

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON STANDARDS OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

OPINION NO. 17-2009

RE: Propriety of a magistrate judge being a member of a social networking site such as Facebook.

FACTS

A magistrate judge has inquired as to the propriety of being a member of Facebook, a social networking site. The Magistrate is friends with several law enforcement officers and employees of the Magistrate's office. The Magistrate is concerned about the possibility of an appearance of impropriety since the list of Facebook subscribers is vast.

CONCLUSION

A judge may be a member of Facebook and be friends with law enforcement officers and employees of the Magistrate as long as they do not discuss anything related to the judge's position as magistrate.

OPINION

A judge shall respect and comply with the law and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. Canon 2(A), Rule 501, SCACR. However, the commentary to Canon 4 states that complete separation of a judge from extra-judicial activities is neither possible nor wise; a judge should not become isolated from the community in which the judge lives. Allowing a Magistrate to be a member of a social networking site allows the community to see how the judge communicates and gives the community a better understanding of the judge. Thus, a judge may be a member of a social networking site such as Facebook.

A. CAMDEN LEWIS, CHAIRMAN

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