Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 481—Chapter 15
"Iowa Code of Administrative Judicial Conduct"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 10A.801(7)"d"
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code chapter 10A

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

November 18, 2025	6200 Park Avenue
3:30 to 4 p.m.	Des Moines, Iowa

Virtual participation information will be available on the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing website prior to the hearing.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

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Purpose and Summary

This proposed rulemaking repromulgates Chapter 15 and implements Iowa Code section 10A.801(7)"d."

Iowa Code section 10A.801(7)"d" provides that the Department's Administrative Hearings Division (AHD) shall adopt rules "[t]o establish, consistent with the provisions of this section and chapter 17A, a code of administrative judicial conduct that is similar in function and substantially equivalent to the Iowa code of judicial conduct, to govern the conduct, in relation to their quasi-judicial functions in contested cases, of all persons who act as presiding officers under the authority of section 17A.11, subsection 1." This proposed chapter establishes a code of administrative judicial conduct that is similar in function and substantially equivalent to the Iowa Code of Judicial Conduct, to govern the conduct, in relation to their quasi-judicial functions in contested cases, of all persons who act as presiding officers under the authority of Iowa Code section 17A.11(1).

Analysis of Impact

1. **Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:**

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

Administrative law judges subject to this code of conduct may indirectly incur costs by the nature of needing to meet the requirements of the Iowa Code of Administrative Judicial Conduct; however, this Iowa Code of Administrative Judicial Conduct is statutorily required.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

The AHD and administrative law judges subject to the Iowa Code of Administrative Judicial Conduct will benefit since a code of administrative judicial conduct promotes trust in and legitimacy of the AHD and the administrative law judges. Additionally, parties to proceedings before the AHD and even the public at large, who benefit from an administrative judiciary that is subject to a code of conduct.

2. **Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:**

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

There is no readily apparent quantitative impact associated with this proposed chapter.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

This proposed chapter promotes an ethical administrative judiciary and promotes trust in and legitimacy of the AHD and the administrative law judges. This proposed chapter benefits the AHD and administrative law judges but also parties to proceedings before the AHD and even the public at large, who benefit from an administrative judiciary that is subject to a code of conduct.

3. **Costs to the State:**

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

There are not any identifiable costs to AHD or the Department associated with this chapter.

- **Anticipated effect on State revenues:**

This proposed rulemaking has no anticipated effect on State revenues.

4. **Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:**

As noted above, there are no costs associated with this proposed chapter, other than the potential indirect cost incurred by administrative law judges by the nature of needing to meet the requirements of the Iowa Code of Administrative Judicial Conduct. The benefits outweigh these potential indirect costs. Additionally, this proposed chapter is required by the Iowa Code, so inaction is not an option.

5. **Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:**

Iowa Code section 10A.801(7)“d” requires AHD to establish a code of administrative judicial conduct that is similar in function and substantially equivalent to the Iowa Code of Judicial Conduct. This chapter does that, and less costly or less intrusive methods would undermine its compliance with the statutory directive.

6. **Alternative methods considered by the agency:**

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

No alternative methods were seriously considered. See Section 5.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

See responses in Sections 5 and 6.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking’s compliance or reporting requirements for small business.

- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

This rulemaking does not have a substantial impact on small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Rescind 481—Chapter 15 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 15
IOWA CODE OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDICIAL CONDUCT

481—15.1(10A) Canon 1. A presiding officer shall uphold and promote the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the administrative judiciary and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

15.1(1) *Compliance with the law.* A presiding officer shall comply with the law, including the Iowa Code of Administrative Judicial Conduct, hereafter referred to as "this Code."

15.1(2) *Promoting confidence in the administrative judiciary.* A presiding officer shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the administrative judiciary and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

15.1(3) *Avoiding abuse of the prestige of an administrative judicial position.* A presiding officer shall not abuse the prestige of the administrative judicial position to advance the personal or economic interests of the presiding officer or others or allow others to do so.

481—15.2(10A) Canon 2. A presiding officer shall perform administrative judicial duties impartially, competently, and diligently.

15.2(1) *Giving precedence to administrative judicial duties.* The administrative judicial duties, as prescribed by law, shall take precedence over all of a presiding officer's personal and extrajudicial activities.

15.2(2) *Impartiality and fairness.* A presiding officer shall uphold and apply the law and shall perform all administrative judicial duties fairly and impartially.

15.2(3) *Bias, prejudice, and harassment.*

a. A presiding officer shall perform all administrative judicial and other duties without bias or prejudice.

b. A presiding officer shall not, in the performance of administrative judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice or engage in harassment, including but not limited to bias, prejudice, or harassment based upon race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation, and shall not permit others subject to the presiding officer's direction and control to do so.

c. A presiding officer shall require lawyers and party representatives in proceedings before the presiding officer to refrain from manifesting bias or prejudice or engaging in harassment, based upon attributes including but not limited to race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation against parties, witnesses, lawyers, party representatives, or others.

d. The restrictions of paragraphs 15.2(3)*"b"* and *"c"* do not preclude presiding officers, lawyers, or party representatives from making legitimate reference to the listed factors, or similar factors, when they are relevant to an issue in a proceeding.

15.2(4) *External influences on administrative judicial conduct.*

a. A presiding officer shall not be swayed by public clamor or fear of criticism.

b. A presiding officer shall not permit family, social, political, financial, or other interests or relationships to influence the presiding officer's administrative judicial conduct or judgment.

c. A presiding officer shall not convey or permit others to convey the impression that any person or organization is in a position to influence the presiding officer.

15.2(5) *Competence, diligence, and cooperation.*

a. A presiding officer shall perform administrative judicial and other duties competently and diligently.

b. A presiding officer shall cooperate with other presiding officers and other executive branch employees in the administration of agency business.

15.2(6) *Ensuring the right to be heard.*

a. A presiding officer shall accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person's lawyer or authorized representative, the right to be heard according to law.

b. A presiding officer may encourage parties to a proceeding and their lawyers or authorized representatives to settle matters in dispute but shall not act in a manner that coerces any party into settlement.

15.2(7) *Responsibility to decide.* A presiding officer shall hear and decide matters assigned to the presiding officer, except when disqualification is required by subrule 15.2(11) or other law.

15.2(8) *Decorum and demeanor.*

a. A presiding officer shall require order and decorum in proceedings before the presiding officer.

b. A presiding officer shall be patient, dignified, and courteous to parties, board members, witnesses, lawyers, party representatives, agency staff, agency officials, and others with whom the presiding officer deals in an official capacity and shall require similar conduct of lawyers, party representatives, and others subject to the presiding officer's direction and control.

15.2(9) *Ex parte communications.*

a. A presiding officer shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications or consider other communications made to the presiding officer outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers, concerning a pending matter or impending matter, except as permitted by Iowa Code section 17A.17.

b. A presiding officer shall not investigate facts in a matter independently and shall consider only the evidence presented and any facts that may be officially noticed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.14.

15.2(10) *Statements on pending and impending cases.*

a. A presiding officer shall not make any public statement that might reasonably be expected to affect the outcome or impair the fairness of a pending matter or impending matter before the presiding officer or another presiding officer in the same agency or make any nonpublic statement that might substantially interfere with a fair hearing.

b. A presiding officer shall not, in connection with cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the presiding officer, make pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the presiding officer's adjudicative duties.

c. A presiding officer shall require others subject to the presiding officer's direction and control to refrain from making statements that the presiding officer would be prohibited from making by paragraphs 15.2(10)*"a"* and *"b."*

d. Notwithstanding the restrictions in paragraph 15.2(10)*"a,"* a presiding officer may explain agency procedures and may comment on any proceeding in which the presiding officer is a party in a personal capacity.

e. Subject to the requirements of paragraph 15.2(10)*"a,"* a presiding officer may respond directly or through a third party to allegations in the media or elsewhere concerning the presiding officer's conduct in a matter.

15.2(11) *Disqualification.*

a. A presiding officer shall disqualify the presiding officer in any proceeding in which the presiding officer's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to the following circumstances:

(1) The presiding officer has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's lawyer or other representative or has personal knowledge of facts that are in dispute in the proceeding.

(2) The presiding officer knows that the presiding officer, the presiding officer's spouse or domestic partner, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse or domestic partner of such a person is:

1. A party to the proceeding, or an officer, director, general partner, managing member, or trustee of a party;

2. Acting as a lawyer or party representative in the proceeding;

3. A person who has more than a de minimis interest that could be substantially affected by the proceeding; or

4. Likely to be a material witness in the proceeding.

(3) The presiding officer knows that the presiding officer, individually or as a fiduciary, or the presiding officer's spouse, domestic partner, parent, or child, or any other member of the presiding officer's family residing in the presiding officer's household has an economic interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding.

(4) The presiding officer, while a presiding officer, has made a public statement, other than in an agency proceeding, decision, opinion, or order, that commits or appears to commit the presiding officer to reach a particular result or rule in a particular way in the proceeding or controversy.

(5) The presiding officer:

1. Served as a lawyer in the matter in controversy or was associated with a lawyer who participated substantially as a lawyer in the matter during such association;

2. Served in governmental employment and in such capacity participated personally and substantially as a lawyer or public official concerning the proceeding or has publicly expressed in such capacity an opinion concerning the merits of the particular matter in controversy; or

3. Was a material witness concerning the matter.

(6) The presiding officer personally investigated, prosecuted, or advocated in connection with the matter, the specific controversy underlying the matter, or another pending factually related matter, or pending factually related controversy that may culminate in a contested case, involving the same parties, or is subject to the authority, direction, or discretion of any person who has personally investigated, prosecuted, or advocated in connection with that contested case, the specific controversy underlying that contested case, or a pending factually related contested case or controversy, involving the same parties. But the presiding officer is not required to disqualify the presiding officer solely because the presiding officer determined there was probable cause to initiate the proceeding.

b. A presiding officer shall keep informed about the presiding officer's personal and fiduciary economic interests and make a reasonable effort to keep informed about the personal economic interests of the presiding officer's spouse or domestic partner and minor children residing in the presiding officer's household.

c. A presiding officer subject to disqualification under this rule, other than for bias or prejudice under subparagraph 15.2(11)*"a"*(1), may disclose on the record the basis of the presiding officer's disqualification and may ask the parties and their lawyers or representatives to consider, outside the presence of the presiding officer, whether to waive disqualification. If, following the disclosure, the parties and lawyers or party representatives agree, without participation by the presiding officer, that the presiding officer should not be disqualified, the presiding officer may participate in the proceeding. The agreement shall be incorporated into the record of the proceeding.

15.2(12) *Supervisory duties.*

a. A presiding officer shall require others subject to the presiding officer's direction and control to act in a manner consistent with the presiding officer's obligations under this Code.

b. A presiding officer with supervisory authority for the performance of other presiding officers shall take reasonable measures to ensure that those presiding officers properly discharge their administrative judicial responsibilities, including the prompt disposition of matters before them.

15.2(13) *Disability and impairment.* A presiding officer having a reasonable belief that the performance of a lawyer, party representative, or another presiding officer is impaired by drugs or alcohol, or by a mental, emotional, or physical condition, shall take appropriate action, which may include a confidential referral to a lawyer or employee assistance program.

15.2(14) *Responding to administrative judicial and lawyer misconduct.*

a. A presiding officer having knowledge that another presiding officer has committed a violation of this Code that raises a substantial question regarding the presiding officer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a presiding officer in other respects shall inform the appropriate authority.

b. A presiding officer having knowledge that a lawyer has committed a violation of the Iowa Rules of Professional Conduct that raises a substantial question regarding the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects shall inform the appropriate authority.

c. A presiding officer who receives information indicating a substantial likelihood that another presiding officer has committed a violation of this Code shall take appropriate action.

d. A presiding officer who receives information indicating a substantial likelihood a lawyer has committed a violation of the Iowa Rules of Professional Conduct shall take appropriate action.

e. This rule does not require disclosure of information gained by a presiding officer while participating in an approved lawyers assistance program.

15.2(15) *Cooperation with disciplinary authorities.*

a. A presiding officer shall cooperate and be candid and honest with a lawyer disciplinary agency or other appropriate authority investigating a violation of this Code or the Iowa Rules of Professional Conduct.

b. A presiding officer shall not retaliate, directly or indirectly, against a person known or suspected to have assisted or cooperated with an investigation of a presiding officer or a lawyer.

481—15.3(10A) Canon 3. An administrative law judge shall conduct the administrative law judge's personal and extrajudicial activities to minimize the risk of conflict with administrative judicial obligations.

15.3(1) *Extrajudicial activities in general.* An administrative law judge may engage in extrajudicial activities, except as prohibited by law or this Code. However, when engaging in extrajudicial activities, an administrative law judge shall not:

a. Participate in activities that will interfere with the proper performance of the administrative law judge's administrative judicial duties;

b. Participate in activities that will lead to frequent disqualification of the administrative law judge;

c. Participate in activities that would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the administrative law judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality;

d. Engage in conduct that would appear to a reasonable person to be coercive; or

e. Make use of agency premises, staff, stationery, equipment, or other resources, except for incidental use for activities that concern the law, the legal system, the provision of legal services, or the administration of justice, or unless such additional use is permitted by law.

15.3(2) *Testifying as a character witness.* An administrative law judge shall not testify as a character witness in a judicial, administrative, or other adjudicatory proceeding or otherwise vouch for the character of a person in a legal proceeding, except when duly subpoenaed.

15.3(3) *Appointments to governmental positions.* An administrative law judge shall not accept appointment to a governmental committee, board, commission, or other governmental position that would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the administrative law judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality or would lead to frequent disqualification of the administrative law judge.

15.3(4) *Use of nonpublic information.* An administrative law judge shall not intentionally disclose or use nonpublic information acquired in an administrative judicial capacity for any purpose unrelated to the administrative law judge's administrative judicial or other duties.

15.3(5) *Affiliation with discriminatory organizations.*

a. An administrative law judge shall not hold membership in any organization that practices invidious discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. An administrative law judge's membership in a religious organization as a lawful exercise of the freedom of religion is not prohibited.

b. An administrative law judge shall not use the benefits or facilities of an organization if the administrative law judge knows or should know that the organization practices invidious discrimination on one or more of the bases identified in paragraph 15.3(5)*"a."* An administrative law judge's attendance at an event in a facility of an organization that the administrative law judge is not permitted to join is not a violation of this rule when the administrative law judge's attendance is an isolated event that could not reasonably be perceived as an endorsement of the organization's practices.

15.3(6) *Participation in educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organizations and activities.*

a. Subject to the requirements of subrule 15.3(1), an administrative law judge may participate in activities sponsored by organizations or governmental entities concerned with the law, the legal system, the provision of legal services, or the administration of justice, and those sponsored by or on behalf of educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organizations not conducted for profit, including but not limited to the following activities:

(1) Assisting such an organization or entity in planning related to fundraising, volunteering goods or services at fundraising events, and participating in the management and investment of the organization's or entity's funds;

(2) Soliciting contributions for such an organization or entity but only from members of the administrative law judge's family or from other administrative law judges or coworkers in the administrative law judge's immediate office over whom the administrative law judge does not exercise supervisory authority;

(3) Appearing or speaking at, receiving an award or other recognition at, being featured on the program of, and permitting an administrative law judge's title to be used in connection with an event of such an organization or entity, but if the event serves a fundraising purpose, the administrative law judge may participate only if the event concerns the law, the legal system, the provision of legal services, or the administration of justice;

(4) Making recommendations to such a public or private fund-granting organization or entity in connection with its programs and activities but only if the organization or entity is concerned with the law, the legal system, the provision of legal services, or the administration of justice; and

(5) Serving as an officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisor of such an organization or entity unless it is likely that the organization or entity:

1. Will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the administrative law judge; or

2. Will frequently be engaged in adversary proceedings before the agency in which the administrative law judge serves.

b. An administrative law judge may encourage lawyers to provide pro bono publico legal services.

c. Subject to the requirements of subrule 15.3(1), an administrative law judge may:

(1) Provide leadership in identifying and addressing issues involving equal access to the justice system; developing public education programs; engaging in activities to promote the fair administration of justice and convening, participating or assisting in advisory committees and community collaborations devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system, the provision of legal services, or the administration of justice.

(2) Endorse projects and programs directly related to the law, the legal system, the provision of legal services, and the administration of justice to those coming before the courts or the administrative judiciary.

(3) Participate in programs that concern the law or that promote the administration of justice.

15.3(7) *Appointments to fiduciary positions.*

a. An administrative law judge shall not accept an appointment to serve in a fiduciary position, such as executor, administrator, trustee, guardian, attorney-in-fact, or other personal representative, except for the estate, trust, or person of a member of the administrative law judge's family, and then only if such service will not interfere with the proper performance of administrative judicial duties.

b. An administrative law judge shall not serve in a fiduciary position if the administrative law judge as fiduciary will likely be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the administrative law judge or if the estate, trust, or ward becomes involved in adversary proceedings before the agency in which the administrative law judge serves.

c. An administrative law judge acting in a fiduciary capacity shall be subject to the same restrictions on engaging in financial activities that apply to an administrative law judge personally.

d. If a person who is serving in a fiduciary position becomes an administrative law judge, the administrative law judge must comply with this subrule as soon as reasonably practicable but in no event later than six months after becoming an administrative law judge.

15.3(8) *Services as arbitrator or mediator.* An administrative law judge shall not act as an arbitrator or a mediator or perform other judicial functions apart from the administrative law judge's official duties unless expressly authorized by law.

15.3(9) *Practice of law.* An administrative law judge shall not engage in the private practice of law. An administrative law judge may act pro se and may, without compensation, give legal advice to and draft or review documents for a member of the administrative law judge's family but is prohibited from serving as the family member's lawyer before the agency in which the administrative law judge serves. An administrative law judge serving in the administrative hearings division of the department is prohibited from serving as the family member's lawyer in any proceeding in which another administrative law judge serving in the division is the presiding officer, regardless of whether the proceeding is being conducted on behalf of the department or another state agency.

15.3(10) *Financial, business, or remunerative activities.*

a. An administrative law judge may hold and manage investments of the administrative law judge and members of the administrative law judge's family.

b. An administrative law judge shall not serve as an officer, director, manager, general partner, advisor, or employee of any business entity, except that an administrative law judge may manage or participate in:

(1) A business closely held by the administrative law judge or members of the administrative law judge's family; or

(2) A business entity primarily engaged in investment of the financial resources of the administrative law judge or members of the administrative law judge's family.

c. An administrative law judge shall not engage in financial activities permitted under paragraphs 15.3(10)*"a"* and *"b"* if the financial activities will:

(1) Interfere with the proper performance of administrative judicial duties;

(2) Lead to frequent disqualification of the administrative law judge;

(3) Involve the administrative law judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with lawyers or other persons likely to come before the agency in which the administrative law judge serves; or

(4) Result in violation of other provisions of this Code.

15.3(11) *Compensation for extrajudicial activities.* An administrative law judge may accept reasonable compensation for extrajudicial activities permitted by this Code and other law unless such acceptance would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the administrative law judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality.

15.3(12) *Acceptance of gifts, loans, bequests, benefits, or other things of value.* An administrative law judge, an administrative law judge's spouse, and an administrative law judge's dependent child shall not accept or receive any gift, loan, bequest, benefit, or other thing of value if acceptance or receipt is prohibited by Iowa Code chapter 68B or any other law or if acceptance or receipt would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the administrative law judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality.

15.3(13) *Reimbursement of expenses and waivers of fees or charges.*

a. Unless otherwise prohibited by subrules 15.3(1) and 15.3(12), Iowa Code chapter 68B, or other law, an administrative law judge may accept reimbursement of necessary and reasonable expenses for travel, food, lodging, or other incidental expenses, or a waiver or partial waiver of fees or charges for registration, tuition, and similar items, from sources other than the administrative law judge's employing entity, if the expenses or charges are associated with the administrative law judge's participation in extrajudicial activities permitted by this Code.

b. Reimbursement of expenses for necessary travel, food, lodging, or other incidental expenses shall be limited to the actual costs reasonably incurred by the administrative law judge and, when appropriate to the occasion, by the administrative law judge's spouse, domestic partner, or guest.

481—15.4(10A) Canon 4. An administrative law judge shall not engage in political or campaign activity that is inconsistent with the independence, integrity, or impartiality of the administrative judiciary.

15.4(1) *Political and campaign activities of administrative law judges.*

a. Except as permitted by law, an administrative law judge shall not:

(1) Act as a leader in, or hold an office in, a political organization;

(2) Make speeches on behalf of a political organization;

(3) Publicly endorse or oppose a candidate for any public office;

(4) Solicit funds for, pay an assessment to, or make a contribution to a political organization, a candidate for judicial retention, or a candidate for public office;

(5) Attend or purchase tickets for dinners or other events sponsored by a political organization or a candidate for public office; or

(6) Participate in a precinct caucus, except as provided for in paragraph 15.4(1)*"b."*

b. Paragraph 15.4(1)*"a"* does not prohibit an administrative law judge from participating in a precinct caucus merely to vote for, or support in the delegate selection process, a candidate for the office of President of the United States, provided that the administrative law judge does not speak publicly on behalf of or against a candidate, encourage other caucus participants to support or oppose a candidate, or otherwise engage in conduct that is inconsistent with the independence, integrity, or impartiality of the administrative judiciary.

c. An administrative law judge shall take reasonable measures to ensure that other persons do not undertake, on behalf of the administrative law judge, any activities prohibited under paragraph 15.4(1)*"a."*

15.4(2) *Activities of administrative law judges who become candidates for nonjudicial office.*

a. Upon becoming a candidate for nonjudicial elective office, an administrative law judge shall resign from the administrative law judge position unless permitted by law to continue to hold the administrative law judge position.

b. Upon becoming a candidate for nonjudicial appointive office, an administrative law judge is not required to resign from the administrative law judge position provided that the administrative law judge complies with the other provisions of this Code.

481—15.5(10A) Scope, definitions, and application.

15.5(1) *Scope.*

a. This Code consists of four canons, each of which is codified as the introductory paragraph of an administrative rule, and numbered rules under each canon, which are codified as subrules. Subrule 15.5(3) establishes when the various rules apply to a presiding officer or an administrative law judge.

b. The canons state overarching principles of judicial ethics that all administrative law judges and presiding officers, as applicable, must observe. Although an administrative law judge or presiding officer may be disciplined only for violating an applicable rule, the canons provide important guidance in interpreting the rules. Where a rule contains a permissive term, such as "may" or "should," the conduct being addressed is committed to the personal and professional discretion of the administrative law judge or presiding officer in question, and no disciplinary action should be taken for action or inaction within the bounds of such discretion.

c. Consistent with the requirement of Iowa Code section 10A.801(7)*"d,"* this Code is similar in function and substantially equivalent to the Iowa Code of Judicial Conduct adopted by the Iowa Supreme Court and contained in Chapter 51 of the Iowa Court Rules. The Iowa Code of Judicial Conduct includes accompanying comments to the rules that may provide useful guidance regarding the purpose, meaning, and proper application of the corresponding rule in this Code. The comments contain explanatory material and, in some instances, provide examples of permitted or prohibited conduct. The comments may also identify aspirational goals for administrative law judges and presiding officers. To implement fully the principles of this Code as articulated in the canons, administrative law judges and presiding officers should strive to exceed the standards of conduct established by the rules, holding themselves to the highest ethical standards and seeking to achieve those aspirational goals, thereby enhancing the dignity of the administrative judicial position.

d. The rules of this Code are rules of reason that should be applied consistent with constitutional requirements, statutes, administrative rules, and decisional law, and with due regard for all relevant circumstances. The rules should not be interpreted to impinge upon the essential independence of administrative law judges and presiding officers in making administrative judicial decisions.

e. Although the black letter of the rules is binding and enforceable, it is not contemplated that every transgression will result in the imposition of discipline. Whether discipline should be imposed should be determined by the presiding officer's appointing authority through a reasonable and reasoned application of the rules and should depend upon factors such as the seriousness of the transgression, the facts and circumstances that existed at the time of the transgression, the extent of any pattern of improper activity, whether there have been previous violations, and the effect of the improper activity upon the administrative judicial system or others.

f. This Code is not designed or intended as a basis for civil or criminal liability. Neither is it intended to be the basis for parties to seek collateral remedies against each other or to obtain tactical advantages in proceedings before a presiding officer.

15.5(2) *Definitions.* For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions apply:

"Administrative law judge" means a person who acts as a presiding officer under the authority of Iowa Code section 17A.11(1) who is not an agency head or a member of a multimembered agency head. This includes but is not limited to administrative law judges employed by the administrative hearings division of the department, the unemployment insurance appeals bureau of Iowa workforce development, the public employment relations board, and the board of parole, as well as deputy workers' compensation commissioners in the division of workers' compensation of Iowa workforce development.

"Affiliate" or *"affiliated"* mean any person, domestic or foreign, that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with any other person.

"Appropriate authority" means the authority having responsibility for the initiation of a disciplinary process in connection with the violation to be reported.

"Associate" or *"associated"* means any person who employs, is employed by, or is under common employment with another person; any person who acts in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at the request of, another person; and any spouse, domestic partner, or person within the third degree of relationship of any of the foregoing.

"Contribution" means both financial and in-kind contributions, such as goods, professional or volunteer services, advertising, and other types of assistance, which, if obtained by the recipient otherwise, would require a financial expenditure.

"Control" or *"controlled"* each refers to the power of one person to exercise, directly or indirectly or through one or more persons, a dominating, governing, or controlling influence over another person, whether by contractual relationship (including without limitation a debtor-creditor relationship), by family relationship, by ownership, by dominion over, or by power to vote any category or voting interest (including without limitation shares of common stock, shares of voting preferred stock, and partnership interests), or by exercising (or wielding the power to exercise) in any manner dominion over a majority of directors, partners, trustees, or other persons performing similar functions. For more information, see definition of "affiliate" and "affiliated."

"De minimis," in the context of interests pertaining to disqualification of an administrative law judge, means an insignificant interest that could not raise a reasonable question regarding the administrative law judge's impartiality.

"Domestic partner" means a person with whom another person maintains a household and an intimate relationship, other than a person to whom he or she is legally married.

"Economic interest" means ownership of more than a de minimis legal or equitable interest. Except for situations in which the presiding officer participates in the management of such a legal or equitable interest, or the interest could be substantially affected by the outcome of a proceeding before a presiding officer, economic interest does not include:

1. An interest in the individual holdings within a mutual or common investment fund;
2. An interest in securities held by an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization in which the presiding officer or the presiding officer's spouse, domestic partner, parent, or child serves as a director, an officer, an advisor, or other participant;
3. A deposit in a financial institution or deposits or proprietary interests the presiding officer may maintain as a member of a mutual savings association or credit union, or similar proprietary interests; or
4. An interest in the issuer of government securities held by the presiding officer.

"Fiduciary" includes relationships such as executor, administrator, trustee, or guardian.

"Impartial," "impartiality," and *"impartially"* mean absence of bias or prejudice in favor of, or against, particular parties or classes of parties, as well as maintenance of an open mind in considering issues that may come before a presiding officer or administrative law judge.

"Impending matter" is a matter that is imminent or expected to occur in the near future.

"Impropriety" includes conduct that violates the law, court rules, or provisions of this Code and conduct that undermines a presiding officer's or administrative law judge's independence, integrity, or impartiality.

"Independence" means a presiding officer's or administrative law judge's freedom from influence or controls other than those established by law.

"Integrity" means probity, fairness, honesty, uprightness, and soundness of character.

"Knowingly," "knowledge," "known," and *"knows"* mean actual knowledge of the fact in question. A person's knowledge may be inferred from circumstances.

"Law" encompasses administrative rules and regulations, court rules, ordinances, statutes, constitutional provisions, and decisional law.

"Member of a presiding officer's family residing in the presiding officer's household" means any relative of a presiding officer by blood or marriage, or a person treated by a presiding officer as a member of the presiding officer's family, who resides in the presiding officer's household.

"Member of the administrative law judge's family" means a spouse, domestic partner, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or other relative or person with whom the administrative law judge maintains a close familial relationship.

"Member of the presiding officer's family" means a spouse, domestic partner, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or other relative or person with whom the presiding officer maintains a close familial relationship.

"Nonpublic information" means information that is not available to the public. "Nonpublic information" may include but is not limited to information that is confidential or sealed by statute or court or administrative order or impounded or communicated in camera.

"Pending matter" is a matter that has commenced. A matter continues to be pending through any appellate process, including director review and judicial review, until final disposition.

"Person" means any natural or juridical person, including without limitation any corporation, limited liability company, partnership, trust, union, or other labor organization; any branch, division, department, or local unit of any of the foregoing; any political committee, party, or organization; or any other organization or group of persons.

"Political organization" means a political party or other group sponsored by or affiliated with a political party or candidate, the principal purpose of which is to further the election or appointment of candidates for political office.

"Presiding officer" means a person who acts as a presiding officer of a contested case proceeding under the authority of Iowa Code section 17A.11(1).

"Third degree of relationship" includes the following persons: great-grandparent, grandparent, parent, uncle, aunt, brother, sister, child, grandchild, great-grandchild, nephew, and niece.

15.5(3) *Application.*

a. The provisions of this Code apply to all persons who act as presiding officers under the authority of Iowa Code section 17A.11(1), except as specified in paragraph 15.5(3)*"b"* for agency heads or members of multimembered agency heads. Canons and rules that apply to all presiding officers use the terminology "presiding officer" in their text. This Code only applies to an agency head or a member of a multimembered agency head who actually acts as a presiding officer and does not apply merely because the agency head or member of a multimembered agency head is authorized to serve as the presiding officer when another person serves as the presiding officer.

b. The provisions of rules 481—15.3(10A) and 481—15.4(10A) of this Code do not apply to agency heads or members of multimembered agency heads. These provisions apply only to administrative law judges and thus the terminology "administrative law judge" is used in their text.

c. This Code does not apply to persons who participate only in the making of a final decision in a contested case without serving as a presiding officer pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.11(1) in that contested case unless a statute or administrative rule requires such a person to abide by this Code or a particular provision of this Code. This Code may nevertheless provide useful ethical guidance for a person participating in the making of a final decision in a contested case.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 10A.801.