

Judicial Inquiry Commission

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February 27, 1992

This is in response to your request for an advisory opinion from the Judicial Inquiry Commission upon the following question:

“Are district and circuit judges prohibited by the Canons of Judicial Ethics or otherwise from joining organizations such as the Alabama State Employees Association or the State Employees Association Political Action Committee?”

The answer to your question is that the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics do not prohibit membership in the Alabama State Employees Association or the State Employees Association Political Action Committee.

The Commission recognizes that the fundamental purpose of both these organizations is to secure benefits for and promote the welfare and interests of a particular interest group - state employees. To that extent, both of these organizations are “political” in nature. Generally, under the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics a judge is discouraged but not prohibited from engaging in any political activity unrelated to his or her own campaign. Canon 7. In becoming a member of any political organization, a judge must be careful to adhere to the admonition of Canon 7 A to “conduct himself in a manner at all times to prevent any political considerations, entanglements or influences from ever becoming involved in or from ever appearing to be involved in any judicial decision or in the judicial process.” In addition, the judge must be careful “not lend the prestige of his office to advance the private interests of others,” Canon 2C, and to “conduct himself at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.” Canon 2 B.

The Commission thanks you for your request.

Respectfully,