



CHIEF JUSTICE'S COMMISSION ON PROFESSIONALISM

Memorandum

The Honorable P. Harris Hines (Chair)
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The Honorable Steve C. Jones
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TO: Active Members of the State Bar of Georgia

FROM: Karlise Y. Grier, Executive Director, Chief Justice's
Commission on Professionalism

RE: Annual Professionalism Surcharge on Bar Dues Statement

DATE: March 14, 2018

The Supreme Court of Georgia created the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, the first body of its kind in the nation, on February 1, 1989. The primary charge of the Commission is to enhance professionalism among Georgia's lawyers and judges. On May 4, 1989, the Supreme Court of Georgia issued an order stating: "Funding for the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism shall be provided by an additional surcharge for each active State Bar member who attends [a] course in professionalism. . . . The rate shall be set annually by the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism. . . ." Since 1998, the Commission has set a \$15 per hour fee for each hour of professionalism reported by a lawyer or CLE sponsor for CLE credit.

After consultation with the Supreme Court, the Commission has determined that it is best for the profession and the public, for the Commission to set a **\$15 per year** surcharge on every active State Bar member **instead of a \$15 per hour** surcharge for each hour of professionalism reported by a lawyer or CLE sponsor for CLE credit.

The purpose of changing the fee structure is twofold. First, the Commission wants to encourage lawyers to take more professionalism hours, and the Court and the Commission believe the hourly fee acts as a disincentive for lawyers to do so. Second, the Commission wants to make it easier for State Bar sections and local and voluntary bar associations to incorporate professionalism training into their continuing legal education programming. The Commission believes that increased participation by lawyers in professionalism CLEs will also benefit the public.

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The Commission considered various methods of collecting the Court-mandated professionalism surcharge on an annual basis. The Commission determined that assessing the Court-mandated surcharge on the Bar's annual dues statement would be the easiest way for active Bar members to pay the surcharge, so that lawyers do not receive two separate invoices with fees that could impair a lawyer's ability to practice, if the fees are not paid in a timely manner. Therefore beginning with the State Bar's 2018-2019 fiscal year, Active Members of the State Bar will see the following information on their Bar dues statement:

The Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism was created in 1989 by the Supreme Court of Georgia. Since 1998, a \$15 **per hour** professionalism fee has been charged. The Commission has determined that the Court-mandated surcharge shall be a \$15 **per year** fee for unlimited professionalism courses taken for CLE credit. The surcharge shall be assessed annually on the dues notice for all Active Members.

The Commission welcomes the opportunity to present professionalism programming and information about the professionalism surcharge to local and voluntary bar associations and to State Bar sections. For more information, or to arrange a presentation, please contact the Commission's Executive Director, Karlise Y. Grier, via e-mail to kygrier@cjcpga.org or via telephone at (404) 225-5040.