

July 21, 2003

Re: IO-03-64

You inquired whether the county executive violated the ethics law by having her name and title placed on a county monument on Route 50 at the border of Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties. The ethics commission considered your question at its meeting on July 14, 2003 and concluded that this activity does not violate the ethics law. It is common practice for elected officials to place their names on signs within the boundaries of their jurisdictions. You stated that this activity constitutes an unfair political advantage to would be opponents. While your conclusion is speculative, it is undoubtedly true that the placement of the names and titles of current elected officials in public areas provides relevant information to citizens and visitors alike. With due respect for your reference to Immanuel Kant's theory of reversibility, the ethics commission concluded that the possibility that this activity would lead other elected officials to place their names on signs in their own districts does not constitute an abuse of the prestige of office, or a case of politicking run amok.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,
Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director