

STATE OF KANSAS



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ETHICS  
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JUDICIAL ETHICS ADVISORY PANEL

*Judge Patrick D. McAnany, Chair*

KANSAS JUDICIAL CENTER  
301 S.W. TENTH AVENUE  
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1507  
785-296-2913 ♦ ethicspanel@kscourts.org

*Justice Edward Larson  
Judge J. Patrick Brazil*

**JUDICIAL ETHICS OPINION 186**

**February 19, 2020**

A Kansas district magistrate judge, a former journalist, asks if it would be ethically proper to write book reviews for a newspaper in the state of Washington. The newspaper's editor has approached the judge because of the judge's prior journalism experience, not because of the judge's current judicial position. The judge would be compensated for the reviews which would be published in a for-profit publication with circulation primarily in eastern Washington. But the judge would not be identified as a judge in any of the reviews. Moreover, the writing of book reviews will not interfere with the judge's judicial duties.

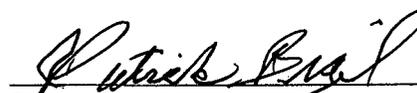
The present facts are distinct from those presented in Judicial Ethics Opinion JE 180, in which a judge asked about writing a column entitled "Judge's Corner" for a local for-profit newspaper. There, the panel expressed the opinion that writing this column would violate Rule 1.3 of the Kansas Code of Judicial Conduct which provides: "A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or *economic interest* of the judge or others, or allow others to do so."

Here, the judge will not be identified as a judge in the book reviews, and the newspaper will not receive any economic advantage from the fact that the author of the book reviews is a judge. Moreover, the book reviews will be published in a newspaper half a continent away from the judge's jurisdiction, though they may be available on the internet. We see no economic advantage to the newspaper arising from the fact that its book reviewer—unknown to its readers—is a Kansas judge. Finally, the judge is not lending the prestige of the judge's judicial office to this activity.

We conclude that this activity would not violate the Kansas Code of Judicial Conduct.

  
PATRICK D. MCANANY, CHAIR

  
EDWARD LARSON

  
J. PATRICK BRAZIL