

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE
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JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION ISSUES
PUBLIC ADMONISHMENT OF JUDGE HENRY J. WALSH

The Commission on Judicial Performance has publicly admonished Judge Henry J. Walsh of the Ventura County Superior Court. The public admonishment concerns Judge Walsh engaging in a pattern of failing to disclose campaign contributions of attorneys who appeared before him after his reelection in 2012.

During his campaign for reelection, and after he was reelected, Judge Walsh received contributions of \$100 or more from more than 150 attorneys. After the election, Judge Walsh failed to disclose the campaign contributions of attorneys when they appeared before him.

Judge Walsh did not believe he was required to disclose contributions after the election. The commission noted that the judge's position severely restricts the extent of disclosure of campaign contributions and leads to the result that post-election contributions would never be disclosed. The commission found the judge's position to be contrary to the intent of the disclosure requirements and the ethics opinions available to the judge. The commission determined that Judge Walsh's conduct was inconsistent with his duty to disclose on the record information reasonably relevant to the question of disqualification, as set forth in canon 3E(2), and inconsistent with Code of Civil Procedure section 170.1, subdivision (a)(9)(C), requiring disclosure of campaign contributions.

Judge Walsh's failure to disclose campaign contributions after the election deprived the parties and attorneys appearing before him of information to which they were entitled. Even if the amount of a campaign contribution does not require disqualification, the perception of an impartial and independent judiciary is fundamental to public respect for the judicial system and rule of law. In turn, public confidence in a fair and impartial judiciary depends on a transparent process through disclosure of information that may reasonably be relevant to the question of disqualification. Particularly with respect to campaign contributions, failure to disclose can give rise to public distrust in the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

The public admonishment is available on the commission's website at <http://cjp.ca.gov> (under "Pending Cases - Press Releases & Documents" and "Public Discipline & Decisions") and at the commission's office. Judge Walsh is represented by attorney Edith R. Matthai of Los Angeles.

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The commission is composed of three judges, two lawyers and six public members. The chairperson is Honorable Erica R. Yew of the Santa Clara County Superior Court.

For further information about the Commission on Judicial Performance, see the commission's website at <http://cjp.ca.gov>.