



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: [Cathal Conneely](mailto:Cathal.Conneely@judicial.ethics.opinions.ca.gov), 415-865-7740

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Supreme Court Committee Provides Guidance on Disqualifications Triggered by Judicial Campaign Contributions

Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions also advises judges about how to make disclosures

SAN FRANCISCO—The California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) has provided guidance on a statute that prohibits trial court judges from hearing cases where one of the lawyers in the case contributed more than \$1,500 to the judge’s campaign. The committee concluded in [CJEO Formal Opinion 2013-003](#) that disqualification is mandatory for contributions over \$1,500 from individual lawyers, but judges must also consider whether aggregated contributions from a group of lawyers or a law firm might cause a reasonable person to doubt the judge’s impartiality and require disqualification. The opinion is the first advisory opinion in the country to address aggregated and law firm contributions.

In a separate opinion, the committee also provided steps for judges to take to ensure that disclosures become part of the record when there is no court reporter or electronic recording of the proceedings. In [CJEO Formal Opinion 2013-002](#), the committee addresses the Code of Judicial Ethics requirement that disclosures be made “on the record” in those circumstances where there is no court reporter or electronic recording. The opinion provides judges with practical advice about making disclosures part of the written record, including entering a written disclosure document in the case file and notifying the parties and lawyers.

CJEO is an independent committee appointed by the Supreme Court to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. CJEO was established as part of the court’s constitutional responsibility to guide the conduct of judges and judicial candidates (Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18, subd. (m)). In making appointments to serve on CJEO, the court selects members of the bench with a strong background in judicial ethics and diverse courtroom experience. The current twelve CJEO members are justices, judges, a commissioner, and a retired bench officer who have served in courts of various sizes throughout the state.

CJEO publishes formal opinions, issues confidential informal opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the California Code of Judicial Ethics and other authorities (rule 9.80(e)(1)). CJEO acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on

Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and all other entities (rule 9.80(b)).

For more information about CJEO, visit the [CJEO website](#) and [view the members' page](#), call toll-free at 1 (855) 854-5366, or email Judicial.Ethics@jud.ca.gov.

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The Supreme Court established the Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. (Cal. Rules of Court, [rule 9.80](#).) CJEO publishes formal advisory opinions, issues confidential written opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the [California Code of Judicial Ethics](#) and other authorities. In providing its advisory opinions, the committee acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and all other entities. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(b).) The Supreme Court is responsible for adopting the Code of Judicial Ethics, which guides the conduct of judges on and off the bench (Cal. Const., Art. VI, § 18, subd. (m).)