



April 24, 2025

Final Statement of Senator Bobby Joe Champion

Rule 55.2 allows a member to request an advisory opinion regarding a potential conflict of interest and, when such a request is made, the Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct *must provide* the advisory opinion to the member.

There is good reason for this process. If concerns are raised in news stories or social media regarding a member's conduct, an advisory opinion from this Subcommittee may be the only method for members to clear their name because only this subcommittee has the authority and the duty to speak definitively on the issue. We have had media outlets go from saying there was a conflict of interest requiring disclosure without reading the conflict-of-interest statute. Then we had another outlet attempting to outdo the other by saying the unfounded conflict of interest is really about fraud and corruption, when there hasn't been any, I repeat, any alleged fraud, misuse of funds or corruption involving 21 Days of Peace in this matter. Unfortunately, there has been loose use of facts that attempts to erode Senator Champion's integrity. Senator Champion's late father would say the only thing a person has is their word and reputation. He has fought hard and lived his life upholding the importance of integrity. Again, once this matter became the headlines of media outlets, Senator Champion submitted a request for this body to help with the past unfounded allegation and to provide an advisory opinion for him and your senate colleagues.

Importantly, the Subcommittee's duty to respond to a request for an advisory opinion is not limited to circumstances where the action relates to currently pending legislation. Nothing in Rule 55.2 imposes such a limitation and the Subcommittee should not infer such a limitation. Of course, the Subcommittee's actions in response to a request for an advisory opinion relating to past actions cannot change the fact that a bill was enacted into law, but that is always the case—even if the proposed legislation is still pending. The Subcommittee never has the power to block a bill from passage in response to a request for an advisory opinion, but it always has the authority and the duty to issue an advisory opinion in response to a request and, in so doing, to speak definitively on the question of whether a conflict of interest existed or currently exist.

Similarly, the rules do not absolve the Subcommittee of its obligation to issue an advisory opinion when an ethics complaint has been filed addressing the same or related conduct from media outlets. That is particularly true here. As the Subcommittee is aware six members filed an ethics complaint relating to Senator Champion's introduction of Senate File Nos. 2970 and 2978 citing concerns related to his obligations to his former clients under the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct.

For clarity, the previously submitted and passed bill provided a direct appropriation to Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Hennepin County. The direct appropriation was not made directly to 21 Days of Peace. The CAP agency was to work with both A Mothers Love and 21 Days of Peace for a community violence prevention initiative and a job and career development strategy. Now back to the filed ethics complaint based on the media stories.

This complaint—which was filed after Senator Champion made his request for an advisory opinion—does not address the narrow question presented in Senator Champion’s request: whether a conflict of interest existed under Minn. Stat. 10A.07 in connection with his introduction of Senate File Nos. 2970 and 2978.

If the committee believes an advisory opinion cannot be rendered for any past behavior, then how can this committee entertain an ethic complaint that's based on the same past actions in the request for an advisory opinion?

The bottom line is that this Subcommittee has the duty and authority to issue an advisory opinion in response to Senator Champion’s request and, because Senator Champion had no financial interest in either Senate File No. 2970 or 2978, the Subcommittee must conclude that no conflict of interest existed under Minn. Stat. 10A.07.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "B. H. Flay". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".