

**ADVISORY OPINION NO. 2000-15**

**Issued On August 3, 2000 By The**

**WEST VIRGINIA ETHICS COMMISSION**

**OPINION SOUGHT**

A **County Commission** asks whether it may spend County funds to pay Chamber of Commerce dues and to purchase tickets for Chamber luncheons and annual dinners for Commissioners and the County Administrator?

**FACTS RELIED UPON BY THE COMMISSION**

The County Commission is interested in membership in the local Chamber of Commerce and asks whether it may become a dues paying member. The Commission feels membership in the Chamber, which promotes community business interests, would benefit both the Commission and the Chamber.

The Chamber has monthly luncheon meetings and an annual awards dinner at a cost of \$6 and \$25 respectively. The Commissioners ask if they may use County funds to provide tickets to each Commissioner and the County Administrator. The monthly luncheon meetings generally include speakers who address issues of interest to the local business community and would afford the Commission an opportunity to meet with community leaders and discuss the Commission's work on issues of local interest.

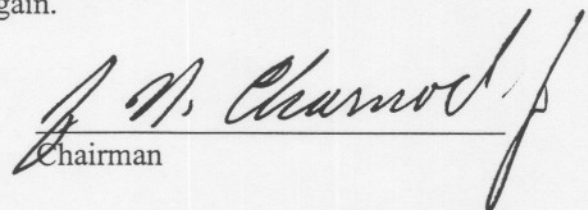
**CODE PROVISIONS RELIED UPON BY COMMISSION**

WV Code § 6B-2-5 (b) provides that a "public official or public employee may not knowingly and intentionally use his or her office or the prestige of his or her office for his or her own private gain or that of another person."

**ADVISORY OPINION**

The Ethics Commission finds that it would not be a violation for the County Commission to use county funds to pay for its membership in the local Chamber of Commerce.

The Ethics Commission finds that the use of county funds to buy meals tickets for the Commissioners and staff members to attend Chamber luncheons and its annual award dinner would be a prohibited use of office for their own private gain.

  
Chairman