



California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions  
350 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California 94102-4797  
[www.JudicialEthicsOpinions.ca.gov](http://www.JudicialEthicsOpinions.ca.gov)

**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 accepting gifts**

*Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions advises judges on accepting small gifts as ordinary social hospitality*

SAN FRANCISCO— The California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) has issued an advisory opinion, [CJEO Formal Opinion No. 2014-005](#), that provides guidance on small value gifts (*di minimis* items) that are sometimes offered to judges. The opinion clarifies that these tokens of esteem or appreciation, such as tickets to local events and food items, are gifts under the Code of Judicial Ethics and subject to the ban on gifts from parties and nonparties because they might create an appearance of influence, favor, or advantage.

The advisory opinion also provides an important analytical framework for judges to use when determining whether small-value gifts that are not banned may be accepted under the ordinary social hospitality exception. The opinion advises that gifts of little or nominal value that are not otherwise banned may be accepted if they are ordinary by community standards, offered for social traditions or purposes, and hospitable in nature.

The committee previously [invited the public to comment](#) on this advisory opinion in draft form and considered all of the comments received when approving CJEO Formal Opinion No. 2014-005.

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 (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(e)(1)). CJEO acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, 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](mailto: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, 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).)*

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