

876—4.38(17A) Recusal.

4.38(1) The workers' compensation commissioner or a deputy workers' compensation commissioner shall withdraw from participation in the making of any proposed or final decision in a contested case if that person:

- a. Has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a representative of a party;
- b. Has personally investigated, prosecuted or advocated in connection with that case the specific controversy underlying that case, another pending factually related contested case, or a pending factually related controversy that may culminate in a contested case involving the same parties;
- c. 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;
- d. Has acted as counsel to any person who is a private party to that proceeding within the past two years;
- e. Has a personal financial interest in the outcome of the case or any other significant personal interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the case;
- f. Has a spouse or relative within the third degree of relationship that (1) is a party to the case, or an officer, director or trustee of a party; (2) is a lawyer in the case; (3) is known to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the case; or (4) is likely to be a material witness in the case;
- g. Has even the appearance of impropriety; or
- h. Has any other legally sufficient cause to withdraw from participation in the decision making in that case.

4.38(2) The term "personally investigated" means taking affirmative steps to interview witnesses directly or to obtain documents or other information directly. The term "personally investigated" does not include general direction and supervision of assigned investigators, unsolicited receipt of information which is relayed to assigned investigators, review of another person's investigative work product in the course of determining whether there is probable cause to initiate a proceeding, or exposure to factual information while performing other agency functions, including fact gathering for purposes other than investigation of the matter which culminates in a contested case. Factual information relevant to the merits of a contested case received by a person who later serves as presiding officer in that case shall be disclosed if required by Iowa Code section 17A.17 and rule 876—4.38(17A).

4.38(3) In a situation where the workers' compensation commissioner or deputy workers' compensation commissioner knows of information which might reasonably be deemed to be a basis for recusal and decides voluntary withdrawal is unnecessary, that person shall submit the relevant information for the record by affidavit and shall provide for the record a statement of the reasons for the determination that withdrawal is unnecessary.

4.38(4) If a party asserts disqualification on any appropriate ground, including those listed in subrule 4.38(1), the party shall file a motion supported by an affidavit pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.17(7). The motion must be filed as soon as practicable after the reason alleged in the motion becomes known to the party.

If, during the course of the hearing, a party first becomes aware of evidence of bias or other grounds for disqualification, the party may move for recusal but must establish the grounds by the introduction of evidence into the record.

If the workers' compensation commissioner or deputy workers' compensation commissioner determines that recusal is appropriate, that person shall withdraw. If that person determines that withdrawal is not required, that person shall enter an order to that effect.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 17A.17.

[ARC 6841C, IAB 2/8/23, effective 3/15/23]