

17th Judicial Circuit Aspirational Code

Statement of Purpose

Judges and lawyers share a common profession while having distinct roles to play within the legal system. In fulfilling those roles, both are subject to formal regulation. A lawyer's conduct and duties are closely regulated by the Rules of Professional Conduct (Art. VII, Rules of the Supreme Court of Illinois), as well as the law of procedure, the law of agents and fiduciaries and the general law of civil liability. Judges, likewise, are governed by independent statutory and Supreme Court regulatory provisions. These sources of law define the lawyer's primary responsibilities as a confidential and loyal representative of clients and the judge's primary responsibility for the integrity of the law and formal legal process.

However, as noted in the American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct, no set of rules will "exhaust the moral and ethical considerations that should inform a lawyer, for no worthwhile human activity can be completely defined by legal rules." In that spirit, the judges and lawyers of the 17th Judicial Circuit have undertaken to restate elements of our shared professional traditions that go beyond the level of discipline and civil liability and represent the highest aspirations of an organized profession.

Nothing in this aspirational statement detracts from or adds to the responsibilities or liabilities of lawyers or judges as defined in the relevant law regulating our conduct. Rather, this statement is, by definition, *aspirational*. It represents our shared goals for the legal profession and the quality of legal practice we hope for within the 17th Circuit. Its focus, inevitably, is on our professional interactions, in the belief that our primary obligations to clients and the legal system will best be served in a professional environment of mutual trust and respect.

A community's confidence that justice is available to all its members is a priceless public good. Essential to achieving that good is a healthy, efficient and dedicated bench and bar. Creating and sustaining such a professional bench and bar is a continuing process and this aspirational statement of the bench and bar of Winnebago and Boone counties is offered as part of that process.