



TEXAS ETHICS COMMISSION



ETHICS ADVISORY OPINION NO. 247

February 24, 1995

Whether a judge may use political contributions to pay a person to assist the judge in the preparation of a thesis required for a Masters of Law in the Judicial Process. (AOR-275)

The Texas Ethics Commission has been asked to consider whether a judge may use political contributions to pay a person to assist the judge in the preparation of a thesis required for a Masters of Law in the Judicial Process.¹

A person who accepts a political contribution as a candidate or officeholder may not convert the contribution to personal use. Elec. Code § 253.035. "Personal use," for purposes of that provision, means "a use that primarily furthers individual or family purposes not connected with the performance of duties or activities as a candidate for or holder of a public office." *Id.* subsec. (d) (emphasis added). Whether a particular activity is connected with the performance of duties or activities as an officeholder is a fact question, but a course of study about the judicial process may be connected with a judge's duties or activities of office. If so, it is permissible to use political contributions to pay expenses incurred in connection with that course of study.

SUMMARY

A judge may use political contributions to pay expenses incurred in connection with a course of study related to the judge's duties or activities of office.

¹ The request letter notes that the person who would assist the judge is not a state employee. In other words, this request focuses only on the use of political contributions, not on the use of state resources.