

## Maryland Judicial Ethics Committee

**Opinion Request Number:** 1980-09

**Date of Issue:** November 28, 1980

**O** Published Opinion    **G** Unpublished Opinion    **G** Unpublished Letter of Advice

### Judge May Serve on Advisory Committee Regarding County's Establishment of Equestrian Center

A trial judge has requested the opinion of this Committee as to the propriety of the judge's acceptance of a position to serve on a steering committee concerned with the establishment of a major equestrian center. The invitation has been extended to the judge by the County's Chief Executive Officer. The County has purchased a race track and proposes to maintain the aforementioned center. The purchase was effected several months ago.

The Committee is informed that the subject center would have barns and a large indoor and outdoor arena. In addition, there is some hope that there would be a steeplechase course and a learning center in horse management for youth groups and 4-H clubs.

The steering committee will be an advisory organization formed to make recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council. It is to be disbanded if and when its recommendations have been acted upon. The committee will not be involved in the solicitation of funds for operational and maintenance costs. However, the committee will be asked to make recommendations concerning the manner and/or method of solicitations.

The Canons and Rules of Judicial Ethics make reference to soliciting for charitable organizations in Canon XXIV, to-wit:

"A judge should avoid giving ground for any reasonable suspicion that he is utilizing the power or prestige of his office to persuade or coerce others to patronize or contribute either to the success of private business ventures, or to charitable enterprises ....; he should not solicit for charities..."

It is the unanimous opinion of this Committee that participation of the judge on this steering committee does not violate spirit or the rule of the aforementioned Canon. On the issue of activities involving the solicitation of funds, however, your attention is invited to the first question discussed in our [Opinion Request No. 1980-10].