

Editorial

**"Ethics" In Mississippi
*In Re Dr. Doug Rouse***

Yes, members of the Mississippi Ethics Commission (MEC) changed their minds and now believes Dr. Doug Rouse is not acting unethically. Sort of. Let's look at the details of the MEC [revised decision](#) and draw some conclusions.

"However, the trustee should carefully consider whether this conduct complies with the public policy set forth in Section 25-4-101, Miss. Code of 1972...Section 25-4-101, Miss. Code of 1972. The legislature declares that elective and public office and employment is a public trust and any effort to realize personal gain through official conduct, other than as provided by law, or as a natural consequence of the employment or position, is a violation of that trust. Therefore, public servants shall endeavor to pursue a course of conduct which will not raise suspicion among the public that they are likely to be engaged in acts that are in violation of this trust and which will not reflect unfavorably upon the state and local governments."

In other words, the MEC has decided to allow Dr. Rouse to voluntarily stop dubious ethical behavior. They are allowing him to save face while he makes the right decision and does the right thing: either resign his decision-making position at the IHL or take his Southern Bone and Joint medical practice out of the business of providing services to USM. Dr. Rouse's business practices at Southern Bone and Joint Specialists and his outpatient surgery arm, Southern Surgery Center in Hattiesburg, his employment/membership at the Institutions of Higher Learning appears to "raise suspicion among the public that [Dr. Rouse is] likely to be engaged in acts that are in violation of this trust." In other words, Dr. Rouse should avoid the appearance of impropriety and resign from the IHL or voluntarily withdraw his SBJ business from any connection with the University of Southern Mississippi.

My bet: Doug Rouse will continue to collect profits from SBJ while he continues his decision-making role as a member of the IHL.