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**Subject:** RE: Rules Committee Agenda Item 2021-004 / Proposed Amendment of RPC Rule 1.8(e)/ March 15 Agenda

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**From:** Stovall, Marcy [<mailto:MStovall@PULLCOM.COM>]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 3, 2021 11:32 AM

**To:** Del Ciampo, Joseph <[Joseph.DelCiampo@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Joseph.DelCiampo@jud.ct.gov)>; Petruzzelli, Lori <[Lori.Petruzzelli@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Lori.Petruzzelli@jud.ct.gov)>

**Subject:** Rules Committee Agenda Item 2021-004 / Proposed Amendment of RPC Rule 1.8(e)/ March 15 Agenda

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At the February 8 Rules Committee meeting, you pointed out that there was a discrepancy between the versions of the proposed amendment of Rule 1.8(e) attached to the proposal as submitted under my cover letter dated February 1, 2021 (copy attached). My understanding was that the Committee appeared ready to approve the proposed amendment, but tabled the proposal until the March meeting so that I could confirm which version would be subject to a vote.

I see now that the versions at Tab A and Tab C were prepared based on the Model Rule version of Rule 1.8(e). The version at Tab B was prepared based on the current Connecticut version of Rule 1.8, which differs slightly from the Model Rule.

I write now to confirm that the version attached at Tab B is the correct proposal, and I request that it be added to the agenda for the Rules Committee's March 15 meeting.

Please let me know if there are any other aspects of the 1.8(e) proposal that might benefit from discussion prior to the next Rules Committee meeting.

Marcy

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## **Proposed Amendment of Connecticut Rule 1.8 Conflict of Interest: Prohibited Transactions**

**Showing changes from current Connecticut Rule 1.8 and Commentary (additions underlined; [deletions in brackets]).**

### **Rule 1.8. Conflict of Interest: Prohibited Transactions**

(a) A lawyer shall not enter into a business transaction, including investment services, with a client or former client or knowingly acquire an ownership, possessory, security or other pecuniary interest adverse to a client or former client unless:

(1) The transaction and terms on which the lawyer acquires the interest are fair and reasonable to the client or former client and are fully disclosed and transmitted in writing to the client or former client in a manner that can be reasonably understood by the client or former client;

(2) The client or former client is advised in writing that the client or former client should consider the desirability of seeking and is given a reasonable opportunity to seek the advice of independent legal counsel in the transaction;

(3) The client or former client gives informed consent in writing signed by the client or former client, to the essential terms of the transaction and the lawyer's role in the transaction, including whether the lawyer is representing the client in the transaction;

(4) With regard to a business transaction, the lawyer advises the client or former client in writing either (A) that the lawyer will provide legal services to the client or former client concerning the transaction, or (B) that the lawyer will not provide legal services to the client or former client and that the lawyer is involved as a business person only and not as a lawyer representing the client or former client and that the lawyer is not one to whom the client or former client can turn for legal advice concerning the transaction; and

(5) With regard to the providing of investment services, the lawyer advises the client or former client in writing (A) whether such services are covered by legal liability insurance or other insurance, and either (B) that the lawyer will provide legal services to the client or former client concerning the transaction, or (C) that the lawyer will not provide legal services to the client or former client and that the lawyer is involved as a business person only and not as a lawyer representing the client or former client and that the lawyer is not one to whom the client or former client can turn to for legal services concerning the transaction. Investment services shall only apply where the lawyer has either a direct or indirect control over the invested funds and a direct or indirect interest in the underlying investment.

For purposes of subsection (a)(1) through (a)(5), the phrase “former client” shall mean a client for whom the two-year period starting from the conclusion of representation has not expired.

**(b)** A lawyer shall not use information relating to representation of a client to the disadvantage of the client unless the client gives informed consent, except as permitted or required by these Rules.

**(c)** A lawyer shall not solicit any substantial gift from a client, including a testamentary gift, or prepare on behalf of a client an instrument giving the lawyer or a person related to the lawyer any substantial gift, unless the lawyer or other recipient of the gift is related to the client. For purposes of this paragraph, related persons include a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent or other relative or individual with whom the lawyer or the client maintains a close, familial relationship.

**(d)** Prior to the conclusion of representation of a client, a lawyer shall not make or negotiate an agreement giving the lawyer literary or media rights to a portrayal or account based in substantial part on information relating to the representation.

**(e)** A lawyer shall not provide financial assistance to a client in connection with pending or contemplated litigation, except that:

(1) A lawyer may pay court costs and expenses of litigation on behalf of a client, the repayment of which may be contingent on the outcome of the matter;

(2) A lawyer representing an indigent client may pay court costs and expenses of litigation on behalf of the client~~];and~~

(3) a lawyer representing an indigent client pro bono; a lawyer representing an indigent client pro bono through a nonprofit legal services or public interest organization, a law school clinical or pro bono program, or a state or local bar association program; and a lawyer representing an indigent client through a public defender’s office may provide modest gifts to the client to pay for food, shelter, transportation, medicine and other basic living expenses. A lawyer may not:

(i) promise, assure or imply the availability of such gifts prior to retention, or as an inducement to continue the client-lawyer relationship after retention, or as an inducement to take, or forgo taking, any action in the matter;

(ii) seek or accept reimbursement from the client, a relative of the client, or anyone affiliated with the client; or

(iii) publicize or advertise a willingness to provide such gifts to prospective clients.

A lawyer may provide financial assistance permitted by this Rule even if the representation is eligible for fees under a fee-shifting statute.

**(f)** A lawyer shall not accept compensation for representing a client from one other than the client unless:

(1) The client gives informed consent; subject to revocation by the client, such informed consent shall be implied where the lawyer is retained to represent a client by a third party obligated under the terms of a contract to provide the client with a defense;

(2) There is no interference with the lawyer's independence of professional judgment or with the client-lawyer relationship; and

(3) Information relating to representation of a client is protected as required by Rule 16.

**(g)** A lawyer who represents two or more clients shall not participate in making an aggregate settlement of the claims of or against the clients, or in a criminal case an aggregated agreement as to guilty or nolo contendere pleas, unless each client gives informed consent, in a writing signed by the client. The lawyer's disclosure shall include the existence and nature of all the claims or pleas involved and of the participation of each person in the settlement. Subject to revocation by the client and to the terms of the contract, such informed consent shall be implied and need not be in writing where the lawyer is retained to represent a client by a third party obligated under the terms of a contract to provide the client with a defense and indemnity for the loss and the third party elects to settle a matter without contribution by the client.

**(h)** A lawyer shall not:

(1) Make an agreement prospectively limiting the lawyer's liability to a client for malpractice unless the client is independently represented in making the agreement; or

(2) Settle a claim or potential claim for such liability with an unrepresented client or former client unless that person is advised in writing of the desirability of seeking and is given a reasonable opportunity to seek the advice of independent legal counsel in connection therewith.

**(i)** A lawyer shall not acquire a proprietary interest in the cause of action or subject matter of litigation the lawyer is conducting for a client, except that the lawyer may:

(1) Acquire a lien granted by law to secure the lawyer's fee or expenses; and

(2) Contract with a client for a reasonable contingent fee in a civil case.

(j) A lawyer shall not have sexual relations with a client unless a consensual sexual relationship existed between them when the client-lawyer relationship commenced.

(k) While lawyers are associated in a firm, a prohibition in the foregoing subsection (a) through (i) that applies to any one of them shall apply to all of them.

## Official Commentary

**Business Transactions between Client and Lawyer.** Subsection (a) expressly applies to former clients as well as existing clients. A lawyer's legal skill and training, together with the relationship of trust and confidence between lawyer and client, create the possibility of overreaching when the lawyer participates in a business, property or financial transaction with a client, for example, a loan or sales transaction or a lawyer investment on behalf of a client. The requirements of subsection (a) must be met even when the transaction is not closely related to the subject matter of the representation, as when a lawyer drafting a will for a client learns that the client needs money for unrelated expenses and offers to make a loan to the client. It also applies to lawyers purchasing property from estates they represent. It does not apply to ordinary fee arrangements between client and lawyer, which are governed by Rule 1.5, although its requirements must be met when the lawyer accepts an interest in the client's business or other nonmonetary property as payment of all or part of a fee. In addition, the Rule does not apply to standard commercial transactions between the lawyer and the client for products or services that the client generally markets to others, for example, banking or brokerage services, products manufactured or distributed by the client, and utilities' services. In such transactions, the lawyer has no advantage in dealing with the client, and the restrictions in subsection (a) are unnecessary and impracticable.

Subsection (a)(1) requires that the transaction itself be fair to the client and that its essential terms be communicated to the client, in writing, in a manner that can be reasonably understood. Subsection (a)(2) requires that the client also be advised, in writing, of the desirability of seeking the advice of independent legal counsel. It also requires that the client be given a reasonable opportunity to obtain such advice. Subsection (a)(3) requires that the lawyer obtain the client's informed consent, in a writing signed by the client, both to the essential terms of the transaction and to the lawyer's role. When necessary, the lawyer should discuss both the material risks of the proposed transaction, including any risk presented by the lawyer's involvement, and the existence of reasonably available alternatives and should explain why the advice of independent legal counsel is desirable. See Rule 1.0(f) (definition of informed consent).

The risk to a client is greatest when the client expects the lawyer to represent the client in the transaction itself or when the lawyer's financial interest otherwise poses a significant risk that the lawyer's representation of the client will be materially limited by the lawyer's financial interest in the transaction. Here, the lawyer's role requires that the lawyer must comply, not only with the requirements of subsection (a), but also with the

requirements of Rule 1.7. Under that Rule, the lawyer must disclose the risks associated with the lawyer's dual role as both legal adviser and participant in the transaction, such as the risk that the lawyer will structure the transaction or give legal advice in a way that favors the lawyer's interests at the expense of the client. Moreover, the lawyer must obtain the client's informed consent. In some cases, the lawyer's interest may be such that Rule 1.7 will preclude the lawyer from seeking the client's consent to the transaction.

If the client is independently represented in the transaction, subsection (a)(2) of this Rule is inapplicable, and the subsection (a)(1) requirement for full disclosure is satisfied either by a written disclosure by the lawyer involved in the transaction or by the client's independent counsel. The fact that the client was independently represented in the transaction is relevant in determining whether the agreement was fair and reasonable to the client as subsection (a)(1) further requires.

**Use of Information Related to Representation.** Use of information relating to the representation to the disadvantage of the client violates the lawyer's duty of loyalty. Subsection (b) applies when the information is used to benefit either the lawyer or a third person, such as another client or business associate of the lawyer. For example, if a lawyer learns that a client intends to purchase and develop several parcels of land, the lawyer may not use that information to purchase one of the parcels in competition with the client or to recommend that another client make such a purchase. The Rule does not prohibit uses that do not disadvantage the client. For example, a lawyer who learns a government agency's interpretation of trade legislation during the representation of one client may properly use that information to benefit other clients. Subsection (b) prohibits disadvantageous use of client information unless the client gives informed consent, except as permitted or required by these Rules. See Rules 1.2(d), 1.6, 1.9(c), 3.3, 4.1(b), 8.1 and 8.3.

**Gifts to Lawyers.** A lawyer may accept a gift from a client, if the transaction meets general standards of fairness. For example, a simple gift such as a present given at a holiday or as a token of appreciation is permitted. If a client offers the lawyer a more substantial gift, subsection (c) does not prohibit the lawyer from accepting it, although such a gift may be voidable by the client under the doctrine of undue influence, which treats client gifts as presumptively fraudulent. In any event, due to concerns about overreaching and imposition on clients, a lawyer may not suggest that a substantial gift be made to the lawyer or for the lawyer's benefit, except where the lawyer is related to the client as set forth in paragraph (c).

If effectuation of a substantial gift requires preparing a legal instrument such as a will or conveyance, the client should have the detached advice that another lawyer can provide. The sole exception to this Rule is where the client is a relative of the donee.

This Rule does not prohibit a lawyer from seeking to have the lawyer or a partner or associate of the lawyer named as executor of the client's estate or to another

potentially lucrative fiduciary position. Nevertheless, such appointments will be subject to the general conflict of interest provision in Rule 1.7 when there is a significant risk that the lawyer's interest in obtaining the appointment will materially limit the lawyer's independent professional judgment in advising the client concerning the choice of an executor or other fiduciary. In obtaining the client's informed consent to the conflict, the lawyer should advise the client concerning the nature and extent of the lawyer's financial interest in the appointment, as well as the availability of alternative candidates for the position.

**Literary Rights.** An agreement by which a lawyer acquires literary or media rights concerning the conduct of the representation creates a conflict between the interests of the client and the personal interests of the lawyer. Measures suitable in the representation of the client may detract from the publication value of an account of the representation. Subsection (d) does not prohibit a lawyer representing a client in a transaction concerning literary property from agreeing that the lawyer's fee shall consist of a share in ownership in the property, if the arrangement conforms to Rule 1.5 and subsections (a) and (i).

**Financial Assistance.** Lawyers may not subsidize lawsuits or administrative proceedings brought on behalf of their clients, including making or guaranteeing loans to their clients for living expenses, because to do so would encourage clients to pursue lawsuits that might not otherwise be brought and because such assistance gives lawyers too great a financial stake in the litigation. These dangers do not warrant a prohibition on a lawyer lending a client court costs and litigation expenses, including the expenses of medical examination and the costs of obtaining and presenting evidence, because these advances are virtually indistinguishable from contingent fees and help ensure access to the courts. Similarly, an exception allowing lawyers representing indigent clients to pay court costs and litigation expenses regardless of whether these funds will be repaid is warranted.

Paragraph (e)(3) provides another exception. A lawyer representing an indigent client who does not pay a fee may give the client gifts in the form of modest contributions toward basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, transportation, clothing, and medicine. If the gift may have consequences for the client, including, e.g., for receipt of government benefits, social services, or tax liability, the lawyer should consult with the client about such consequences. See Rule 1.4.

The paragraph (e)(3) exception is narrow. Modest contributions towards basic necessities are allowed only in circumstances where it is unlikely to create conflicts of interest or invite abuse.

Financial assistance, including modest gifts pursuant to paragraph (e)(3), may be provided even if the representation is eligible for fees under a fee-shifting statute. However, paragraph (e)(3) does not permit lawyers to provide assistance in other contemplated or pending litigation in which the lawyer may eventually recover a fee,



such as contingent-fee personal injury cases or cases in which fees may be available under a contractual fee-shifting provision, even if the lawyer does not eventually receive a fee.

**Person Paying for a Lawyer's Services.** Subsection (f) requires disclosure of the fact that the lawyer's services are being paid for by a third party. Such an arrangement must also conform to the requirements of Rule 1.6 concerning confidentiality and Rule 1.7 concerning conflict of interest. Where the client is a class, consent may be obtained on behalf of the class by court-supervised procedure.

Lawyers are frequently asked to represent a client under circumstances in which a third person will compensate the lawyer, in whole or in part. The third person might be a relative or friend, an indemnitor (such as a liability insurance company) or a co-client (such as a corporation sued along with one or more of its employees). Because third-party payers frequently have interests that differ from those of the client, including interests in minimizing the amount spent on the representation and in learning how the representation is progressing, lawyers are prohibited from accepting or continuing such representations unless the lawyer determines that there will be no interference with the lawyer's independent professional judgment and there is informed consent from the client. See also Rule 5.4(c) (prohibiting interference with a lawyer's professional judgment by one who recommends, employs or pays the lawyer to render legal services for another).

Sometimes, it will be sufficient for the lawyer to obtain the client's informed consent regarding the fact of the payment and the identity of the third-party payer. If, however, the fee arrangement creates a conflict of interest for the lawyer, then the lawyer must comply with Rule 1.7. The lawyer must also conform to the requirements of Rule 1.6 concerning confidentiality. Under Rule 1.7(a), a conflict of interest exists if there is significant risk that the lawyer's representation of the client will be materially limited by the lawyer's own interest in the fee arrangement or by the lawyer's responsibilities to the third-party payer (for example, when the third-party payer is a co-client). Under Rule 1.7(b), the lawyer may accept or continue the representation with the informed consent of each affected client, unless the conflict is nonconsentable under that subsection. Under Rule 1.7(b), the informed consent must be confirmed in writing.

**Aggregate Settlements.** Differences in willingness to make or accept an offer of settlement are among the risks of common representation of multiple clients by a single lawyer. Under Rule 1.7, this is one of the risks that should be discussed before undertaking the representation, as part of the process of obtaining the clients' informed consent. In addition, Rule 1.2(a) protects each client's right to have the final say in deciding whether to accept or reject an offer of settlement and in deciding whether to enter a guilty or nolo contendere plea in a criminal case. The rule stated in this paragraph is a corollary of both these Rules and provides that, before any settlement offer or plea bargain is made or accepted on behalf of multiple clients, the lawyer must inform each of them about all the material terms of the settlement, including what the

other clients will receive or pay if the settlement or plea offer is accepted. See also Rule 1.0(f) (definition of informed consent). Lawyers representing a class of plaintiffs or defendants, or those proceeding derivatively, may not have a full client-lawyer relationship with each member of the class; nevertheless, such lawyers must comply with applicable rules regulating notification of class members and other procedural requirements designed to ensure adequate protection of the entire class.

**Limiting Liability and Settling Malpractice Claims.** Agreements prospectively limiting a lawyer's liability for malpractice are prohibited unless the client is independently represented in making the agreement because they are likely to undermine competent and diligent representation. Also, many clients are unable to evaluate the desirability of making such an agreement before a dispute has arisen, particularly if they are then represented by the lawyer seeking the agreement. This subsection does not, however, prohibit a lawyer from entering into an agreement with the client to arbitrate legal malpractice claims, provided such agreements are enforceable and the client is fully informed of the scope and effect of the agreement. Nor does this subsection limit the ability of lawyers to practice in the form of a limited-liability entity, where permitted by law, provided that each lawyer remains personally liable to the client for his or her own conduct and the firm complies with any conditions required by law, such as provisions requiring client notification or maintenance of adequate liability insurance. Nor does it prohibit an agreement in accordance with Rule 1.2 that defines the scope of the representation, although a definition of scope that makes the obligations of representation illusory will amount to an attempt to limit liability.

Agreements settling a claim or a potential claim for malpractice are not prohibited by this Rule. Nevertheless, in view of the danger that a lawyer will take unfair advantage of an unrepresented client or former client, the lawyer must first advise such a person in writing of the appropriateness of independent representation in connection with such a settlement. In addition, the lawyer must give the client or former client a reasonable opportunity to find and consult independent counsel.

**Acquiring Proprietary Interest in Litigation.** Subsection (i) states the traditional general rule that lawyers are prohibited from acquiring a proprietary interest in litigation. Like subsection (e), the general rule, which has its basis in common-law champerty and maintenance, is designed to avoid giving the lawyer too great an interest in the representation. In addition, when the lawyer acquires an ownership interest in the subject of the representation, it will be more difficult for a client to discharge the lawyer if the client so desires. The Rule is subject to specific exceptions developed in decisional law and continued in these Rules. The exception for certain advances of the costs of litigation is set forth in subsection (e). In addition, subsection (i) sets forth exceptions for liens authorized by law to secure the lawyer's fees or expenses and contracts for reasonable contingent fees. The law of each jurisdiction determines which liens are authorized by law. These may include liens granted by statute, liens originating in common law and liens acquired by contract with the client. When a lawyer acquires by contract a security interest in property other than that recovered through the lawyer's

efforts in the litigation, such an acquisition is a business or financial transaction with a client and is governed by the requirements of subsection (a). Contracts for contingent fees in civil cases are governed by Rule 1.5.

**Client-Lawyer Sexual Relationships.** The relationship between lawyer and client is a fiduciary one in which the lawyer occupies the highest position of trust and confidence. The relationship is almost always unequal; thus, a sexual relationship between lawyer and client can involve unfair exploitation of the lawyer's fiduciary role, in violation of the lawyer's basic ethical obligation not to use the trust of the client to the client's disadvantage. In addition, such a relationship presents a significant danger that, because of the lawyer's emotional involvement, the lawyer will be unable to represent the client without impairment of the exercise of independent professional judgment. Moreover, a blurred line between the professional and personal relationships may make it difficult to predict to what extent client confidences will be protected by the attorney-client evidentiary privilege, since client confidences are protected by privilege only when they are imparted in the context of the client-lawyer relationship. Because of the significant danger of harm to client interest and because the client's own emotional involvement renders it unlikely that the client could give adequate informed consent, this Rule prohibits the lawyer from having sexual relations with a client regardless of whether the relationship is consensual and regardless of the absence of prejudice to the client.

Sexual relationships that predate the client-lawyer relationship are not prohibited. Issues relating to the exploitation of the fiduciary relationship and client dependency are diminished when the sexual relationship existed prior to the commencement of the client-lawyer relationship. However, before proceeding with the representation in these circumstances, the lawyer should consider whether the lawyer's ability to represent the client will be materially limited by the relationship. See Rule 1.7(a)(2).

**Imputation of Prohibitions.** Under subsection (k), a prohibition on conduct by an individual lawyer in subsections (a) through (i) also applies to all lawyers associated in a firm with the personally prohibited lawyer. The prohibition set forth in subsection (j) is personal and is not applied to associated lawyers.