

Public Law 93-512

AN ACT

December 5, 1974
[S. 1064]

To improve judicial machinery by amending title 28, United States Code, to broaden and clarify the grounds for judicial disqualification.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 455 of title 28, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

Judicial disqualification.

“§ 455. Disqualification of justice, judge, magistrate, or referee in bankruptcy

“(a) Any justice, judge, magistrate, or referee in bankruptcy of the United States shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

“(b) He shall also disqualify himself in the following circumstances:

“(1) Where he has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party, or personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;

“(2) Where in private practice he served as lawyer in the matter in controversy, or a lawyer with whom he previously practiced law served during such association as a lawyer concerning the matter, or the judge or such lawyer has been a material witness concerning it;

“(3) Where he has served in governmental employment and in such capacity participated as counsel, adviser or material witness concerning the proceeding or expressed an opinion concerning the merits of the particular case in controversy;

“(4) He knows that he, individually or as a fiduciary, or his spouse or minor child residing in his household, has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, or any other interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;

“(5) He or his spouse, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse of such a person:

“(i) Is a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director, or trustee of a party;

“(ii) Is acting as a lawyer in the proceeding;

“(iii) Is known by the judge to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;

“(iv) Is to the judge’s knowledge likely to be a material witness in the proceeding.

“(c) A judge should inform himself about his personal and fiduciary financial interests, and make a reasonable effort to inform himself about the personal financial interests of his spouse and minor children residing in his household.

“(d) For the purposes of this section the following words or phrases shall have the meaning indicated:

Definitions.

“(1) ‘proceeding’ includes pretrial, trial, appellate review, or other stages of litigation;

“(2) the degree of relationship is calculated according to the civil law system;

“(3) ‘fiduciary’ includes such relationships as executor, administrator, trustee, and guardian;

“(4) ‘financial interest’ means ownership of a legal or equitable interest, however small, or a relationship as director, adviser, or other active participant in the affairs of a party, except that:

“(i) Ownership in a mutual or common investment fund that holds securities is not a ‘financial interest’ in such securities unless the judge participates in the management of the fund;

“(ii) An office in an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization is not a ‘financial interest’ in securities held by the organization;

“(iii) The proprietary interest of a policyholder in a mutual insurance company, of a depositor in a mutual savings association, or a similar proprietary interest, is a ‘financial interest’ in the organization only if the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the interest;

“(iv) Ownership of government securities is a ‘financial interest’ in the issuer only if the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of the securities.

“(e) No justice, judge, magistrate, or referee in bankruptcy shall accept from the parties to the proceeding a waiver of any ground for disqualification enumerated in subsection (b). Where the ground for disqualification arises only under subsection (a), waiver may be accepted provided it is preceded by a full disclosure on the record of the basis for disqualification.”

SEC. 2. Item 455 in the analysis of chapter 21 of such title 28 is amended to read as follows: “Disqualification of justice, judge, magistrate, or referee in bankruptcy.”

SEC. 3. This Act shall not apply to the trial of any proceeding commenced prior to the date of this Act, nor to appellate review of any proceeding which was fully submitted to the reviewing court prior to the date of this Act.

Approved December 5, 1974.

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JOINT RESOLUTION

Assuring compensation for damages caused by nuclear incidents involving the nuclear reactor of a United States warship.

Whereas it is vital to the national security to facilitate the ready acceptability of United States nuclear powered warships into friendly foreign ports and harbors; and

Whereas the advent of nuclear reactors has led to various efforts throughout the world to develop an appropriate legal regime for compensating those who sustain damages in the event there should be an incident involving the operation of nuclear reactors; and

Whereas the United States has been exercising leadership in developing legislative measures designed to assure prompt and equitable compensation in the event a nuclear incident should arise out of the operation of a nuclear reactor by the United States as is evidenced in particular by section 170 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended; and

Waiver of disqualification.

Nonapplicability.
28 USC 455
note.

December 6, 1974
[S. J. Res. 248]

42 USC 2210.