

RE: THE 2025 CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT AND ACCOUNTABILITY*A.M. No. 25-04-04-SC, November 11, 2025*Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/a-m-no-25-04-04/>

As the visible personification of law and justice, members of the Judiciary bear the heavy burden of public scrutiny and are therefore held to higher standards of conduct. Every act or omission of a justice or a judge, whether part of one's official duties or not, is viewed closely and critically by the public at large. These acts or omissions then form part of the overall perception not only of the justice or judge in question, but more importantly, the entire Judiciary and reflects, deservedly or not, its capacity to administer justice.

In order to enforce these stringent standards, and pursuant to its mandate under Section 6, Article VIII of the Constitution, the Court issued the Code of Judicial Conduct in 1989 and the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary in 2004.

These issuances were "founded on a universal recognition that a competent, independent[,] and impartial [J]udiciary is essential if the courts are to fulfill their role in upholding constitutionalism and the rule of law, and that public confidence in the judicial system and in the moral authority and integrity of the [J]udiciary is of utmost importance in a modern democratic society."

Nevertheless, the law, technology, and socioeconomic structures have rapidly evolved since the promulgation of these issuances. These changes have demanded more from the members of the Judiciary and even raised higher standards of conduct expected of judicial officers. Notably, justices and judges now have an online presence, necessitating provisions in the code of conduct pertaining to social media. The advent of artificial intelligence has also impacted the work of justices and judges.

Relative to these developments, the Court, on June 28, 2022 issued a Resolution in A.M. No. 22-04-26-SC, approving the Strategic Plan for Judicial Innovations (SPJI) 2022-2027, an action plan to address institutional challenges in the Judiciary and to ensure that the administration of justice is timely and fair, transparent and accountable, equal and inclusive, and technologically adaptive.

Relatedly, the Court issued Memorandum Order No. 11-2023, dated January 24, 2023, creating the Sub-Committee for the Review of the New Code of Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary (NCJC) tasked with reviewing, updating, and modernizing the NCJC. The Sub-Committee conducted regional consultation caravans in Iloilo, Lipa, Davao, Tacloban, General Santos, and Metro Manila to gather suggestions and comments from relevant stakeholders, including justices, judges, court officials and personnel, government lawyers, private practitioners, the academe, law students, and the community organizations.

After the regional consultation caravans, the Sub-Committee conducted a comprehensive final review and writeshop on March 26 to 27, 2025, in Metro Manila to discuss the comments and feedback received during the regional consultations and to finalize the proposed provisions in the new code of conduct, to be called the 2025 Code of Judicial Conduct and Accountability, for approval by the Court En Banc.

FOR THESE REASONS, the Court hereby resolves to APPROVE A.M. No. 25-04-04-SC, titled "2025 Code of Judicial Conduct and Accountability."

A.M. No. 25-04-04-SC shall take effect after 15 calendar days after its publication in the Official Gazette or two newspapers of general circulation and posting on the Supreme Court website.

SO ORDERED.

Gesmundo, C.J., Leonen, S.J., Caguioa, Inting, Zalameda, Gaerlan, Rosario, J. Lopez, Dimaampao, Marquez, Kho, Jr., and Villanueva, JJ., concur.

Hernando[*] and Lazaro-Javier,[*] JJ., on official business, but left their votes.

[*] On official business.

EN BANC

A.M. No. 25-04-04-SC

**THE 2025 CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY**

WHEREAS, Section 1, Article XI of the 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates that public office is a public trust and that all public officers, including members of the Judiciary, shall "at all times, be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives";

WHEREAS, Section 6, Article VIII of the 1987 Constitution vests the Supreme Court with administrative supervision over all courts and the personnel thereof;

WHEREAS, Section 7(3), Article VIII of the 1987 Constitution mandates that members of the Judiciary must be persons of proven competence, integrity, probity, and independence;

WHEREAS, it has been over two decades since the adoption of the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary on April 27, 2004, which embodied the principles espoused in the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct, to which the Philippine Supreme Court is a signatory;

WHEREAS, the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary was founded on a universal recognition that a competent, independent, and impartial Judiciary is essential if the courts are to fulfill their role in upholding constitutionalism and the rule of law, and that public confidence in the judicial system and in the moral authority and integrity of the Judiciary is of utmost importance in a modern democratic society;

WHEREAS, since the promulgation of the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary, there have been significant developments in law, technology, and socioeconomic structures that have affected how members of the Judiciary perform their official duties;

WHEREAS, there is now an urgent need to revise the New Code of Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary in order to adapt to these developments;

WHEREAS, on June 28, 2022, the Court issued a Resolution in A.M. No. 22-04-26-SC, approving the Strategic Plan for Judicial Innovations (SPJI) 2022-2027, an action plan to address institutional challenges in the Judiciary and to ensure that the administration of justice is timely and fair, transparent and accountable, equal and inclusive, and technologically adaptive;

WHEREAS, under the SPJI, pursuing a campaign for ethical responsibility is one of the activities under the outcome of Efficiency;

WHEREAS, through Memorandum Order No. 11-2023, dated January 24, 2023, the Supreme Court of the Philippines created the Sub-Committee for the Review of the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary;

WHEREAS, the Sub-Committee conducted a series of regional information and consultation campaigns to gather suggestions and comments from relevant stakeholders, including justices, judges, court officials and personnel, government lawyers, private practitioners, the academe, law students, and community organizations;

NOW, THEREFORE, acting on the recommendation of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee for the Review of the New Code of Judicial Conduct and Accountability for the Philippine Judiciary, the Court resolves to APPROVE the "2025 Code of Judicial Conduct and Accountability."

The 2025 Code of Judicial Conduct and Accountability shall take effect after 15 calendar days after its publication in the Official Gazette or two newspapers of general circulation and posting on the Supreme Court website.

November 11, 2025, Manila, Philippines.

(Sgd.) ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Chief Justice

(Sgd.) MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Senior Associate Justice

(Sgd.) ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice

(On official business, but left his vote)
(Sgd.) RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice

(On official business, but left her vote)
(Sgd.) AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) RICARDO R. ROSARIO

Associate Justice

(Sgd.) JHOSEP Y. LOPEZ

Associate Justice

(Sgd.) JAPAR B. DIMAAMPAO

Associate Justice

(Sgd.) JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ

Associate Justice

(Sgd.) ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.

Associate Justice

(Sgd.) MARIA FILOMENA D. SINGH

Associate Justice

(Sgd.) RAUL B. VILLANUEVA

Associate Justice

2025 CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

PREAMBLE

The rule of law is the bedrock of our democracy. In ensuring a democratic way of life for the people, a judge, as the principal dispenser of justice, must uphold the rule of law.

Constitutionally, a judge must be of proven competence, integrity, probity, and independence to qualify for the office. As the visible representation of the Judiciary, a judge's professional and personal conduct should inspire confidence in the institution. Public confidence is fostered not only by action but also by perception. A judge must, therefore, not only behave ethically but must likewise be perceived to act ethically.

The judicial office is a public trust. As such, a judge shall be accountable to the people. Judicial accountability, in turn, rests on the highest standard of integrity.

Integrity is the amalgamation of the values every judge must possess: independence, fidelity, impartiality, propriety, equality, competence, diligence, and accountability.[1] These values are the measure of a judge's integrity and ethical responsibility.

A judge who lacks any of these values is unworthy of the position.

This Code shall apply to all incumbent justices and judges in the Philippine Judiciary, except as otherwise provided herein.

CANON I

Independence

Judicial independence is the performance of duties free from any undue or unwarranted influence. It is vital to the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the guarantee of a fair trial. It is likewise essential to the promotion and preservation of confidence in the judicial system. Hence, a judge has the solemn duty to uphold and exemplify judicial independence in both its individual and institutional aspects.

SECTION 1. Merit-based adjudication. – In the exercise of judicial duties, a judge must act independently, relying on one's own appreciation of the facts and evidence and interpretation of the law. A judge should reject influences from political, family, social, professional, or other relationships, as well as inducements, pressure, or threats from any source, including but not limited to the threat or fear of being administratively, civilly, or criminally charged.

SECTION 2. Duty to uphold judicial independence. – A judge shall protect judicial independence by observing measures to safeguard the performance of judicial responsibilities.

SECTION 3. Role in raising public awareness of independence. – In the performance of judicial functions and when appropriate, a judge may participate in activities that raise public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the importance of judicial independence and its impact on the fair and effective administration of justice.

SECTION 4. Role in the promotion of public confidence. – Judicial independence is essential to promote public confidence. To this end, a judge shall exemplify and uphold the highest standards of judicial conduct and strictly observe the guarantees of a fair trial.

SECTION 5. Independence from coequal branches. – A judge shall avoid inappropriate connections with the executive and legislative branches of government, whether on the national or local levels, and must also appear to be free from them, to allay any suspicion that such connection will affect judicial independence.

Nevertheless, assistance from other government branches may be accepted, as allowed by law.

Until such time that the funding is allocated under the Judiciary appropriation of the annual budget, a judge may receive financial assistance from other government branches, including allowances, as allowed by the Local Government Code. In all cases, such financial assistance shall be restricted to work-related activities.

When the assistance is in the form of equipment, furniture, supplies, or like items, a judge shall ensure that it is received solely in the name of the Judiciary and for its sole benefit. For assistance in the form of personnel complement, a judge shall ensure that confidentiality of information or records is strictly maintained and safeguarded.

A judge shall observe the pertinent laws and rules in the receipt and documentation of the assistance.[2]

SECTION 6. Freedom from influence from other members of the Judiciary. – The performance of judicial functions is a judge's sole responsibility. A judge is mandated to render decisions and orders consistent with the facts and the law on which these are based.

A judge shall reject and report any exertion of influence, pressure, or inducement from any former or incumbent member, official, or employee of the Judiciary to the appropriate authorities.

SECTION 7. Freedom from influence of parties. – A judge shall exhibit independence from the parties involved in the disputes that a judge is tasked to adjudicate.

SECTION 8. Prohibition against promotion or influence of private interests. – A judge shall not use the judicial office to promote private interests or create, or permit others to create, an impression that certain individuals have

influence over the judge.

SECTION 9. Security threats jeopardizing independence. – A judge shall remain vigilant against any attempt to compromise or undermine the independence of the Judiciary through the threat of harm from any source. Recognizing that such threats against a judge may jeopardize judicial independence, a judge shall promptly report any such threat to the Office of the Judiciary Marshals and the proper authorities.[3]

CANON II

Fidelity

Fidelity refers to a judge's fealty to their role in the administration of justice and to the institution, in ensuring the efficient and effective operation of the court.

SECTION 1. Fealty to the Constitution and the law. – A judge shall uphold the Constitution and the laws of the land.

In case of doubt in the interpretation and application of the laws, a judge shall be guided both by the letter and the spirit of the law. In the absence or insufficiency of an applicable law, a judge shall be guided by what is right, just, and fair.

SECTION 2. Fealty to the role as a judge. – A judge shall be faithful to one's role in the administration of justice. In the discharge of official functions, a judge shall ensure that one's conduct is above reproach and is perceived to be so.

SECTION 3. Fealty to the institution. – A judge shall faithfully discharge one's functions so as to inspire confidence in the Judiciary. Justice must not merely be done but must also be seen to be done.

SECTION 4. Duty to encourage settlement. – When the laws or rules allow, a judge shall, with due regard to the rights of the parties, encourage them, in a manner free from any appearance of bias or coercion, to arrive at an equitable compromise or settlement at any stage of the proceedings but before the finality of judgment.

SECTION 5. Administrative duties. – A judge shall ensure the efficient and effective operation of the court in accordance with pertinent administrative rules.

A judge shall report to the assigned court or station and render service during the prescribed working hours and shall likewise ensure that all court personnel, regardless of the nature of appointment, do the same.

SECTION 6. Duty to ensure the integrity of court proceedings. – A judge shall not tolerate conduct by lawyers appearing before the court and court personnel that impedes the proceedings or is an affront to the dignity of the court. When appropriate, a judge shall initiate disciplinary action against such lawyer or court personnel.

SECTION 7. Duty to uphold professionalism in the Judiciary. – A judge shall uphold professionalism and merit-based appointments and promotions in the Judiciary. A judge shall not endorse, support, or recommend the employment, promotion, or advancement of an unqualified applicant to any position in the Judiciary.

CANON III

Impartiality

Impartiality means fairness in the discharge of judicial functions without favor for or bias against any party to the proceeding. It applies not only to the decision itself but also to the process by which the decision is made.

SECTION 1. Duty to be impartial. – A judge shall perform all duties without fear or favor, bias or prejudice.

SECTION 2. Appearance of impartiality. – In the discharge of duties, a judge shall not only be impartial but must

also appear to be impartial to a reasonable observer, who is referred to as a reasonable, fair-minded, and informed person.[4]

SECTION 3. Preference for or bias against lawyers and litigants. – A judge shall not give or appear to give unwarranted preferential or special treatment to any lawyer or litigant. Neither shall a judge exhibit prejudice or bias against any lawyer or litigant.

SECTION 4. Conduct and statement of a judge to promote impartiality. – A judge shall ensure that one's conduct and statements, both in and out of court, inspire and maintain public confidence in the impartiality of the judge.

SECTION 5. Ex parte communication. – A judge shall not engage in ex parte communication in whatever form, platform, or medium.

Ex parte communication, as used in this Canon, is any communication outside the official court proceeding between a judge and a litigant, lawyer, or any interested party involving any issue pending before the judge without informing, and in the absence of, the other party.

SECTION 6. Prohibition against inappropriate interaction or association with lawyers and litigants. – A judge shall refrain from interacting or associating with litigants or their lawyers, in whatever form, platform, or medium, or on any occasion, when such interaction or association will tend to undermine or compromise the judge's impartiality, or give the appearance of undermining or compromising the judge's impartiality.

SECTION 7. Conduct of proceedings. – A judge shall ensure that court proceedings are conducted in an orderly and fair manner, without unnecessary disruptions.

When warranted, a judge may take an active part in examining a witness to determine their credibility, as well as the truth of their testimony, without manifesting bias or prejudice.

SECTION 8. Duty to refrain from or avoid financial and business dealings. – A judge shall refrain from financial and business dealings that tend to reflect adversely on the court's impartiality, interfere with the proper performance of judicial functions, or increase involvement with lawyers or persons likely to come before the court.

SECTION 9. Judge to minimize potential for inhibition. – A judge shall, so far as reasonable, conduct themselves as to minimize the occasions in which it will be necessary for them to inhibit from hearing or deciding cases.

SECTION 10. Prohibition against improper comments. – During the pendency of a case or when there is a likelihood that a case could come before them, a judge shall not knowingly make any comment in and out of court that could reasonably be expected or perceived to affect its outcome, impair the fairness of the process, or diminish the public's confidence in the court's impartiality.

SECTION 11. Mandatory inhibition. – A judge shall inhibit from participating in any proceeding under any of the following when:

(a)

The judge has gained personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;

(b)

The judge previously served as counsel or was a material witness, in the matter in controversy;

(c)

The counsel or witness in a pending matter before the judge:

(i)

is the judge's former associate. An associate shall include former partners or coworkers in an office, whether public or private; and

(ii)

the said associate had already been engaged in the action during their association;^[5]

(d)

The judge, or a member of the judge's family, has a financial interest in the outcome of the matter in controversy;

(e)

The judge served as executor, administrator, guardian, or trustee in the case or matter in controversy, or with respect to the subject matter thereof;

(f)

The judge's ruling in a lower court or that of the judge's relative within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity is the subject of the present review;

(g)

The judge is related by consanguinity or affinity to a party litigant within the sixth civil degree or to counsel within the fourth civil degree; or

(h)

The judge's spouse or child has a financial interest as heir, legatee, creditor, fiduciary, or the like in the subject matter in controversy, or in a juridical party to the proceeding, or has any other interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceedings.

SECTION 12. Voluntary inhibition. – A judge may, in the exercise of sound discretion, inhibit from a proceeding for just or valid reasons other than the grounds for mandatory inhibition.

In case of voluntary inhibition, the judge shall take into consideration the following:

(a)

whether a judge is unable to decide the matter impartially or if it will appear to a reasonable observer that the judge is unable to decide the matter impartially;

(b)

whether the matter giving rise to the possibility of inhibition is serious as to affect the fairness and undermine the integrity of the proceedings; and

(c)

whether there is no other court that can be assigned to handle the case or because of urgent circumstances, failure to act could lead to a miscarriage of justice.

As soon as the judge becomes aware of circumstances that may affect the judge's impartiality, the judge shall disclose the same to the parties. After the ground has been disclosed and the parties agree, the judge may continue with the proceedings. The agreement shall be embodied in an order.

SECTION 13. Duty to state reason for inhibition. – In every order of inhibition, a judge shall state the reason therefor and furnish copies to the parties; and, for the trial courts, the executive judge, the Office of the Court Administrator, and the Office of the Chief Justice; and for the tertiary-level courts, the presiding justice and the Office of the Chief Justice.[6]

CANON IV

Propriety

Propriety and the appearance of propriety encompass a judge's conduct, behavior, and attitude, in whatever form, platform, or medium, in accord with the highest standard of behavior expected of judges in their public and private capacities to inspire and maintain public confidence in the judicial system. A judge shall live modestly and avoid any ostentatious display of wealth.

SECTION 1. Overall conduct and personal restrictions. – As a subject of constant public scrutiny because of their esteemed position, a judge must freely and willingly embrace personal restrictions that may be commonly viewed as burdensome by an ordinary citizen. In particular, a judge shall conduct oneself in a manner consistent with the dignity of the judicial office.

SECTION 2. Highest ethical standards. – A judge's conduct shall be beyond reproach and conform to the highest ethical standards.

A judge must be aware of prevailing social norms. A judge shall refrain from committing any act, in or out of court, that may cause dishonor or ridicule to, or reasonably tend to tarnish the image and dignity of, the judicial office.

SECTION 3. Avoiding publicity. – A judge shall not seek publicity for self-promotion and vainglory.

Self-promotion includes actions taken to elevate one's public image for personal gain or advantage. A judge shall avoid making claims of expertise and ensure that any statement of qualifications is objective and factual.

Vainglory is inordinate pride in one's achievements.

SECTION 4. Use of appropriate language. – A judge shall use only dignified, gender-fair and child- and culturally-sensitive language at all times.

SECTION 5. Judicial temperament. – A judge shall, at all times, exhibit the judicial temperament required of the position as reflected in the ability to effectively and respectfully communicate with counsel, witnesses, litigants, court staff, and other court users, as well as the willingness to listen to and consider all sides of a debatable position. A judge shall strive to be patient, open-minded, courteous, tactful, courageous, resolute, compassionate, and humble.

SECTION 6. Proper decorum and appearance. – A judge shall observe proper decorum in keeping with the dignity of the judicial office.

A judge's attire shall at all times be consistent with the dignity of the judicial office, with due respect to the person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

A judge shall wear their black judicial robe during official court proceedings as a symbol of judicial authority, unless otherwise provided.

SECTION 7. Personal relations of a judge with lawyers. – A judge shall, in their personal relations with individual members of the legal profession, especially those who regularly appear in their court, avoid situations which might reasonably give rise to the suspicion or appearance of closeness or favoritism, to maintain the integrity and impartiality of the judicial office.

A judge shall not meet in private with any litigant, lawyer, or person to discuss an interest in any case or action, whether potential, current, or terminated, subject to the rule on ex parte communications.

SECTION 8. Balancing the requirements of judicial office and family interests. – As the acceptance of judicial office has implications on a judge's family, a judge shall exercise sound discretion in balancing the requirements of judicial office and the legitimate demands of their private lives and family relations.

SECTION 9. Family interests affecting judicial duties. – A judge shall instruct their family members not to invoke or use the judge's position, nor convey any impression of influence over the judge in order to secure benefits, obtain favors, or, in any, way advance the family member's personal, professional, or financial concerns or interests.

A judge is expected to know the professional or financial concerns of their family members insofar as they may be relevant to the discharge of their judicial functions and the necessity of inhibition. When the circumstances indicate that a judge was in the position to know or ought to have known such concerns, the lack of knowledge may not be raised as an excuse for the failure of a judge to inhibit in the proper case.

A judge's family includes a judge's spouse or partner, their children, the spouses or partners of their children, their parents, and the parents of their spouse or partner.

SECTION 10. Family engaged in political activities. – When any member of a judge's family within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity is engaged in politics or politically-related activities, a judge shall recognize that such activities of family members may adversely affect the public perception of their judicial office, and, thus, a judge shall refrain from activities that might compromise one's judicial independence and fairness.

Should a case arise where a judge's independence or fairness is placed into question due to a family member's elective position or political activity or affiliation, a judge shall consider whether inhibition is appropriate.

SECTION 11. Use of residence by lawyers in the family. – A judge shall not allow their residence to serve as the law office or the law office address of other lawyers in the family, or be used to receive and confer with their clients and potential litigants. In all cases involving a common residence of a judge and other lawyers in the

family, a judge shall avoid inappropriate engagement in or involvement with the professional work of the lawyers, including discussing the merits of a case, providing legal opinions, or intervening with strategic approaches.

This provision shall also apply to members of the family who, not being judges or lawyers, are engaged in legal or law-related professions.

SECTION 12. Exercise of freedoms compatible with office. – A judge shall exercise their freedom of expression, religion or belief, association, and assembly in a manner compatible with the dignity of their judicial office and the impartiality and independence of the Judiciary.

A judge shall consider the possible consequences and perceptions likely to arise from the exercise of these freedoms and seek to minimize the situations in which they may eventually be called upon to inhibit themselves.

SECTION 13. Freedom of expression. – A judge may express personal views and beliefs on matters of government and politics, religion and culture, and social and public interest, ensuring that these do not interfere with the independent and fair discharge of judicial functions, nor in any way compromise the appearance of independence and impartiality of the judge and the Judiciary.

In all cases, a judge shall:

(a)

abide by the statutory prohibition against partisan politics, including openly endorsing political candidates or contributing to political parties;

(b)

not publicly engage in any form of debate that would identify one as biased or prejudiced for or against any potentially litigable issue;

(c)

not allow religious and other beliefs to dictate the course of their adjudication, ensuring that every decision is strictly in accord with law and the evidence on record;

(d)

not impose on the court and its users any form of religious practice;

(e)

not make statements or comments in any forum, platform, or medium, including but not limited to public appearances, academic lectures, online platforms, or social media, that might affect the outcome of a proceeding before or could come before them, or that might diminish public confidence in the impartiality of the Judiciary;

(f)

not comment nor provide any opinion or forecast sub judice on any matter pending before other courts, tribunals, or agencies; and

(g)

not engage in other analogous actions.

SECTION 14. Freedom of association. – Subject to the limitations imposing a level of mindfulness, sensitivity, and restraint in their actions, a judge is free to join:

(a)

associations or assemblies of judges, or participate in other organizations representing the interests of judges;

(b)

organizations of lawyers; and

(c)

associations devoted to their particular nonlegal or nonjudicial interests.

In these associations, a judge shall:

(a)

avoid actions that will reasonably raise suspicion that they are partial to cases handled or represented by members of the associations or organizations they are a part of;

(b)

minimize the risk of conflict with judicial duties and reduce the occasions that call for inhibition;

(c)

refrain from actions that may imply a capacity to exert influence over another in their judicial duties;

(d)

prioritize the judicial office and duties over their responsibilities in the associations; and

(e)

guard the integrity of their office and ensure that the same is not taken advantage of or compromised in any manner by such membership.

SECTION 15. Work priority and personal interests. – In general, a judge has the right to pursue personal,

socio-civic, academic, financial, or other lawful interests, provided these do not interfere with the proper and efficient discharge of one's judicial duties, nor detract from the dignity of the office as to erode the confidence of the public in the judiciary.

In particular, a judge shall not capitalize on one's position, influence, or prestige to advance personal interests.

SECTION 16. Academic interests. – A judge may pursue further studies, teach subject to the appropriate guidelines, write books and articles, deliver lectures, and engage in analogous activities, provided that these do not detract from their principal duties. They shall always be mindful not to indulge in self-promotion.

SECTION 17. Socio-civic interests. – A judge may participate in socio-civic or nonprofit activities, causes, or advocacies in human rights, gender, or environmental issues, and the like, provided that when a contentious or potentially litigable issue emerges, they shall observe utmost prudence not to take sides, or create the appearance of taking sides, and in the proper cases, consider inhibition.

SECTION 18. Financial interests. – A judge may maintain financial interests and investments but shall not take any active or managerial position in any entity, including family-owned businesses, nor take advantage of their position or the resources of the judicial office for business advancement, whether in their own behalf or in behalf of other parties.

A judge shall conscientiously avoid involvement in financial dealings and transactions that may give rise to occasions of conflict of interest.

SECTION 19. Prohibited acts and activities. – A judge shall not:

(a)

engage in the private practice of law;

(b)

engage in any form of gambling, or enter, stay, or play in any gambling establishment;^[7]

(c)

make inappropriate use of the official letterhead for personal causes or for purposes that redound to the private benefit of the judge or their family;

(d)

solicit or accept, directly or indirectly, any gift, bequest, or favor of any value on any occasion, except unsolicited gifts of small or insignificant value as a mere token of gratitude or friendship according to local customs and usage;

(e)

lend or borrow money or property from a lawyer or litigant with a case pending before the judge;

(f)

acquire, by assignment or purchase, even at a public or judicial auction, directly or indirectly, the property and rights in litigation or levied upon on execution; and

(g)

engage in any activity analogous to the foregoing.

SECTION 20. Allowable emoluments; recognitions. – Subject to law and to any legal requirements of public disclosure, a judge may receive per diem, honoraria, recognition, appreciation, royalty, or award, as appropriate to the occasion on which it is given, provided that such might not reasonably be perceived as intended to influence the judge in the performance of judicial duties, or otherwise give rise to an appearance of impropriety or partiality.

SECTION 21. Confidential information. – A judge shall not use or disclose confidential information acquired in their judicial capacity for any purpose not related to their judicial duties.

Confidential information refers to information not yet made a matter of public record relating to pending cases, such as drafts, internal memoranda, or record of internal deliberations, and similar papers. These include the judge's notes or research papers, unless referred to in the decision already promulgated, as well as matters required by law to be kept confidential.

A judge shall seek the authority of the Office of the Court Administrator for trial courts, or the presiding justice of the tertiary court before accepting an invitation or complying with a subpoena or other compulsory process issued by another court or branch of government in connection with the performance of their judicial functions.

Rules on the Use of Social Media

SECTION 22. Responsible use of social media by a judge. – A judge shall use social media or other digital or online platforms with caution and circumspection, fully aware of its universality and public accessibility, always conscious that inappropriate social media behavior may diminish public confidence in the judge and in the judicial system.

In the exercise of one's freedom of expression, a judge who uses social media platforms is reminded that in so doing, they do not shed their status as judges. As the visible personification of the law and justice, they are subject to the highest standard of conduct and, thus, must be cautious and circumspect in their engagement on these platforms.

SECTION 23. Knowledge of risks, incidents, and characteristics of the use of social media. – A judge shall have the duty to understand the benefits, privacy and security concerns, risks, and ethical implications of their use of social media.

A judge shall review their privacy settings and be aware of and take into consideration the practical aspects of online forms of expression and association.

SECTION 24. Limitations on use of social media. – A judge shall not engage or use any form of expression which tends to violate, or has the effect of, violating the sub judice principle, provoke or inflame divisive and contentious issues of public concern, or project an image not compatible with the dignity of their position.

A judge shall not use in their online activities any language, image, video, or the like that are false, malicious, vulgar, scandalous, intemperate, abusive, or discriminatory. Neither shall a judge knowingly or maliciously post,

share, upload or otherwise disseminate false or unverified statements, claims, or commit any other act of disinformation.

At all times, a judge shall exercise prudence when engaging with others online, keeping in mind that such engagements even if made in small or private circles may be circulated to other groups or in other platforms.

SECTION 25. Recreational use of social media. – A judge shall ensure that their recreational use of social media shall not adversely affect their performance of judicial duties with competence and diligence.

SECTION 26. Refraining from using social media to advance financial interests. – A judge shall refrain from using their social media accounts to directly or indirectly advance their own or any third party's financial interests.

SECTION 27. Use of real names and pseudonyms in social media. – A judge may use their real names and disclose their rank or position on social media provided that it does not violate the Canon on Propriety. A judge may use a pseudonym if allowed by the social media site, unless doing so will circumvent the law or the provisions of the Code. In using a pseudonym, a judge shall be mindful that their real identity may nevertheless be known to or discovered by other users.

SECTION 28. Use of social media in relation to pending cases. – A judge shall refrain from employing social media to gather information about a particular party, issue, or incident in a pending case that are not part of the evidence presented before the court and may potentially influence their decision in a case.

SECTION 29. Handling abuses online. – A judge shall refrain from responding to abuses or harassment made online directed against the judge. A judge may instead resort to the remedies provided for under the applicable laws or rules for their protection and security.

CANON V

Equality

Equality before the courts means fair and equal treatment in both adjudicative and administrative matters regardless of nationality or ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, age, religion, educational attainment, marital, social, or financial status, and other similar factors.

SECTION 1. Equal treatment by a judge. – A judge shall accord colleagues, court personnel, and court users the same level of respect, attention, and sensitivity.

SECTION 2. Avoidance of stereotyping. – A judge shall refrain from stereotyping anyone based on their circumstances. Neither shall a judge exhibit conduct or use language that perpetuates discriminatory stereotypes.

SECTION 3. Equal treatment by court personnel and court users. – A judge shall direct the court personnel and any individual under their supervision or control to treat everyone equally. Appropriate action shall be taken by the judge against anyone who discriminates against or extends undue favor toward any individual.

SECTION 4. Permissible differential treatment. – In ensuring equal access to court proceedings and remedies, a judge shall make reasonable adjustments to accommodate vulnerable persons, to the extent allowed by existing laws and rules.

A vulnerable person is one who is at a higher risk of harm than others, including, but not limited to, children, women, the elderly, the homeless, persons with disability, persons deprived of liberty, human rights victims, victims of domestic violence, victims of armed conflict, those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, or those who belong to racial or ethnic minorities.

SECTION 5. Equal access to court proceedings and remedies. – A judge shall ensure equal access to court

proceedings and remedies for all individuals, which includes reasonable adjustments to accommodate those with communication barriers, language difficulty, distinct religious practices and beliefs, and physical inability to attend court proceedings, in accordance with existing laws and rules.

CANON VI

Competence and Diligence

Competence and diligence encompass a judge's knowledge, skills, values, and personal qualities necessary to efficiently and effectively perform their noble role of dispensing justice fairly and objectively.

Competence is the ability to perform adjudicative and administrative functions efficiently and effectively.

Diligence is the consistent and earnest effort of a judge to discharge their adjudicative and administrative functions in a manner that prevents delay, oppression, and injustice.

SECTION 1. Requirement of highest professional competence and diligence. – A judge shall be faithful to one's official duties and maintain the highest standard of professional competence and diligence.

SECTION 2. Commitment to judicial duties. – A judge shall devote and pursue their professional activities in a manner that is consistent with the proper discharge of their judicial functions and responsibilities, which include not only the writing of decisions, but also other tasks relevant to the judicial office.

The adjudicative functions of a judge shall take precedence over all other activities.

SECTION 3. Decision-making. – A judge shall personally write all decisions and resolutions based on the facts and laws, rules, and jurisprudence.

SECTION 4. Duty to ensure speedy disposition of cases. – In the discharge of judicial functions, a judge shall adhere to the prescribed periods to act or decide as set forth in the Constitution, the law and rules. A judge shall be responsible for the prompt and efficient disposition of cases.

SECTION 5. Continuing judicial career enhancement. – To maintain and enhance professional competence, a judge shall take reasonable steps to improve one's knowledge, skills, and values necessary for the proper and efficient performance of their duties.

A judge shall keep abreast of the relevant developments in the field of law, including international law and norms. They must be proficient in the use of technological tools that aid in the discharge of their adjudicative and administrative functions.

A judge may utilize artificial intelligence tools only for research of relevant legal authorities, but must always verify the sources before properly citing them in their decisions.

SECTION 6. Ethical use of technology and artificial intelligence. – A judge's use of technological tools and innovations shall be in accord with the fundamental rights of court users and court personnel, as well as ethical and professional standards, as may be promulgated by the Court. A judge shall exercise care and prudence in the use of technology and artificial intelligence, keeping in mind that these are merely tools to aid them in the exercise of their judicial duties, and must never substitute the judge's own discernment and discretion, especially in the writing of decisions and resolutions.

SECTION 7. Responsible and efficient court management. – A judge, in one's regular or acting capacity, shall be responsible for, and efficient in, the management of their court, its cases, properties and personnel, to ensure transparent, effective, and prompt delivery of court services.

SECTION 8. Duty to ensure prompt, orderly, and efficient court proceedings. – A judge shall ensure the prompt, orderly, and efficient flow of court proceedings, and avoid delay in the disposition of cases.

In all court proceedings, a judge shall maintain order and decorum and shall be patient, dignified, and courteous at all times, using appropriate language, and require similar conduct from court personnel, lawyers and other court users.

SECTION 9. Referral of concerns and recommendations to proper authorities. – A judge shall refer concerns and recommendations relating to court operations only through the proper court authorities.

CANON VII

Accountability

The Code embodies the ethical standards which all judges must observe in their professional and private conduct. In accordance with these standards, judges shall be held accountable for their failure to abide by the duties and obligations imposed on them by their oath and office.

SECTION 1. How instituted. –

(1) Motu proprio against those who are not members of the Supreme Court. – Proceedings for the discipline of the Presiding Justices and Associate Justices of the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan, the Court of Tax Appeals, the Shari'ah High Court, and Judges of the First and Second Level Courts, including the Shari'ah District and Circuit Courts, may be instituted by the Judicial Integrity Office (JIO) on its own initiative, or upon the directive of the Supreme Court, or by referral from the appropriate offices of the tertiary level courts, or any administrative body, such as but not limited to the Civil Service Commission, the Commission on Audit, the Office of the Ombudsman, or the Department of Justice. Any report or other document that forms the basis of the action shall be made part of the records.

(2) By complaint against those who are not members of the Supreme Court. – Disciplinary proceedings against those mentioned in Section 1(1) of this Canon may also be filed with the JIO by any interested person, either through:

(a) a verified complaint, supported by affidavits of persons who have personal knowledge of the facts alleged therein or by authentic documents which may substantiate the allegations; or

(b) an anonymous complaint, provided, that its material averments may be readily verified, or substantiated by competent evidence, including public records.

In every case, the written verified or anonymous complaint shall state, clearly and concisely, the acts or omissions constituting the administrative offense under this Canon.

If the verified or anonymous complaint is filed directly with the Supreme Court or with any court or office under the Judiciary, the same shall be immediately referred to the JIO as if it was originally filed before the latter, reckoned from the date the JIO receives the complaint.

(3) By complaint against members of the Supreme Court. – Complaints involving graft and corruption and violations of ethical standards, including anonymous complaints, against Members of the Supreme Court shall be filed directly with the Supreme Court and shall be referred to its Committee on Ethics and Ethical Standards. The Committee, after evaluation of the complaint and any evidence in support thereof, shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Supreme Court En Banc.

If the complaint is filed directly with the JIO, it shall be referred to the Supreme Court as if it was originally filed

before the Court, reckoned from the date of the latter's receipt of the complaint.

SECTION 2. Effect of death, retirement, and separation from service to the Proceedings. –

(1) Circumstances already existing prior to the institution of the proceedings. – Disciplinary proceedings may not be instituted against a judge who has already died, retired, resigned or has otherwise been separated from judicial service. However, for compelling reasons, such proceedings may still be instituted notwithstanding the retirement, resignation or separation from judicial service of the judge within twelve (12) months from such retirement, resignation or separation from the service.

(2) Circumstances supervening only during the pendency of the proceedings. – Once disciplinary proceedings have already been instituted, the respondent's supervening resignation, retirement or separation from judicial service shall not preclude or otherwise affect the continuation of the proceedings.

Disciplinary proceedings instituted against a judge who dies during the pendency of the proceedings shall be dismissed with prejudice, but subject to any surviving civil claim against the estate of the deceased or the legal heirs or representatives.

(3) Circumstances not affecting the proceedings; exceptional circumstances. – The desistance of the complainant, settlement, compromises, restitution, withdrawal of the disciplinary action by the complainant, failure of the complainant to prosecute the same, the death of the complainant, the respondent's transfer of residence to a foreign country, or analogous circumstances, shall not interrupt or terminate the investigation and resolution of disciplinary actions conducted by the JIO, unless exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the termination or dismissal of the action, as may be determined and recommended by the JIO to the Supreme Court.

SECTION 3. Action initiated by the Supreme Court or the JIO, verified comment. – In disciplinary proceedings initiated by the JIO, the respondent shall be notified of the relevant acts or omissions and the applicable Canons, and served with a copy of the records, media reports, or other documents used as basis for the disciplinary action. Thereafter, within ten (10) calendar days from notice and service, or any extended period granted by the JIO not exceeding thirty (30) calendar days, the respondent shall file a verified comment, supported by affidavits of persons who have personal knowledge of the facts alleged and/or documents which may substantiate respondent's defenses.

SECTION 4. Initial action when proceedings initiated by complaint; verified comment. – If the action is commenced by a verified or anonymous complaint, and the JIO finds factual basis to proceed, the respondent shall be notified of the relevant acts or omissions and the applicable Canons, and served with a copy of the complaint including its attachments. Within ten (10) calendar days from notice and service, or any extended period granted by the JIO, not exceeding thirty (30) calendar days, the respondent shall be required to file a verified comment, supported by affidavits of persons who have personal knowledge of the facts alleged and/or documents which may substantiate the respondent's defenses.

SECTION 5. Recommendation for outright dismissal of complaint. – If the JIO finds no factual basis to proceed on a verified or anonymous complaint, it shall no longer docket the complaint and instead recommend its outright dismissal.

Moreover, if the complaint, on its face, appears to be baseless and was filed only to harass or embarrass the respondent, or to hinder the respondent's qualification for promotion, or to unduly delay the release of retirement benefits, the JIO shall recommend to the Supreme Court that the complainant be required to show cause why he or she should not be cited in contempt. Furthermore, if the complainant is a lawyer or is assisted by one, the counsel shall also be required to show cause why he or she should not be administratively sanctioned as a member of the

Bar and as an officer of the Court.

Litigants and/or counsel who have a record of filing vexatious or harassment complaints against judges shall be presumed to have abused the court processes and, if found guilty, shall be sanctioned for contempt of court and/or under the pertinent administrative rules, whichever is applicable.

SECTION 6. Consequence of failure to comment. – Failure of the respondent to file a verified comment shall, unless otherwise justified, result in a waiver of participation in the proceedings, and the investigation may proceed based on the complaint and available evidence on record.

SECTION 7. Prohibited motions and pleadings. – The following submissions are prohibited and shall only be noted without action:

(a)

motion for a bill of particulars or for clarification;

(b)

motion to dismiss;

(c)

motion to quash;

(d)

memoranda;

(e)

supplemental pleadings including reply and rejoinder; and

(f)

motion for reconsideration of an order of outright dismissal.

SECTION 8. Administrative case considered as disciplinary action as a member of the bar. – An administrative case against any of those in Section 1(1) of this Canon shall also be treated as a disciplinary action against that individual as a member of the Bar, provided, that the complaint imputes acts or omissions which may constitute violations of the Lawyer's Oath or the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability.

If the complaint fails to include such specific statement, or if the disciplinary proceedings are instituted by the JIO on its own initiative, the respondent, in the interest of due process, must first be required to show cause in this respect before being likewise disciplined as a member of the Bar, as may be warranted by the circumstances of the case.

The disciplinary action against the respondent as a member of the Bar shall be docketed as a separate

administrative case but shall be consolidated with and jointly threshed out in the investigation of the administrative complaint against the respondent as a judge. The JIO shall include the findings and recommendations on said disciplinary action in the "Report" submitted to the Supreme Court.

SECTION 9. Preventive suspension of respondent. – The Supreme Court may, on its own initiative or upon recommendation of the JIO, for compelling reasons, order the preventive suspension of the respondent for a period not exceeding 90 calendar days, unless earlier lifted by the Supreme Court. Upon the lapse of the period of preventive suspension, the respondent shall be automatically reinstated in the service, unless the Supreme Court finds compelling reason to extend the suspension.

In case of several complaints arising from the same act or omission, the respondent may only be preventively suspended once, subject to the preceding paragraph.

If the respondent is exonerated from any administrative liability, a judge shall be paid back salaries, allowances, and other economic benefits for the entire period of preventive suspension.[8]

Preventive suspension may be imposed to enable the JIO or any other office tasked by the Supreme Court to conduct an unhampered formal investigation.

SECTION 10. Withholding of retirement benefits. – If the respondent is retiring or has retired from service, the Supreme Court may, on its own initiative or upon the recommendation of the JIO, order the withholding of the respondent's retirement benefits, in full or in part, for a period not exceeding three (3) months from the effectivity date of their retirement.

If the proceedings are not terminated or resolved within three months from the effectivity date of retirement, the respondent's retirement benefits shall be immediately released, unless it is shown that the delay in the resolution of the case is due to justifiable reasons or is attributable to the retiring judge. If the delay in the resolution of the case is for justifiable reasons or is attributable to the retiring judge, the retirement benefits shall not be released pending full resolution of the case. The release of the respondent's retirement benefits shall be without prejudice to the final outcome of the case.

Retirement benefits may also be withheld, in accordance with the foregoing rules, if the retiring or retired judge is the subject of a pending criminal case where the act or omission involved also constitutes a violation of this Code.

The benefits withheld shall in no case include the judge's terminal or accrued leave benefits.

SECTION 11. Procedure for formal investigation. -

(1) When hearings are not required. – A disciplinary action against any respondent which may already be resolved on the basis of the pleadings, public or court records, or other documents or papers on record without need of a hearing, shall be deemed submitted for the preparation and submission by the JIO of the Report. The JIO shall notify the parties that the case has been submitted for resolution without the need for any hearing.

(2) When hearings are required. – If based on the pleadings of the parties, there is a prima facie case against the respondent which requires a hearing to resolve substantial factual issues raised, the JIO shall set such hearing, with due notice to the parties.

At the hearing, the parties may be heard by themselves and/or through counsel. If after due notice, the complainant or respondent fails to appear, the investigation shall proceed ex parte. Furthermore, the parties may present documentary and/or object evidence, as well as testimonial evidence in the form of judicial affidavits to serve as the direct testimony of the parties and/or their witnesses; after which, they may be cross-examined by the other party or counsel, and may also be examined by the JIO. No hearing shall last more than 30 calendar days

from the date of the first setting.

(3) JIO report. – The Report, containing findings of facts and recommendations, shall be submitted to the Supreme Court within 60 calendar days from the JIO's receipt of said pleadings, records or documents, or termination of the hearing, without prejudice to an extension granted by the Supreme Court for valid reasons, not exceeding 30 calendar days.

SECTION 12. Functions of the JIO during hearings. – The JIO shall have the power to administer oaths to the parties and their witnesses, and to issue subpoenae ad testificandum and duces tecum, conduct ocular inspections and take depositions of the complainant or witnesses, as may be warranted and in accordance with the Rules of Court. The failure or refusal to obey or comply with the subpoena ad testificandum and duces tecum issued by the JIO shall be referred to the Supreme Court for contempt proceedings, which shall proceed independently of the administrative proceedings.

SECTION 13. Referral of fact-finding investigation. – The JIO may delegate the fact-finding investigation of judges to the Office of the Judiciary Marshals (OJM)[9] or to the appropriate offices or committees of the Judiciary.

SECTION 14. Termination of fact-finding investigation. – If the JIO delegates the fact-finding investigation to the OJM or any appropriate office or committee of the Judiciary, the latter shall terminate its investigation and submit its Report to the JIO within 60 calendar days from the date of delegation, without prejudice to an extension granted by the Supreme Court for valid reasons not exceeding 30 calendar days.

SECTION 15. Confidentiality of proceedings and records. – All proceedings, records, and reports in administrative disciplinary investigations shall be confidential and for the exclusive use of the Supreme Court. The decision or resolution in such disciplinary proceeding shall be appended to the personnel file of the concerned judge.

Any unauthorized disclosure or tampering of records shall render the responsible party liable for contempt of court, in addition to other sanctions, as may be provided by law.

SECTION 16. Action of the Supreme Court. – The Supreme Court shall take action on the Report as may be warranted by the facts and the law, this Code, as well as the issuances of the Supreme Court and its Internal Rules.

A copy of the decision or resolution of the Supreme Court shall be served immediately on the parties by electronic mail, and a physical copy shall also be sent by registered mail no later than thirty (30) days from promulgation.

A copy shall likewise be attached to the official records of the respondent in the Office of the Court Administrator and other similar offices in other courts. Such copy shall also be furnished to the Office of the Bar Confidant, and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines.

SECTION 17. Classification of offenses. – Administrative Offenses are classified as serious, less serious, or light offenses.

SECTION 18. Serious offenses. – Serious offenses include:

(a)

Gross misconduct constituting violations of this Code, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials or Employees,[10] or of the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability;

(b)

Conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude;

(c)

Bribery, direct and indirect, and violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act;^[11]

(d)

Falsification of official documents, including making untruthful statements in the certificate of service;

(e)

Serious dishonesty;

(f)

Gross neglect of duty;

(g)

Knowingly rendering an unjust judgment or order;

(h)

Borrowing money or property from lawyers or litigants in a case pending before the court;

(i)

Gross immorality;

(j)

Gross ignorance of the law or procedure;

(k)

Grave abuse of authority, or conduct unbecoming of a judge or prejudicial, vulgar or scandalous conduct that gravely besmirches or taints the reputation of the service;

(l)

Sexual harassment or any other form of sexual abuse;

(m)

Gross insubordination;

(n)

Possession or use of illegal drugs or substances, or possession of drug paraphernalia;^[12]

(o)

Illegal possession of firearms or ammunitions, or explosive devices;

(p)

Unlawful discriminatory acts in the performance of judicial functions, whether based on gender, religion, race, age, or other factors;

(q)

Habitual alcoholism; and

(r)

Other acts analogous or similar to the foregoing.

SECTION 19. Less serious offenses. – Less serious offenses include:

(a)

Simple misconduct constituting violations of this Code, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials or Employees, or the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability;

(b)

Habitual absenteeism or tardiness;

(c)

Unauthorized private practice of law;

(d)

Receiving additional or double compensation, unless specifically authorized by law;

(e)

Partisan political activity;

(f)

Illegal gambling;

(g)

Willful failure to pay just debts and obligations, or taxes due to the government;

(h)

Lending money with exorbitant interest;^[13] and

(i)

Other acts analogous or similar to the foregoing.

SECTION 20. Light offenses. – Light Offenses include:

(a)

Acts that are done during office hours other than official functions, including but not limited to playing computer or mobile games, or excessive recreational use of social media, repeated long lunches or coffee breaks.

(b)

Simple neglect of duty; and

(c)

Other acts analogous or similar to the foregoing.

SECTION 21. Preliminary grievance meeting in complaints involving less serious and light offenses. – In administrative complaints involving less serious and light offenses, where the complainant and the respondent belong to the same office, branch, or court station, the JIO shall not, in the meantime, docket the complaint and instead shall direct them to undergo a mandatory preliminary grievance meeting to explore the possibility of resolving the grievance by discussion. At least two grievance meetings shall be conducted, taking no longer than 60 days from the first meeting.

Should there be a resolution of the complaint, the JIO shall record such resolution and declare the case closed and terminated. If there is no resolution despite the meetings, the complaint shall be docketed and processed like other complaints.

Even if there is a resolution of the grievance, but the Judicial Integrity Officer determines that there is basis to proceed on another ground independent of the grievance, the JIO shall docket that part of the complaint and proceed accordingly.

SECTION 22. Penalties. –

(1) If the respondent is found guilty of a serious offense, any of the following penalties shall be imposed:

(a)

Dismissal from the service, forfeiture of all or part of the benefits as the Supreme Court may determine, and disqualification from reinstatement or appointment to any public office, including in government-owned or -controlled corporations. Provided, however, that the forfeiture of benefits shall in no case include accrued leave credits;

(b)

Suspension from office without salary and other benefits for one year and one day up to three years; and/or

(c)

A fine of PHP 101,000.00 but not more than PHP 500,000.00.

(2) If the respondent is found guilty of a Less Serious Offense, any of the following penalties shall be imposed:

(a)

Suspension from office without salary and other benefits for six months and one day up to one year; and/or

(b)

A fine of PHP 51,000.00 but not more than PHP 100,000.00.

(3) If the respondent is found guilty of a Light Offense, any of the following penalties shall be imposed:

(a)

A fine of PHP 20,000.00 but not more than PHP 50,000.00;

(b)

Suspension from office without salary and other benefits for one (1) month up to six (6) months.

(c)

Censure; or

(d)

Reprimand.

In all instances, when the offense involves money or property owed, which is intrinsically linked to the duties of the respondent, the respondent shall be ordered to return the same.

In case the respondent is found not liable for violating any rule of conduct and no penalty is imposed, the Supreme Court may still issue an admonition or warning. An admonition or warning, however, shall not be considered a penalty under this Code.

SECTION 23. Penalty in lieu of dismissal on account of supervening resignation, retirement, or other modes of separation of service. – If the respondent is found liable for an offense which merits the imposition of the penalty of dismissal from judicial service but the same can no longer be imposed due to the respondent's prior resignation, retirement, or other mode of separation from the service except for death, the respondent may be meted the following penalties in lieu of dismissal:

(a)

Forfeiture of all or part of the benefits as the Supreme Court may determine, and disqualification from reinstatement or appointment to any public office, including in government-owned or -controlled corporations. Provided, however, that the forfeiture of benefits shall in no case include accrued leave credits; and/or

(b)

Fine, as applicable under this Canon; or

SECTION 24. Modifying Circumstances. – In determining the appropriate penalty to be imposed, the Court may, in its discretion, appreciate the following mitigating and aggravating circumstances:

(1)

Mitigating circumstances:

(a)

First offense;

(b)

Length of service of, at least, 10 years with no previous disciplinary case where respondent was meted an administrative penalty;

(c)

Exemplary performance;

(d)

Humanitarian considerations;

(e)

Unconditional admission of guilt and public demonstration of remorse; and

(f)

Other analogous circumstances.

(2)

Aggravating Circumstances:

(a)

Finding of previous administrative liability where a penalty has been imposed, regardless of nature or gravity;

(b)

Length of service facilitated the commission of the offense;

(c)

Employment of fraudulent means to conceal the offense;

(d)

Arrogance, belligerent attitude of the respondent, or lack of remorse; and

(e)

Other analogous circumstances.

SECTION 25. Manner of imposition of penalty. – If one or more aggravating circumstances and no mitigating circumstances are present, the Supreme Court may impose the penalty of suspension or fine, for a period or amount not exceeding double of the maximum prescribed under this Canon.

If one or more mitigating circumstances and no aggravating circumstances are present, the Supreme Court may impose the penalty of suspension or fine, for a period or amount not less than half of the minimum prescribed under this Canon.

If there are both aggravating and mitigating circumstances present, the Supreme Court may offset each against the other.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Supreme Court may impose the next higher or lower penalty against the respondent subject to its appreciation of the number and gravity of the mitigating and aggravating circumstances

present.

SECTION 26. Penalty for multiple offenses. – If the respondent is found liable for more than one offense arising from separate acts or omissions in a single administrative proceeding, the Court shall impose separate penalties for each offense. Should the aggregate of the imposed penalties exceed five years of suspension or PHP 1,000,000.00 in fines, the respondent may be meted the penalty of dismissal from the service, forfeiture of all or part of the benefits as may be determined, and disqualification from reinstatement or appointment to any public office, including in government-owned or -controlled corporations. Provided, however, that the forfeiture of benefits shall in no case include accrued leave credits.

If a single act or omission constitutes more than one offense, the respondent shall still be found liable for all such offenses, but shall only be meted the appropriate penalty for the most serious offense.

SECTION 27. Payment of fines. – When the penalty imposed is a fine or when there is an obligation to return money or property, the respondent shall comply within three months from the date of the receipt of the decision or resolution by the respondent. If the fine remains unpaid, the amount may be deducted from the salaries and benefits, including accrued leave credits, due to the respondent. The deduction of unpaid fines from accrued leave credits, which is considered as a form of compensation, is not tantamount to the imposition of the accessory penalty of forfeiture covered under the provisions of this Canon.

SECTION 28. Immediately executory nature. – Decisions or resolutions pronouncing the respondent's administrative liability are immediately executory in nature. The respondent, upon receipt of such decision or resolution, shall immediately serve the penalty indicated therein. In case of suspension, the respondent shall formally manifest to the Supreme Court that the suspension has started within five calendar days upon receipt of the decision or resolution.

Upon completion of service of the penalty of suspension and issuance of the Certification of Completion, the respondent shall be allowed to resume service. The presiding justice of the Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, or the Court of Tax Appeals, or the executive judge where the respondent is assigned or stationed, in case of the first- and second- level courts, shall issue the certification with no delay. The certification shall be submitted to the Supreme Court.

Upon issuance of such certification, the respondent shall automatically resume service as a judge, unless sooner retired, resigned or otherwise separated from the service.

SECTION 29. Inflation adjustments. – The Supreme Court shall adjust the monetary penalties by increasing the maximum monetary penalty or the range of minimum and maximum penalties as applicable under this Canon to reflect the inflation rates every five years to maintain the deterrent effect of this Code. Any increase shall be rounded off to the nearest multiple of one peso. The adjusted penalties shall be published no later than January 30 of each five-year period.

SECTION 30. Reinstatement as a judge. – A judge who has been dismissed from service may file a verified petition for judicial clemency after five years from the receipt of the order, decision, or resolution of dismissal from service.

However, if the ground for dismissal involves corruption or bribery, no clemency may be applied for.

SECTION 31. Petition for judicial clemency. – The verified petition for judicial clemency shall allege the following:

- that the verified petition was filed after five years from the receipt of the order, decision, or resolution on the

dismissal from service;

- that the dismissed judge has fully complied with the terms and conditions of all prior disciplinary orders, including orders for restitution;
- that the judge recognizes the wrongfulness and seriousness of the misconduct for which they were dismissed by showing positive acts evidencing reformation;
- the judge has reconciled, or attempted in good faith to reconcile, with the wronged private offended party in the administrative case, or if the same is not possible, an explanation as to why such attempt at reconciliation could not be made. Where there is no private offended party, the plea for clemency must contain a public apology; and
- notwithstanding the conduct for which the judge was dismissed, they have the requisite good moral character and competence.

Any of the following allegations may also be made in support of the petition:

- that the judge still has productive years that can be put to good use if given a chance;^[14] or
- there is a showing of promise (such as intellectual aptitude, learning or legal acumen or contribution to legal scholarship and the development of the legal system or administrative and other relevant skills), as well as potential for public service.

SECTION 32. Action on the petition for judicial clemency; prima facie merit. – Upon receipt of the petition, the Supreme Court shall conduct a preliminary evaluation and determine if the same has prima facie merit based on the criteria.

If the petition has prima facie merit, the Supreme Court shall refer the petition to the JIO or any fact-finding body the Court so designates for investigation, report, and recommendation.

If the petition fails to show any prima facie merit, it shall be denied outright.

SECTION 33. Investigation by the JIO or other fact-finding body. – The JIO or any other fact-finding body designated shall conduct and terminate the investigation and submit to the Supreme Court its report and recommendation within 90 calendar days from receipt of the referral.

SECTION 34. Decision on the petition for judicial clemency; quantum of evidence. – The Supreme Court shall decide the petition on the basis of clear and convincing evidence.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Transitory clause. – The Code shall be applied to all pending and future cases, except to the extent that, in the opinion of the Supreme Court, its retroactive application would not be feasible or would work injustice, in which case the procedure under which the cases were filed shall govern.

SECTION 2. Repealing clause. – This Code supersedes the 2004 Code of Judicial Conduct and all previous rules of ethical conduct for judges.

SECTION 3. Effectivity. This Code shall take effect after 15 calendar days after publication in the Official Gazette or two newspapers of general circulation and posting on the Supreme Court website.

[1] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Judicial Integrity" available at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/judicial-integrity.html> (last accessed on April 3, 2025).

[2] OCA Circular No. 42-2019 (2019), par. 3.

[3] Republic Act No. 11691 (2022), Judiciary Marshals Act, in relation to A.M. No. 24-04-09-SC, August 20, 2024.

[4] A "reasonable observer" is defined in the 2007 Commentary on the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct, par. 77 as "a 'reasonable, fair-minded[,] and informed person' who 'might believe' that the judge is unable to decide the matter impartially." The formulation in the Bangalore Principles—"may appear to a reasonable observer"—was agreed upon at The Hague meeting in November 2002 on the basis that "a reasonable observer" would be both fair-minded and informed.

[5] See A.M. No. 22-08-98-RTC and OCA Circular No. 269-2022, Re: Guidelines for Inhibition of Judges Who Are Former Investigating and/or Inquest Prosecutors, October 5, 2022.

[6] See Supreme Court Administrative Order No. 62-2020, Re: Submission of Copies of Orders of Voluntary Inhibition, February 18, 2020.

[7] Memorandum Circular No. 6, Enjoining All Government Officials and Employees To Strictly Observe and Comply With the Prohibition Against Going to Gambling Casinos, September 20, 2016; Re: Normandie B. Pizarro, 827 Phil 645 (2018); Presidential Decree No. 1067-B, Granting Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) the Franchise To Establish Gambling Casinos, January 1, 1977, sec. 5, par. 3-b.

[8] See Office of the Court Administrator v. Hon. Villavicencio-Olan, A.M. No. RTJ-23-040, June 25, 2024 [Per J. Gaerlan, En Banc].

[9] Once established and operational under A.M. No. 24-04-09-SC or the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 11691 or The Judiciary Marshals Act.

[10] Republic Act No. 6713.

[11] Republic Act No. 3019, as amended.

[12] Pursuant to the drug-free policy of the Supreme Court (A.M. No. 23-02-11-SC).

[13] See Lara's Gifts & Decors, Inc. v. Midtown Industrial Sales, Inc., 929 Phil. 754 (2022) [Per J. Leonen, En Banc].

[14] See Re: Allegations Made Under Oath at the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee Hearing Against Associate Justice Ong, 894 Phil. 99 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, En Banc]. See also Edaña v. Judge Gonzales Asdala, A.M. No. RTJ-06-1974, June 27, 2023 [Per J.M. Lopez, En Banc]; Republic of the Philippines v. Judge Caguioa, 929 Phil. 10 (2022) [Per Curiam, En Banc]; Omar v. Presiding Judge Barraquias, 911 Phil. 126 (2021) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, En Banc].

REVISED OATH OF OFFICE (for Judges)

I accept the honor, privilege and responsibility entrusted to me as a (position). I shall hold this office for the interest of all our people. I shall always be guided by the principle that public office is a public trust.

I solemnly swear to uphold the Constitution, as well as all laws, rules, and orders from duly constituted authorities. I shall uphold the rule of law in order to build a just and humane society to promote the common good.

I shall embody competence, integrity, probity and independence in the exercise of my judicial functions. I shall always remain independent from any influence or unwarranted or undue pressure. I shall discharge these duties without fear or favor always to ensure equitable access to justice for everyone. In all my actions, I will always endeavor to do justice.

I shall adhere to the highest ethical standards of judicial conduct and comply with my oath as a lawyer. I shall do no falsehood, or impropriety, nor tolerate any unethical behavior of other court officers or staff. In all my dealings, I will conduct myself in a manner compatible with the dignity of my judicial office.

I, (name), impose all these upon myself without mental reservation nor purpose of evasion.

So help me God.

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