

Judicial Inquiry Commission

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June 29, 1981

The Judicial Inquiry Commission has considered your request for an opinion regarding whether a judge may be a member of a local chamber of commerce. You stated that it has been mentioned by an individual that a judge's membership in such an organization is perhaps unethical. You further state that such membership might raise the appearance of impropriety in some specific types of judicial proceedings in which the judge might sit.

As you are aware, Canon 5 of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics provides that:

“A judge should regulate his extra-judicial activities to minimize the risk of conflict with his judicial duties.”

Canon 5B further provides that judges may participate in certain organizations and activities not conducted for the economic or political benefit of its members.

The Commission is of the opinion that it is permissible for a judge to become a member of a local chamber of commerce. However, in remaining a member of such an organization, a judge should be ever mindful of all of the provisions of Canons 2 and 5 of the Canons of Judicial Ethics. Circumstances could arise under these canons whereby a judge might be required to relinquish his membership in the organization.

Sincerely,