



TEXAS ETHICS COMMISSION



ETHICS ADVISORY OPINION NO. 284

October 13, 1995

Whether a judge may use political contributions to pay for social events sponsored by a bar association. (AOR-318)

The Texas Ethics Commission has been asked whether a judge may use political contributions to pay for social events sponsored by a bar association. A candidate or officeholder may not convert political contributions to personal use. Elec. Code § 253.035(a). A "personal use" is 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). The term "personal use" does not include a use that is connected with the performance of duties or activities as a candidate for or holder of public office. *Id.* Therefore, as long as the payments for social events are in connection with a judge's activities as a candidate or officeholder, the judge may use political contributions to make those payments. We note that all judges and judicial candidates should be aware of the new rules regarding judicial campaign finance set out in the Judicial Campaign Fairness Act. Elec. Code ch. 253, subch.F (as added by S.B.94, Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 763, Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3956, effective June 16, 1995).

SUMMARY

A judge may use political contributions to pay the expenses of a social event sponsored by a bar association as long as the payments are in connection with a judge's activities as a candidate or officeholder.