



## Committee on Judicial Ethics

### Annual Report for January 1 - December 31, 2020

**Membership and Terms.** The Committee on Judicial Ethics, which began operating on August 1, 2008, continued its work throughout the 2020 calendar year. The membership remained constant during the year, consisting of the following members: Honorable James T. Graham (Chair); Hon. Robert B. Shapiro; Honorable Michael P. Kamp; Vernon D. Oliver; Professor Carolyn W. Kaas and Honorable Karen A. Goodrow (Alternate). Attorneys Joseph J. Del Ciampo, Martin R. Libbin, Viviana L. Livesay and Adam P. Mauriello continued to staff the Committee. The current terms of the members are as follows:

Hon. James T. Graham (Chair)	August 1, 2020 to July 31, 2023
Hon. Michael P. Kamp	August 1, 2020 to July 31, 2023
Hon. Vernon D. Oliver	August 1, 2020 to July 31, 2023
Hon. Karen A. Goodrow (Alternate)	August 1, 2020 to July 31, 2023
Prof. Carolyn W. Kaas	August 1, 2019 to July 31, 2022
Hon. Robert B. Shapiro	August 1, 2018, to July 31, 2021

**Policy and Rules.** No policy or rule changes took place during 2020.

**Committee Webpage.** No substantial changes were made to the webpage during 2020. Notice of all meetings, agendas and minutes continued to be made available on the Committee's website, as well as on the "State Agency Public Meeting Calendar" website portal found at: <https://egov.ct.gov/pmc>.

**Activity.** During 2020, the Committee met via teleconference six (6) times to discuss pending inquiries. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, members of the public who were interested in attending meetings were permitted to participate via teleconference, rather than report to 100 Washington Street, Hartford, CT. The Committee received six (6) requests for advisory opinions and no requests for emergency staff opinions. Four advisory opinions involved off-the-bench activities and two concerned on-the-bench conduct. The following is a brief description of the issues considered:

- Creating an LLC with a long-time friend for the purpose of developing and selling real estate ([2020-01](#))
- Ethical obligations when attorney, who has been charged with a crime, appears as counsel of record for numerous clients in the judge's Judicial District ([2020-02](#))
- Participating in "A Silent March of Black Female Attorneys of Connecticut" by meeting the marchers at the steps of the Connecticut Supreme Court and reading Article First, Sec. 2 of the Connecticut Constitution ([2020-03](#))
- Providing a letter of recommendation to Governor's Legal Counsel at the request of a candidate seeking judicial appointment ([2020-04](#))
- Serving as primary trustee for trust established by a first cousin ([2020-05](#))
- Disqualification/recusal in cases involving Governor's official acts when judge is weeks away from potential re-nomination ([2020-06](#))

The Committee observed that the subjects of inquiries during 2020, as in the previous years, revealed that Judicial Officials continue to pay close attention to the growing body of formal and informal opinions. Although some seek clarification or expansion of matters covered in past opinions, Judicial Officials, for the most part, do not ask about matters that were prevalent in prior years. Rather, they appear to rely on past opinions to guide their conduct. The requests during 2020 continue to consist of increasingly nuanced and current subjects, reflecting heightened sensitivity toward maintaining ethical conduct. Groups of new judges should continue to receive training in order to make them aware of the Committee's work and to encourage them to submit inquiries pertaining to the transitional stage as well as throughout their careers.

The Committee, which has now completed twelve and a half years of service, is encouraged that Judicial Officials appear to be actively using our services and benefitting from access to the summaries of Informal and Formal opinions and the cross-referenced Subject Matter Index, as well as the minutes of Committee meetings. While encouraging Judicial Officials to consult the webpage regularly, the Committee continues to urge that Judicial Officials should not hesitate to present inquiries whenever they have concerns, regardless of the subject matter or the complexity of the issue or whether the particular subject may have been addressed in some respects previously. Ethics inquiries are highly fact-specific and even issues that have been addressed before may present new concerns.

The Committee is prepared to use the "Ethics Alert" feature of the webpage whenever necessary to increase the likelihood that advisory opinions on crucial matters of broad interest will come to the attention of Judicial Officials. All Committee members continue to receive

monthly updates from Cynthia Gray, the ethics director of the National Center for State Courts, Center for Judicial Ethics.

The members of the Committee join in thanking and commending its Secretary and Assistant Secretaries for their excellent and prompt professional assistance in the work of the Committee.

**Recommendations.** The Committee again recommends that ethics components be included on a regular basis in the CJI program. The Committee also welcomes suggestions as to how it can further improve its website to insure effective access to the growing body of ethical opinions.

**Conclusion.** The Committee is dedicated to providing accurate, timely, and effective ethics opinions for the guidance of Judicial Officials while also maximizing the privacy of Judicial Officials who submit requests.

Respectfully submitted,

James T. Graham, Chair  
January 26, 2021