

# ADVISORY ETHICS OPINION 2000-09

## **SYNOPSIS:**

An attorney who is employed by a public corporation, and who will not be providing legal services or practicing law in this capacity for either the corporation or clients, may properly indicate on a business card, and in signing correspondence, that he or she possesses a J.D. degree, and may also use the identifying designation of “Esq.”, with a disclaimer in appropriate cases.

## **FACTS:**

The requesting lawyer possesses a J.D. degree, and is also admitted to practice law, but does not engage in the practice of law for the employing corporation. We are asked to advise whether the lawyer may include “J.D.” or “Esq.” in correspondence for the employer and on business cards. The requester points out that any correspondence using either such designation will include a disclaimer that the content of such correspondence is not intended and should not be considered as legal advice.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:**

In response to a similar request, this Committee recently addressed the issue of appropriate use of the “J.D.” designation by a non-practicing attorney.<sup>1</sup> The only significant difference here relates to the use of the “Esq.” designation. The term “Esquire” generally connotes that the individual is licensed to practice law. Given that the requesting attorney meets this requirement, the Committee finds that the designation “Esq.” is not misleading or improper. The Committee believes that where the contents of the letter might be perceived by the recipient to be legal advice, it would be prudent practice to include a full and complete disclaimer to prevent confusion or unintended reliance.

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<sup>1</sup> See Opinion 2000-8.