true, are misleading, or knowingly make statements that are likely to confuse the public with respect to the proper role of judges and lawyers in the American adversary system.

The new Wisconsin code prohibits a judge, candidate for judicial office, or judge-elect from personally soliciting or accepting campaign contributions but allows a judge, candidate, or judge-elect to appear at his or her own fund-raising events and to acknowledge a contribution in a courtesy thank you letter. There are no time limits on campaign fund-raising. Moreover, the new Wisconsin provision states: "A judge or candidate for judicial office may solicit or accept endorsements supporting his or her election or appointment personally or through his or her committee."

Wisconsin law requires that judicial elections be non-partisan. The new rules implement that requirement by providing: "A candidate for judicial office shall not appeal to partisanship and shall avoid partisan activity in the spirit of a nonpartisan judiciary." However, judges, judge-elects, and judicial candidates may appear "at partisan political gatherings to promote his or her own candidacy." Judges, judicial candidates, and judge-elects may not belong to any political party, "participate in the affairs, caucuses, promotions, platforms, endorsements, conventions, or activities of a political party or of a candidate for partisan office," "make or solicit financial or other contributions in support of a political party's causes or candidates," or "publicly endorse or speak on behalf of its candidates or platforms." However, the new Wisconsin code allows a judge, candidate for judicial office, or judge-elect to attend, as a member of the public, a public event sponsored by a political party or candidate for partisan office, or by the campaign committee for such a candidate and to purchase a ticket to that event, if the amount does not "exceed an amount necessary to defray the sponsor's cost of the event reasonably allocable to the judge's, candidate's, or judge-elect's attendance."

\* In an advisory opinion, the **Wisconsin** Supreme Court Judicial Conduct Committee stated that a judge may not express a personal opinion about as to the fairness, efficacy,

and wisdom of the death penalty, which is the subject of an advisory referendum on the ballot, noting that constitutional issues related to interpretations of the code are beyond its authority. *Wisconsin Advisory Opinion 06-1R* ([www.wicourts.gov/supreme/sc\\_judcond.jsp](http://www.wicourts.gov/supreme/sc_judcond.jsp)).

\* The U.S. District Court for the Western District of **Wisconsin** held that the prohibition on “a judge, judge-elect, or candidate for judicial office [making] . . . with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court, pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office” was not unconstitutional on its face but did not prohibit judicial candidates from responding to a questionnaire from the plaintiff Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc. Further, the court held that the requirement that “a judge shall recuse himself or herself in a proceeding when . . . 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 any of the following: 1. an issue in the proceeding. 2. the controversy in the proceeding” was unconstitutionally overbroad and vague, and indistinguishable from the announce clause. *Duwe v. Alexander*, 490 F. Supp. 2d 968 (U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin 2007).

\* Finding that the plaintiff had not shown “that the balance of hardships favors granting immediate relief,” the U.S. District Court for the Western District of **Wisconsin** denied a motion for a preliminary injunction to enjoin enforcement of three canons of the Wisconsin code of judicial conduct that prohibit him from joining a political party, endorsing a partisan candidate, and personally soliciting campaign funds. *Siefert v. Alexander* (U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin June 2, 2008).

\* In a motion filed in April 2008, the Wisconsin Realtors Association and the Wisconsin Builders Association have asked the **Wisconsin** Supreme Court to “determine that the receipt of a lawful campaign contribution or endorsement by a judicial campaign committee does not, by itself, warrant judicial recusal” or, alternatively, “if the Court finds it necessary” to amend the code of judicial conduct to so provide.

\* On October 7, 2008, the **Wisconsin** Judicial Commission filed a complaint against Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman for a campaign advertisement that contained false statements about the background, qualifications, and experience of his opponent, then-incumbent Justice Louis Butler, that were made knowingly or with reckless disregard for the truth. Gableman defeated Butler in the April 2008 election. Justice Gableman has filed an answer, affirmative defenses, and counterclaim. He claims that the advertisement is “true and does not contain any statements that are objectively false.” He also seeks injunctive relief, arguing that the campaign misrepresentations clause in the Wisconsin code of judicial conduct violates the First Amendment and the Wisconsin constitution because it is vague and overbroad.

*The Center for Judicial Ethics tracks developments following White, as well as other decisions regarding judicial conduct, in the Judicial Ethics News portion of its web-site, a weekly feature at [www.ajs.org/ethics/index.asp](http://www.ajs.org/ethics/index.asp).*