

As Chairman of the ABA Joint Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, it gives me great pleasure to present the revised ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct as unanimously approved by the House of Delegates on February 12, 2007. The Commission was established under the auspices of the Standing Committees on Ethics Professional Responsibility and on Judicial Independence. The multi-year Code revision project was funded almost entirely by the Joyce Foundation which has also provided and is providing the resources for countless projects that contribute to the betterment of our society.

At the time of its adoption, the revised Code had the support of the Conference of Chief Justices and the co-sponsorship of the Judicial Division of the ABA, the ABA Standing Committees on Ethics and Professional Responsibility, on Professional Discipline and on Judicial Independence and the ABA Sections of Litigation, Dispute Resolution and the American Judicature Society.

The approval of the revised Model Code of Judicial Conduct by the House of Delegates culminated a three and one-half year effort by a group comprised of distinguished judges, lawyers, academicians and a public member. The work of the Commission was significantly enhanced by the active participation of a group of advisors comprised of representatives of the organizations principally involved in the work of the judiciary and in the enforcement of the rules governing judicial conduct, and the invaluable assistance of two able Reporters and Center for Professional Responsibility counsel and professional staff.

The last Code revision occurred in 1990 and, although the Code was amended three times in the intervening years, there was a need for a comprehensive evaluation and revision in light of societal changes, as well as changes in the role of judges. The revised Code is the product of a completely transparent process during which the Joint Commission held nine public hearings, met in-person twenty times, had more than thirty teleconferences, and regularly posted its work on this website with requests for feedback and comment. It carefully considered all submitted suggestions and criticism and incorporated many of the suggested changes in the revised Code adopted by the House of Delegates.. To the maximum extent possible, much of the existing Code was preserved.

The Commission is proud of its work and believes it has produced a Model Code which will provide an excellent foundation for the highest court in each state to adopt to improve and clarify the standards of conduct for the judiciary throughout the nation. It is hoped that the revised Code will promote national uniformity and be adopted by the highest Court in each state.

An independent, impartial judiciary is indispensable to our system of justice. Equally important is the confidence of the public in the independence, integrity and impartiality of our judiciary as an institution. In its work over the last three years, the Joint Commission took great care to adhere to those principles while at the same time providing sound, clear, and reasonable guidance to judges faced with uncertainty. The end result is a Code that should serve both judges and the public well for many years to come.