

**RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**  
**Chapter 3. Advocate (Rules 3.1 – 3.10)**

**Rule 3.1 Meritorious Claims and Contentions**

- (a) A lawyer shall not:
- (1) bring or continue an action, conduct a defense, assert a position in litigation, or take an appeal, without probable cause and for the purpose of harassing or maliciously injuring any person;\* or
  - (2) present a claim or defense in litigation that is not warranted under existing law, unless it can be supported by a good faith argument for an extension, modification, or reversal of the existing law.
- (b) A lawyer for the defendant in a criminal proceeding, or the respondent in a proceeding that could result in incarceration, or involuntary commitment or confinement, may nevertheless defend the proceeding by requiring that every element of the case be established.

**Rule 3.2 Delay of Litigation**

In representing a client, a lawyer shall not use means that have no substantial\* purpose other than to delay or prolong the proceeding or to cause needless expense.

**Comment**

See rule 1.3 with respect to a lawyer's duty to act with reasonable\* diligence and rule 3.1(b) with respect to a lawyer's representation of a defendant in a criminal proceeding. See also Business and Professions Code section 6128, subdivision (b).

**Rule 3.3 Candor Toward the Tribunal\***

- (a) A lawyer shall not:
- (1) knowingly\* make a false statement of fact or law to a tribunal\* or fail to correct a false statement of material fact or law previously made to the tribunal\* by the lawyer;
  - (2) fail to disclose to the tribunal\* legal authority in the controlling jurisdiction known\* to the lawyer to be directly adverse to the position of the client and not disclosed by opposing counsel, or knowingly\* misquote to a tribunal\* the language of a book, statute, decision or other authority; or
  - (3) offer evidence that the lawyer knows\* to be false. If a lawyer, the lawyer's client, or a witness called by the lawyer, has offered material evidence, and the lawyer comes to know\* of its falsity, the lawyer shall take reasonable\* remedial measures, including, if necessary, disclosure to the tribunal,\* unless disclosure is prohibited by Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e) and

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rule 1.6. A lawyer may refuse to offer evidence, other than the testimony of a defendant in a criminal matter, that the lawyer reasonably believes\* is false.

- (b) A lawyer who represents a client in a proceeding before a tribunal\* and who knows\* that a person\* intends to engage, is engaging or has engaged in criminal or fraudulent\* conduct related to the proceeding shall take reasonable\* remedial measures to the extent permitted by Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e) and rule 1.6.
- (c) The duties stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) continue to the conclusion of the proceeding.
- (d) In an ex parte proceeding where notice to the opposing party in the proceeding is not required or given and the opposing party is not present, a lawyer shall inform the tribunal\* of all material facts known\* to the lawyer that will enable the tribunal\* to make an informed decision, whether or not the facts are adverse to the position of the client.

#### Comment

[1] This rule governs the conduct of a lawyer in proceedings of a tribunal,\* including ancillary proceedings such as a deposition conducted pursuant to a tribunal's\* authority. See rule 1.0.1(m) for the definition of “tribunal.”

[2] The prohibition in paragraph (a)(1) against making false statements of law or failing to correct a material misstatement of law includes citing as authority a decision that has been overruled or a statute that has been repealed or declared unconstitutional, or failing to correct such a citation previously made to the tribunal\* by the lawyer.

#### *Legal Argument*

[3] Legal authority in the controlling jurisdiction may include legal authority outside the jurisdiction in which the tribunal\* sits, such as a federal statute or case that is determinative of an issue in a state court proceeding or a Supreme Court decision that is binding on a lower court.

[4] The duties stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) apply to all lawyers, including defense counsel in criminal cases. If a lawyer knows\* that a client intends to testify falsely or wants the lawyer to introduce false evidence, the lawyer should seek to persuade the client that the evidence should not be offered and, if unsuccessful, must refuse to offer the false evidence. If a criminal defendant insists on testifying, and the lawyer knows\* that the testimony will be false, the lawyer may offer the testimony in a narrative form if the lawyer made reasonable\* efforts to dissuade the client from the unlawful course of conduct and the lawyer has sought permission from the court to withdraw as required by rule 1.16. (See, e.g., *People v. Johnson* (1998) 62 Cal.App.4th 608 [72 Cal.Rptr.2d 805]; *People v. Jennings* (1999) 70 Cal.App.4th 899 [83 Cal.Rptr.2d 33].) The obligations of a lawyer under these rules and the State Bar Act are subordinate to applicable constitutional provisions.

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*Remedial Measures*

[5] Reasonable\* remedial measures under paragraphs (a)(3) and (b) refer to measures that are available under these rules and the State Bar Act, and which a reasonable\* lawyer would consider appropriate under the circumstances to comply with the lawyer's duty of candor to the tribunal.\* (See, e.g., rules 1.2.1, 1.4(a)(4), 1.16(a), 8.4; Bus. & Prof. Code, §§ 6068, subd. (d), 6128.) Remedial measures also include explaining to the client the lawyer's obligations under this rule and, where applicable, the reasons for the lawyer's decision to seek permission from the tribunal\* to withdraw, and remonstrating further with the client to take corrective action that would eliminate the need for the lawyer to withdraw. If the client is an organization, the lawyer should also consider the provisions of rule 1.13. Remedial measures do not include disclosure of client confidential information, which the lawyer is required to protect under Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e) and rule 1.6.

*Duration of Obligation*

[6] A proceeding has concluded within the meaning of this rule when a final judgment in the proceeding has been affirmed on appeal or the time for review has passed. A prosecutor may have obligations that go beyond the scope of this rule. (See, e.g., rule 3.8(f) and (g).)

*Ex Parte Communications*

[7] Paragraph (d) does not apply to ex parte communications that are not otherwise prohibited by law or the tribunal.\*

*Withdrawal*

[8] A lawyer's compliance with the duty of candor imposed by this rule does not require that the lawyer withdraw from the representation. The lawyer may, however, be required by rule 1.16 to seek permission of the tribunal\* to withdraw if the lawyer's compliance with this rule results in a deterioration of the lawyer-client relationship such that the lawyer can no longer competently and diligently represent the client, or where continued employment will result in a violation of these rules. A lawyer must comply with Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e) and rule 1.6 with respect to a request to withdraw that is premised on a client's misconduct.

[9] In addition to this rule, lawyers remain bound by Business and Professions Code sections 6068, subdivision (d) and 6106.

**Rule 3.4 Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel**

A lawyer shall not:

- (a) unlawfully obstruct another party's access to evidence, including a witness, or unlawfully alter, destroy or conceal a document or other material having potential evidentiary value. A lawyer shall not counsel or assist another person\* to do any such act;

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- (b) suppress any evidence that the lawyer or the lawyer's client has a legal obligation to reveal or to produce;
- (c) falsify evidence, counsel or assist a witness to testify falsely, or offer an inducement to a witness that is prohibited by law;
- (d) directly or indirectly pay, offer to pay, or acquiesce in the payment of compensation to a witness contingent upon the content of the witness's testimony or the outcome of the case. Except where prohibited by law, a lawyer may advance, guarantee, or acquiesce in the payment of:
  - (1) expenses reasonably\* incurred by a witness in attending or testifying;
  - (2) reasonable\* compensation to a witness for loss of time in attending or testifying;  
or
  - (3) a reasonable\* fee for the professional services of an expert witness;
- (e) advise or directly or indirectly cause a person\* to secrete himself or herself or to leave the jurisdiction of a tribunal\* for the purpose of making that person\* unavailable as a witness therein;
- (f) knowingly\* disobey an obligation under the rules of a tribunal\* except for an open refusal based on an assertion that no valid obligation exists; or
- (g) in trial, assert personal knowledge of facts in issue except when testifying as a witness, or state a personal opinion as to the guilt or innocence of an accused.

#### Comment

[1] Paragraph (a) applies to evidentiary material generally, including computerized information. It is a criminal offense to destroy material for purpose of impairing its availability in a pending proceeding or one whose commencement can be foreseen. (See, e.g., Pen. Code, § 135; 18 U.S.C. §§ 1501-1520.) Falsifying evidence is also generally a criminal offense. (See, e.g., Pen. Code, § 132; 18 U.S.C. § 1519.) Applicable law may permit a lawyer to take temporary possession of physical evidence of client crimes for the purpose of conducting a limited examination that will not alter or destroy material characteristics of the evidence. Applicable law may require a lawyer to turn evidence over to the police or other prosecuting authorities, depending on the circumstances. (See *People v. Lee* (1970) 3 Cal.App.3d 514, 526 [83 Cal.Rptr. 715]; *People v. Meredith* (1981) 29 Cal.3d 682 [175 Cal.Rptr. 612].)

[2] A violation of a civil or criminal discovery rule or statute does not by itself establish a violation of this rule. See rule 3.8 for special disclosure responsibilities of a prosecutor.

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**Rule 3.5 Contact with Judges, Officials, Employees, and Jurors**

- (a) Except as permitted by statute, an applicable code of judicial ethics or code of judicial conduct, or standards governing employees of a tribunal,\* a lawyer shall not directly or indirectly give or lend anything of value to a judge, official, or employee of a tribunal.\* This rule does not prohibit a lawyer from contributing to the campaign fund of a judge or judicial officer running for election or confirmation pursuant to applicable law pertaining to such contributions.
- (b) Unless permitted to do so by law, an applicable code of judicial ethics or code of judicial conduct, a rule or ruling of a tribunal,\* or a court order, a lawyer shall not directly or indirectly communicate with or argue to a judge or judicial officer upon the merits of a contested matter pending before the judge or judicial officer, except:
  - (1) in open court;
  - (2) with the consent of all other counsel and any unrepresented parties in the matter;
  - (3) in the presence of all other counsel and any unrepresented parties in the matter;
  - (4) in writing\* with a copy thereof furnished to all other counsel and any unrepresented parties in the matter; or
  - (5) in ex parte matters.
- (c) As used in this rule, “judge” and “judicial officer” shall also include: (i) administrative law judges; (ii) neutral arbitrators; (iii) State Bar Court judges; (iv) members of an administrative body acting in an adjudicative capacity; and (v) law clerks, research attorneys, or other court personnel who participate in the decision-making process, including referees, special masters, or other persons\* to whom a court refers one or more issues and whose decision or recommendation can be binding on the parties if approved by the court.
- (d) A lawyer connected with a case shall not communicate directly or indirectly with anyone the lawyer knows\* to be a member of the venire from which the jury will be selected for trial of that case.
- (e) During trial, a lawyer connected with the case shall not communicate directly or indirectly with any juror.
- (f) During trial, a lawyer who is not connected with the case shall not communicate directly or indirectly concerning the case with anyone the lawyer knows\* is a juror in the case.
- (g) After discharge of the jury from further consideration of a case a lawyer shall not communicate directly or indirectly with a juror if:
  - (1) the communication is prohibited by law or court order;

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- (2) the juror has made known\* to the lawyer a desire not to communicate; or
- (3) the communication involves misrepresentation, coercion, or duress, or is intended to harass or embarrass the juror or to influence the juror's actions in future jury service.
- (h) A lawyer shall not directly or indirectly conduct an out of court investigation of a person\* who is either a member of a venire or a juror in a manner likely to influence the state of mind of such person\* in connection with present or future jury service.
- (i) All restrictions imposed by this rule also apply to communications with, or investigations of, members of the family of a person\* who is either a member of a venire or a juror.
- (j) A lawyer shall reveal promptly to the court improper conduct by a person\* who is either a member of a venire or a juror, or by another toward a person\* who is either a member of a venire or a juror or a member of his or her family, of which the lawyer has knowledge.
- (k) This rule does not prohibit a lawyer from communicating with persons\* who are members of a venire or jurors as a part of the official proceedings.
- (l) For purposes of this rule, "juror" means any empaneled, discharged, or excused juror.

#### **Comment**

[1] An applicable code of judicial ethics or code of judicial conduct under this rule includes the California Code of Judicial Ethics and the Code of Conduct for United States Judges. Regarding employees of a tribunal\* not subject to judicial ethics or conduct codes, applicable standards include the Code of Ethics for the Court Employees of California and 5 United States Code section 7353 (Gifts to Federal employees). The statutes applicable to adjudicatory proceedings of state agencies generally are contained in the Administrative Procedure Act (Gov. Code, § 11340 et seq.; see Gov. Code, § 11370 [listing statutes with the act].) State and local agencies also may adopt their own regulations and rules governing communications with members or employees of a tribunal.\*

[2] For guidance on permissible communications with a juror in a criminal action after discharge of the jury, see Code of Civil Procedure section 206.

[3] It is improper for a lawyer to communicate with a juror who has been removed, discharged, or excused from an empaneled jury, regardless of whether notice is given to other counsel, until such time as the entire jury has been discharged from further service or unless the communication is part of the official proceedings of the case.

#### **Rule 3.6 Trial Publicity**

- (a) A lawyer who is participating or has participated in the investigation or litigation of a matter shall not make an extrajudicial statement that the lawyer knows\* or reasonably

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should know\* will (i) be disseminated by means of public communication and (ii) have a substantial\* likelihood of materially prejudicing an adjudicative proceeding in the matter.

- (b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), but only to the extent permitted by Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e) and rule 1.6, lawyer may state:
- (1) the claim, offense or defense involved and, except when prohibited by law, the identity of the persons\* involved;
  - (2) information contained in a public record;
  - (3) that an investigation of a matter is in progress;
  - (4) the scheduling or result of any step in litigation;
  - (5) a request for assistance in obtaining evidence and information necessary thereto;
  - (6) a warning of danger concerning the behavior of a person\* involved, when there is reason to believe\* that there exists the likelihood of substantial\* harm to an individual or to the public but only to the extent that dissemination by public communication is reasonably\* necessary to protect the individual or the public; and
  - (7) in a criminal case, in addition to subparagraphs (1) through (6):
    - (i) the identity, general area of residence, and occupation of the accused;
    - (ii) if the accused has not been apprehended, the information necessary to aid in apprehension of that person;\*
    - (iii) the fact, time, and place of arrest; and
    - (iv) the identity of investigating and arresting officers or agencies and the length of the investigation.
- (c) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), a lawyer may make a statement that a reasonable\* lawyer would believe\* is required to protect a client from the substantial\* undue prejudicial effect of recent publicity not initiated by the lawyer or the lawyer's client. A statement made pursuant to this paragraph shall be limited to such information as is necessary to mitigate the recent adverse publicity.
- (d) No lawyer associated in a law firm\* or government agency with a lawyer subject to paragraph (a) shall make a statement prohibited by paragraph (a).

#### **Comment**

- [1] Whether an extrajudicial statement violates this rule depends on many factors, including:  
(i) whether the extrajudicial statement presents information clearly inadmissible as evidence in

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the matter for the purpose of proving or disproving a material fact in issue; (ii) whether the extrajudicial statement presents information the lawyer knows\* is false, deceptive, or the use of which would violate Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (d) or rule 3.3; (iii) whether the extrajudicial statement violates a lawful “gag” order, or protective order, statute, rule of court, or special rule of confidentiality, for example, in juvenile, domestic, mental disability, and certain criminal proceedings, (see Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6068, subd. (a) and rule 3.4(f), which require compliance with such obligations); and (iv) the timing of the statement.

[2] This rule applies to prosecutors and criminal defense counsel. See rule 3.8(e) for additional duties of prosecutors in connection with extrajudicial statements about criminal proceedings.

#### Rule 3.7 Lawyer as Witness

- (a) A lawyer shall not act as an advocate in a trial in which the lawyer is likely to be a witness unless:
- (1) the lawyer’s testimony relates to an uncontested issue or matter;
  - (2) the lawyer’s testimony relates to the nature and value of legal services rendered in the case; or
  - (3) the lawyer has obtained informed written consent\* from the client. If the lawyer represents the People or a governmental entity, the consent shall be obtained from the head of the office or a designee of the head of the office by which the lawyer is employed.
- (b) A lawyer may act as advocate in a trial in which another lawyer in the lawyer’s firm\* is likely to be called as a witness unless precluded from doing so by rule 1.7 or rule 1.9.

#### Comment

[1] This rule applies to a trial before a jury, judge, administrative law judge or arbitrator. This rule does not apply to other adversarial proceedings. This rule also does not apply in non-adversarial proceedings, as where a lawyer testifies on behalf of a client in a hearing before a legislative body.

[2] A lawyer’s obligation to obtain informed written consent\* may be satisfied when the lawyer makes the required disclosure, and the client gives informed consent\* on the record in court before a licensed court reporter or court recorder who prepares a transcript or recording of the disclosure and consent. See definition of “written” in rule 1.0.1(n).

[3] Notwithstanding a client’s informed written consent,\* courts retain discretion to take action, up to and including disqualification of a lawyer who seeks to both testify and serve as an advocate, to protect the trier of fact from being misled or the opposing party from being prejudiced. (See, e.g., *Lyle v. Superior Court* (1981) 122 Cal.App.3d 470 [175 Cal.Rptr. 918].)

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**Rule 3.8 Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor**

The prosecutor in a criminal case shall:

- (a) not institute or continue to prosecute a charge that the prosecutor knows\* is not supported by probable cause;
- (b) make reasonable\* efforts to assure that the accused has been advised of the right to, and the procedure for obtaining, counsel and has been given reasonable\* opportunity to obtain counsel;
- (c) not seek to obtain from an unrepresented accused a waiver of important pretrial rights unless the tribunal\* has approved the appearance of the accused in propria persona;
- (d) make timely disclosure to the defense of all evidence or information known\* to the prosecutor that the prosecutor knows\* or reasonably should know\* tends to negate the guilt of the accused, mitigate the offense, or mitigate the sentence, except when the prosecutor is relieved of this responsibility by a protective order of the tribunal;\* and
- (e) exercise reasonable\* care to prevent persons\* under the supervision or direction of the prosecutor, including investigators, law enforcement personnel, employees or other persons\* assisting or associated with the prosecutor in a criminal case from making an extrajudicial statement that the prosecutor would be prohibited from making under rule 3.6.
- (f) When a prosecutor knows\* of new, credible and material evidence creating a reasonable\* likelihood that a convicted defendant did not commit an offense of which the defendant was convicted, the prosecutor shall:
  - (1) promptly disclose that evidence to an appropriate court or authority, and
  - (2) if the conviction was obtained in the prosecutor's jurisdiction,
    - (i) promptly disclose that evidence to the defendant unless a court authorizes delay, and
    - (ii) undertake further investigation, or make reasonable\* efforts to cause an investigation, to determine whether the defendant was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit.
- (g) When a prosecutor knows\* of clear and convincing evidence establishing that a defendant in the prosecutor's jurisdiction was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit, the prosecutor shall seek to remedy the conviction.

**Comment**

[1] A prosecutor has the responsibility of a minister of justice and not simply that of an advocate. This responsibility carries with it specific obligations to see that the defendant is

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accorded procedural justice, that guilt is decided upon the basis of sufficient evidence, and that special precautions are taken to prevent and to rectify the conviction of innocent persons.\* This rule is intended to achieve those results. All lawyers in government service remain bound by rules 3.1 and 3.4.

[2] Paragraph (c) does not forbid the lawful questioning of an uncharged suspect who has knowingly\* waived the right to counsel and the right to remain silent. Paragraph (c) also does not forbid prosecutors from seeking from an unrepresented accused a reasonable\* waiver of time for initial appearance or preliminary hearing as a means of facilitating the accused's voluntary cooperation in an ongoing law enforcement investigation.

[3] The disclosure obligations in paragraph (d) are not limited to evidence or information that is material as defined by *Brady v. Maryland* (1963) 373 U.S. 83 [83 S.Ct. 1194] and its progeny. For example, these obligations include, at a minimum, the duty to disclose impeachment evidence or information that a prosecutor knows\* or reasonably should know\* casts significant doubt on the accuracy or admissibility of witness testimony on which the prosecution intends to rely. Paragraph (d) does not require disclosure of information protected from disclosure by federal or California laws and rules, as interpreted by case law or court orders. Nothing in this rule is intended to be applied in a manner inconsistent with statutory and constitutional provisions governing discovery in California courts. A disclosure's timeliness will vary with the circumstances, and paragraph (d) is not intended to impose timing requirements different from those established by statutes, procedural rules, court orders, and case law interpreting those authorities and the California and federal constitutions.

[4] The exception in paragraph (d) recognizes that a prosecutor may seek an appropriate protective order from the tribunal\* if disclosure of information to the defense could result in substantial\* harm to an individual or to the public interest.

[5] Paragraph (e) supplements rule 3.6, which prohibits extrajudicial statements that have a substantial\* likelihood of prejudicing an adjudicatory proceeding. Paragraph (e) is not intended to restrict the statements which a prosecutor may make which comply with rule 3.6(b) or 3.6(c).

[6] Prosecutors have a duty to supervise the work of subordinate lawyers and nonlawyer employees or agents. (See rules 5.1 and 5.3.) Ordinarily, the reasonable\* care standard of paragraph (e) will be satisfied if the prosecutor issues the appropriate cautions to law enforcement personnel and other relevant individuals.

[7] When a prosecutor knows\* of new, credible and material evidence creating a reasonable\* likelihood that a person\* outside the prosecutor's jurisdiction was convicted of a crime that the person\* did not commit, paragraph (f) requires prompt disclosure to the court or other appropriate authority, such as the chief prosecutor of the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred. If the conviction was obtained in the prosecutor's jurisdiction, paragraph (f) requires the prosecutor to examine the evidence and undertake further investigation to determine whether the defendant is in fact innocent or make reasonable\* efforts to cause another appropriate authority to undertake the necessary investigation, and to promptly disclose the evidence to the court and, absent court authorized delay, to the defendant. Disclosure to a represented defendant

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must be made through the defendant’s counsel, and, in the case of an unrepresented defendant, would ordinarily be accompanied by a request to a court for the appointment of counsel to assist the defendant in taking such legal measures as may be appropriate. (See rule 4.2.) Statutes may require a prosecutor to preserve certain types of evidence in criminal matters. (See Pen. Code, §§ 1417.1-1417.9.) In addition, prosecutors must obey file preservation orders concerning rights of discovery guaranteed by the Constitution and statutory provisions. (See *People v. Superior Court (Morales)* (2017) 2 Cal.5th 523 [213 Cal.Rptr.3d 581]; *Shorts v. Superior Court* (2018) 24 Cal.App.5th 709 [234 Cal.Rptr.3d 392].)

[8] Under paragraph (g), once the prosecutor knows\* of clear and convincing evidence that the defendant was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit, the prosecutor must seek to remedy the conviction. Depending upon the circumstances, steps to remedy the conviction could include disclosure of the evidence to the defendant, requesting that the court appoint counsel for an unrepresented indigent defendant and, where appropriate, notifying the court that the prosecutor has knowledge that the defendant did not commit the offense of which the defendant was convicted.

[9] A prosecutor’s independent judgment, made in good faith, that the new evidence is not of such nature as to trigger the obligations of paragraphs (f) and (g), though subsequently determined to have been erroneous, does not constitute a violation of this rule.

**[Publisher’s Note: Comment [7] was amended by order of the Supreme Court, effective June 1, 2020.]**

**Rule 3.9 Advocate in Nonadjudicative Proceedings**

A lawyer representing a client before a legislative body or administrative agency in connection with a pending nonadjudicative matter or proceeding shall disclose that the appearance is in a representative capacity, except when the lawyer seeks information from an agency that is available to the public.

**Comment**

This rule only applies when a lawyer represents a client in connection with an official hearing or meeting of a governmental agency or a legislative body to which the lawyer or the lawyer’s client is presenting evidence or argument. It does not apply to representation of a client in a negotiation or other bilateral transaction with a governmental agency or in connection with an application for a license or other privilege or the client’s compliance with generally applicable reporting requirements, such as the filing of income-tax returns. This rule also does not apply to the representation of a client in connection with an investigation or examination of the client’s affairs conducted by government investigators or examiners. Representation in such matters is governed by rules 4.1 through 4.4. This rule does not require a lawyer to disclose a client’s identity.

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**Rule 3.10 Threatening Criminal, Administrative, or Disciplinary Charges**

- (a) A lawyer shall not threaten to present criminal, administrative, or disciplinary charges to obtain an advantage in a civil dispute.
- (b) As used in paragraph (a) of this rule, the term “administrative charges” means the filing or lodging of a complaint with any governmental organization that may order or recommend the loss or suspension of a license, or may impose or recommend the imposition of a fine, pecuniary sanction, or other sanction of a quasi-criminal nature but does not include filing charges with an administrative entity required by law as a condition precedent to maintaining a civil action.
- (c) As used in this rule, the term “civil dispute” means a controversy or potential controversy over the rights and duties of two or more persons\* under civil law, whether or not an action has been commenced, and includes an administrative proceeding of a quasi-civil nature pending before a federal, state, or local governmental entity.

**Comment**

[1] Paragraph (a) does not prohibit a statement by a lawyer that the lawyer will present criminal, administrative, or disciplinary charges, unless the statement is made to obtain an advantage in a civil dispute. For example, if a lawyer believes\* in good faith that the conduct of the opposing lawyer or party violates criminal or other laws, the lawyer may state that if the conduct continues the lawyer will report it to criminal or administrative authorities. On the other hand, a lawyer could not state or imply that a criminal or administrative action will be pursued unless the opposing party agrees to settle the civil dispute.

[2] This rule does not apply to a threat to bring a civil action. It also does not prohibit actually presenting criminal, administrative or disciplinary charges, even if doing so creates an advantage in a civil dispute. Whether a lawyer’s statement violates this rule depends on the specific facts. (See, e.g., *Crane v. State Bar* (1981) 30 Cal.3d 117 [177 Cal.Rptr. 670].) A statement that the lawyer will pursue “all available legal remedies,” or words of similar import, does not by itself violate this rule.

[3] This rule does not apply to: (i) a threat to initiate contempt proceedings for a failure to comply with a court order; or (ii) the offer of a civil compromise in accordance with a statute such as Penal Code sections 1377 and 1378.

[4] This rule does not prohibit a government lawyer from offering a global settlement or release-dismissal agreement in connection with related criminal, civil or administrative matters. The government lawyer must have probable cause for initiating or continuing criminal charges. (See rule 3.8(a).)

[5] As used in paragraph (b), “governmental organizations” includes any federal, state, local, and foreign governmental organizations. Paragraph (b) exempts the threat of filing an administrative charge that is a prerequisite to filing a civil complaint on the same transaction or occurrence.