



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE
UNITED STATES COURTS

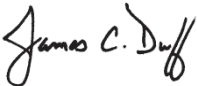
JAMES C. DUFF
Director

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20544

September 29, 2016

MEMORANDUM

To: All United States Judges

From: James C. Duff 

RE: PRIVATELY FUNDED SEMINARS DISCLOSURE (**INFORMATION**)

Ten years ago, the Judicial Conference adopted a policy on judges' attendance at privately funded educational seminars. *Guide to Judiciary Policy*, Volume 2, Part C, Chapter 13. The policy was intended to enhance accountability and transparency by providing information about judges' attendance at privately funded seminars. It allows any member of the public or the media, as well as attorneys and parties, to review details about privately funded educational programs offered to judges on uscourts.gov. It also provides a process for judges who attend privately funded seminars to post information about the seminar on the court's public-facing website, where it remains available for three years.

As you may know, the policy applies to seminars that have "a significant purpose" of educating federal or state judges and that reimburse judges more than the threshold amount (currently \$375) for attending seminars as speakers, panelists, or students. Certain seminar providers are exempted, including state and local bar associations, subject-matter bar associations, judicial associations, the ABA's Judicial Division, and the National Judicial College.

The Private Seminar Disclosure Policy has three components:

- (1) Program providers are required to disclose information about their seminars, including sources of support, dates, location, topics, and names of anticipated speakers. The information is available on uscourts.gov.
- (2) Judges considering attending a seminar (and accepting reimbursement for the costs of attendance) should review the provider's disclosure before determining whether to attend.

- (3) If a judge attends and accepts reimbursement for the expenses, the judge is required to report his or her attendance within 30 days. The report is then available on the court's public website.

The Administrative Office recently updated the automated reporting system. Seminar providers can continue to enter the relevant information in an application on the Judiciary's website, uscourts.gov, which works in conjunction with InfoWeb, the Judiciary's intranet. When a judge receives an invitation, he or she can verify whether a seminar provider has disclosed information about the event before deciding whether to attend. Once a judge has attended a program covered by the policy, he or she can fill out the disclosure information through InfoWeb and it will be displayed on the court website.

Ethics questions associated with attending privately-funded seminars are addressed by the Judicial Conference Committee on Codes of Conduct. [Advisory Opinion No. 67](#) ("Attendance at Independent Educational Seminars") is the primary source of ethics guidance about seminar attendance.

Questions about compliance with the policy or related ethics issues may be addressed to Robert Deyling, counsel for the Judicial Conference Committee on Codes of Conduct, via email at Robert_Deyling@ao.uscourts.gov, or to Carol Messito, counsel for the Judicial Conference Committee on the Judicial Branch, via email at Carol_Messito@ao.uscourts.gov. They may also be reached by phone at 202-502-1100. If you have technical difficulties with the system or InfoWeb, please contact the InfoWeb Help Desk at 202-502-4334.

cc: Honorable Rodney W. Sippel
Honorable Rebecca Beach Smith
Circuit Executives
District Court Executives
Clerks, United States Courts