



Disability and Guardianship Project

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September 21, 2018

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Ms. Sherri R. Carter
Executive Officer
111 N. Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Request to Modify the California Code of Judicial Ethics;
PVP Program of the Superior Court Prompted the Request

Dear Ms. Carter:

Spectrum Institute has just written to the California Supreme Court pursuant to the court's authority under Article VI, Section 18(m) of the state Constitution. That provision gives the court administrative authority to establish a Code of Judicial Ethics to regulate the conduct of judges both on and off the bench.

Based on research we have been conducting over the past six years, we are requesting the Court to modify the Code to clarify that judges may not operate or direct a legal services program involving attorneys who appear before the judges or their court in individual cases.

The report we have submitted to the Court is enclosed. You may want to share it with the presiding judge of the Los Angeles County Superior Court since it focuses heavily on ethical violations occurring in the PVP legal services program operated by the superior court. We call our report *The Domino Effect* because the violations of ethics by judges who run the PVP legal services program have an adverse effect on the legal ethics of and performance by the PVP attorneys, which in turn has an adverse effect on the quality of services being received by clients.

The current Code of Judicial Ethics is apparently insufficient to prevent this domino effect from being triggered with the violation of judicial ethics by superior court judges. If the code were adequate, the practices revealed in Part One of the report would not be occurring repeatedly and openly. We therefore have requested the Court to modify the Code of Judicial Ethics to clarify that it is unethical for judges to manage legal services programs involving attorneys who appear before them or their court in individual cases. This, of course, would require changes in Los Angeles – both by the Los Angeles County Superior Court and by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

Respectfully,

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