

Maryland Judicial Ethics Committee

Opinion Request Number: 1997-04

Date of Issue: March 31, 1997

■ Published Opinion Unpublished Opinion Unpublished Letter of Advice

Endorsement of Candidate for Bar Association Office

A judge has requested the Committee's opinion regarding the propriety of endorsing a candidate for a bar association office. The endorsement would be in the form of publication of a list of judicial supporters included in a letter from the candidate to other bar association members soliciting votes.

Canon 2B of the Code of Judicial Conduct provides:

[A] judge should not allow judicial conduct to be improperly influenced by family, social, or other relationships. A judge should not use the prestige of judicial office to advance the private interests of others; nor should a judge convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence judicial conduct. A judge should not testify voluntarily as a character witness.

The endorsement in question uses the prestige of judicial office to advance the private interests of the candidate. In addition, the form of the endorsement which separately lists the judicial supporters emphasizes the prestigious position of those supporters in a manner designed to positively influence the voters.

It is, therefore, the opinion of the Committee that the endorsement described is prohibited by the Code of Judicial Conduct.