

ADVISORY OPINION NO. 2001-02

Issued On February 1, 2001 By The

WEST VIRGINIA ETHICS COMMISSION

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OPINION SOUGHT

A **County Board of Education** asks if the Board may enter into a mutual promotion campaign with some of its vendors and a local television station.

FACTS RELIED UPON BY THE COMMISSION

A local television station has proposed an advertising campaign promoting public education. The proposal calls for the station to provide approximately half the cost of producing and airing a series of thirty second promotional spots. The balance of the cost would be shared by Board vendors whose support would be acknowledged during the final ten seconds of the spots.

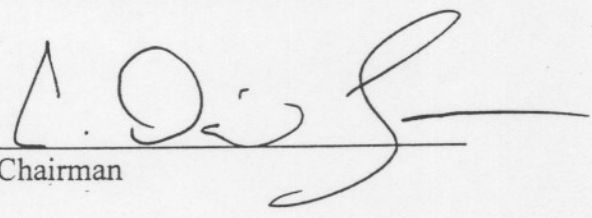
The Board has been asked to approve the station's campaign and its personnel participated in the initial presentation of the plan to Board vendors at a luncheon paid for by the station. Vendors at the luncheon were assured that their participation was purely voluntary and would in no way affect their business with the Board. It is understood that Board personnel have not been, and will not be, involved in soliciting financial support for the campaign from Board vendors.

CODE PROVISIONS RELIED UPON BY COMMISSION

WV Code § 6B-1- 1 et.seq.

ADVISORY OPINION

It would not be a violation of the Ethics Act for the Board or its personnel to acknowledge their support of the campaign or their belief that it will benefit public education goals. However, it would be improper for the Board or its personnel to use the influence of their public positions to persuade or influence Board vendors to support the campaign and they must be sensitive to avoid conduct which suggests a link between support for the campaign and continued business with the Board.


Chairman