

Surface Transportation Board, DOT

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response to the show cause order, the Board shall issue an appropriate decision.

Subpart B—Canons of Ethics

§ 1103.10 Introduction.

The following canons of ethics are adopted as a general guide for those admitted to practice before the Surface Transportation Board. The practitioners before the Board include (a) lawyers, who have been regularly admitted to practice law and (b) others who have fulfilled the requirements set forth in §1103.3. The former are bound by a broad code of ethics and unwritten rules of professional conduct which apply to every activity of a lawyer. The canons do not release the lawyer from any of the duties or principles of professional conduct by which lawyers are bound. They apply similarly to all practitioners before the Board, but do not negate the applicability of other ethical codes. The canons are organized under three headings, The Practitioner’s Duties and Responsibilities to the Board, The Practitioner’s Duties and Responsibilities to the Client, The Practitioner’s Duties and Responsibilities to Other Litigants, Witnesses and the Public.

THE PRACTITIONER’S DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THE BOARD

§ 1103.11 Standards of ethical conduct in courts of the United States to be observed.

These canons further the purpose of the Board’s Rules of Practice which direct all persons appearing in proceedings before it to conform, as nearly as possible, to the standards of ethical conduct required of practice before the courts of the United States. Such standards are taken as the basis for these specifications and are modified as the nature of the practice before the Board requires.

§ 1103.12 The practitioner’s duty to and attitude toward the Board.

(a) It is the duty of the practitioner to maintain a respectful attitude toward the Board and for the importance of the functions it administers. In many respects the Board functions as a

Court, and practitioners should regard themselves as officers of that Court and uphold its honor and dignity.

(b) It is the right and duty of the practitioner to submit grievances about a member or employee of the Board to the proper authorities when proper grounds for complaint exists. In such cases, charges should be encouraged and the person making them should be protected.

(c) It is the duty of the practitioner to be punctual in attendance, and to be concise and direct in the trial and disposition of causes.

§ 1103.13 Attempts to exert political or personal influence on the Board are prohibited.

(a) It is unethical for a practitioner to attempt to influence the judgment of the Board by threats of political or personal reprisal.

(b) Marked attention and unusual hospitality on the part of a practitioner to a Board Member, administrative law judge, or other representative of the Board, which is unwarranted by the personal relationship of the parties, is subject to misconstruction of motive and should be avoided.

§ 1103.14 Private communications with the Board are prohibited.

To the extent that the Board acts in a quasi-judicial capacity, it is improper for litigants, directly or through any counsel or representative, to communicate privately with a Board Member, administrative law judge, or other representative of the Board about a pending case, or to argue privately the merits thereof in the absence of the adversaries or without notice to them. Practitioners at all times shall scrupulously refrain from going beyond *ex parte* representations which are clearly proper in view of the administrative work of the Board in their communication with the Board and its staff.

THE PRACTITIONER’S DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD A CLIENT

§ 1103.15 The practitioner’s duty to clients, generally.

The practitioner shall be respectful of the law and its official ministers, and shall not be involved in corruption of public officials or deception of the

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public. In giving improper service or advice, the practitioner invites and deserves stern condemnation. The practitioner shall observe and advise all clients to observe the statutory law to the best of his knowledge or as interpreted by competent adjudication. The practitioner owes a general duty to practice candor toward his client with respect to all aspects to his service to the client.

§ 1103.16 Adverse influences and conflicting interests.

(a) At the time of the retainer, the practitioner shall disclose to the client all circumstances of his relations to the parties, and any interest in or connection with the case.

(b) It is unethical for a practitioner to represent conflicting interests, except by express consent of all concerned given after a full disclosure of the facts. Within the meaning of this section, a practitioner represents conflicting interest, when on behalf of one client, it is his duty to contend for that which duty to another client requires him to oppose.

(c) The obligation to represent the client with undivided fidelity and not to divulge secrets or confidence forbids also the subsequent acceptance of retainers or employment from others in matters adversely affecting any interest of the client with respect to which confidence has been reposed.

§ 1103.17 Joint association of practitioners and conflicts of opinion.

(a) A client's offer of the assistance of an additional practitioner should not be regarded as evidence of lack of confidence, but the matter should be left to the determination of the client. A practitioner shall decline association as colleague if it is objectionable to the practitioner first retained, but if the client should relieve the practitioner first retained, another may come into the case.

(b) When practitioners jointly associated in a case cannot agree as to any matter vital to the interest of the client the conflict of opinion should be frankly stated to the client for final determination. The client's decision should be accepted by them unless the nature of the difference makes it im-

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practicable for the practitioner whose judgment has been overruled to cooperate effectively. In that event, it is the practitioner's duty to ask the client to relieve him of his obligation.

(c) It is the right of any practitioner to give proper advice to those seeking relief against an unfaithful or neglectful practitioner. The practitioner against whom the complaint is made should be notified of such action.

§ 1103.18 Withdrawal from employment.

The right of a practitioner to withdraw from employment, once begun, arises only from good cause. The desire or consent of the client is not always sufficient cause for withdrawal. The practitioner shall not abandon the unfinished task to the detriment of the client except for reasons of honor, or the client's persistence over the practitioner's remonstrance in presenting frivolous defenses, or the client's deliberate disregard of an obligation as to fees or expenses. In these cases, the practitioner may be warranted in withdrawing after due notice to the client with time allowed for the employment of another practitioner. Other reasons for withdrawal might include instances in which a practitioner discovers that his client has no cause and the client is determined to continue the cause, or the practitioner's own inability to conduct a case effectively. Upon withdrawing from a case, the practitioner shall refund any part of a retainer which clearly has not been earned.

§ 1103.19 Advising upon the merits of a client's cause.

A practitioner shall try to obtain full knowledge of his client's cause before advising thereon. The practitioner shall give a candid opinion of the merits and probable result of bringing the case or of any related pending or contemplated litigation. The practitioner shall beware of bold and confident assurances to clients, especially where employment may depend upon such assurances. Whenever a fair settlement can be reached, the client shall be advised to avoid or to end litigation.