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Chief Justice Maine Supreme Judicial Court
August 26, 2005
Canon 2

My comments are my own and do not represent those of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court nor of any other particular judicial group. Nonetheless, I am confident that many trial judges in Maine would echo the sentiments found in Chief Justice Gray's comments.

I write to express my vigorous support for the modest proposal that Chief Justice Gray has forwarded to the Commission regarding guidance to trial judges for appropriate judicial behavior responding to self represented parties. In Maine, we have experienced an exponential growth in the number of litigants who are either unable or uninterested in obtaining legal representation to assist them in the process of litigation. One consequence of this change is reflected in the fact that more than 50% of family related cases in Maine involve a party who is self-represented. This is a reality for trial judges. To leave those trial judges without guidance on the thorny issues of the extent to which they may, without putting a thumb on the scale of justice, assist a self-represented party in understanding the proceedings, invites stress for those already strained trial judges, and leaves the public without an ability to understand what can and should be expected of trial judges in those circumstances.