

Senate Bill No. 353

CHAPTER 378

An act to amend Section 170.9 of the Code of Civil Procedure, relating to judges.

[Approved by Governor August 3, 1995. Filed with Secretary of State August 4, 1995.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 353, Alquist. Judges: gifts and honoraria.

Existing law limits the amount of gifts, as defined, that may be accepted by judges, as defined, and prohibits judges from accepting any honorarium. The Commission on Judicial Performance is required to enforce these provisions.

This bill would revise the application of the terms gift and honorarium for these purposes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 170.9 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

170.9. (a) No judge shall accept gifts from any single source in any calendar year with a total value of more than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250). This section shall not be construed to authorize the receipt of gifts that would otherwise be prohibited by the California Code of Judicial Conduct adopted by the California Judges Association or any other provision of law.

(b) This section shall not prohibit or limit the following:

(1) Payments, advances, or reimbursements for travel and related lodging and subsistence permitted by subdivision (e).

(2) Wedding gifts and gifts exchanged between individuals on birthdays, holidays and other similar occasions, provided that the gifts exchanged are not substantially disproportionate in value.

(c) For purposes of this section, "judge" means judges of the justice, municipal, or superior courts, and justices of the courts of appeal or the Supreme Court.

(d) The gift limitation amounts in this section shall be adjusted biennially by the Commission on Judicial Performance to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index, rounded to the nearest ten dollars (\$10).

(e) Payments, advances, or reimbursements, for travel, including actual transportation and related lodging and subsistence which is reasonably related to a judicial or governmental purpose, or to an



issue of state, national, or international public policy, is not prohibited or limited by this section if any of the following apply:

(1) The travel is in connection with a speech, practice demonstration, or group or panel discussion given or participated in by the judge, the lodging and subsistence expenses are limited to the day immediately preceding, the day of, and the day immediately following the speech, demonstration, or discussion, and the travel is within the United States.

(2) The travel is provided by a government, a governmental agency or authority, a foreign government, a foreign bar association, an international service organization, a bona fide public or private educational institution, as defined in Section 203 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, or a nonprofit charitable or religious organization which is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or by a person domiciled outside the United States who substantially satisfies the requirements for tax exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

For purposes of this section, “foreign bar association” means an association of attorneys located outside the United States (A) that performs functions substantially equivalent to those performed by state or local bar associations in this state and (B) that permits membership by attorneys in that country representing various legal specialties and does not limit membership to attorneys generally representing one side or another in litigation. “International service organization” means a bona fide international service organization of which the judge is a member. A judge who accepts travel payments from an international service organization pursuant to this subdivision shall not preside over or participate in decisions affecting that organization, its state or local chapters, or its local members.

(3) The travel is provided by a state or local bar association or judges professional association in connection with testimony before a governmental body or attendance at any professional function hosted by the bar association or judges professional association, the lodging and subsistence expenses are limited to the day immediately preceding, the day of, and the day immediately following the professional function.

(f) Payments, advances, and reimbursements for travel not described in subdivision (e) are subject to the limit in subdivision (a).

(g) No judge shall accept any honorarium.

(h) “Honorarium” means any payment made in consideration for any speech given, article published, or attendance at any public or private conference, convention, meeting, social event, meal or like gathering.

(i) “Honorarium” does not include earned income for personal services which are customarily provided in connection with the practice of a bona fide business, trade, or profession, such as teaching or writing for a publisher, and does not include fees or other things



of value received pursuant to Section 94.5 of the Penal Code for performance of a marriage.

(j) Subdivision (a) and (e) shall apply to all payments, advances, reimbursements for travel and related lodging and subsistence.

(k) This section does not apply to any honorarium that is not used and, within 30 days after receipt, is either returned to the donor or delivered to the Controller for deposit in the General Fund without being claimed as a deduction from income for tax purposes.

(l) "Gift" means any payment to the extent that consideration of equal or greater value is not received and includes a rebate or discount in the price of anything of value unless the rebate or discount is made in the regular course of business to members of the public without regard to official status. Any person, other than a defendant in a criminal action, who claims that a payment is not a gift by reason of receipt of consideration has the burden of proving that the consideration received is of equal or greater value. However, the term "gift" does not include:

(1) Informational material such as books, reports, pamphlets, calendars, periodicals, cassettes and discs, or free or reduced-price admission, tuition, or registration, for informational conferences or seminars. No payment for travel or reimbursement for any expenses shall be deemed "informational material."

(2) Gifts which are not used and which, within 30 days after receipt, are returned to the donor or delivered to a charitable organization without being claimed as a charitable contribution for tax purposes.

(3) Gifts from a judge's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin or the spouse of any such person; provided that a gift from any such person shall be considered a gift if the donor is acting as an agent or intermediary for any person not covered by this paragraph.

(4) Campaign contributions required to be reported under Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 84100) of Title 9 of the Government Code.

(5) Any devise or inheritance.

(6) Personalized plaques and trophies with an individual value of less than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250).

(7) Admission to events hosted by state or local bar associations or judges' professional associations, and provision of related food and beverages at such events, when attendance does not require "travel" as described in paragraph (3) of subdivision (e).

(m) The Commission on Judicial Performance shall enforce the prohibitions of this section.

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