

# Office of State Ethics



## *At a Glance*

The Connecticut Office of State Ethics is charged with administering and enforcing the Connecticut Codes of Ethics. The Office accomplishes its mission to ensure honesty, integrity and accountability in state government through educating and providing guidance to those covered by the Ethics Codes; interpreting the Ethics Codes; investigating and enforcing violations of the Ethics Codes; and providing information to the public.

**CAROL CARSON, *Executive Director***

### *Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board Members:*

**Charles Chiusano (*Chair*)**, term ending September 30, 2017; **Mary Bigelow (*Vice-Chair*)**, term ending September 30, 2017; **Kevin Johnston**, term ending September 30, 2018; **Dena Castricone**, term ending September 30, 2018; **Cheryl Lipson**, term ending September 30, 2019; **Richard Lang**, term ending September 30, 2019; **Nichelle Mullins**, term ending September 30, 2019; **Jason Farrell**, term ending September 30, 2020; and **N. Beth Cook**, term ending September 30, 2020.

***Established - July 1, 2005***

***Statutory authority – Chapter 10, CGS 1-79 et. seq.***

***Central office - 18-20 Trinity Street, Suite 205, Hartford, CT 06106; 860-263-2400***

***Number of full-time employees - 13***

***Recurring operating expenses - \$1,330,257 for Fiscal Year 2017***

***Organizational structure - Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board, Executive Director, Legal Division, Enforcement Division.***

## **Mission**

*The Office of State Ethics (OSE) administers Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 10, Part I for Public Officials and Part II for Lobbyists, and Part IV, Ethical Considerations concerning Bidding and State Contracts. The mission of the Office of State Ethics is to practice and promote the highest ethical standards and accountability in state government by providing education and legal advice, ensuring disclosure, and impartially enforcing the Codes of Ethics.*

## **Statutory Responsibility**

The statutory responsibilities of the Office of State Ethics (OSE) are broken down into four main categories: education, interpretation, enforcement and disclosure. The OSE is charged with providing education, guidance and advice to state employees, public officials, lobbyists and legislators on the Codes of Ethics. The Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board (CEAB) is responsible for adjudicating cases brought under the ethics codes and making findings of violations as well as issuing advisory opinions – interpretations of the codes as they apply to specific situations. All investigation and prosecution matters are the responsibility of the Ethics Enforcement Officer. The OSE is also statutorily obligated to administer all lobbyist financial reports along with Statements of Financial Interests (SFIs) filed by public official and state employee.

## **Public Service**

The Office of State Ethics is committed to carrying out its mission in the most user-friendly and transparent manner possible. To this end, the OSE continues to update and improve its website by adding new and historical material as well as continually improving and updating the online filing systems utilized by lobbyists and public officials. It is important to note that these systems are also utilized by members of the public and the media for information and research.

## **Improvements/Achievements 2016-17**

### Education/Communications

- In FY 2017 we provided a full range of communication and education services to ensure high ethical standards among our public servants. We continued our Top Ten Ethics Rules format and completed 65 in-person trainings to approximately 2,000 – 2,500 individuals.
- Issued press releases and e-alerts for the adoption of Advisory Board Opinions, Declaratory Rulings and enforcement action resolutions.
- On February 2, 2017, the Commission on Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) determined that “*Ethics 101: Part 1 for Public Officials and State Employees*” meets the delivery and content requirements of the MCLE rule and qualifies for 1 credit hour.

### Advisory Opinions

- With assistance from the OSE's legal division staff, the CEAB issued two Legal Opinions. Summaries as well as the full text of all opinions and rulings are available on the OSE's website.
- The legal division staff responded to approximately 1,032 requests for advice about the application of the Codes of Ethics; approximately 464 written staff opinions were completed during the reporting period, and legal advice via the telephone or in person was provided on 568 occasions, with an average of 23 calls answered per day.

### Enforcement

- The Enforcement Division received or opened a total of 59 confidential investigations of potential violations of the Code of Ethics
- The Enforcement Division opened 150 enforcement matters for violations of the filing requirements of the Code of Ethics
- 105 matters were settled publicly. A total of \$24,020 in penalties were received. Three of the resolved matters involved alleged violations of the Code of Ethics including conflicts of interest and improper use of office for financial gain. One hundred and two matters were resolved as UAPA matters and involved the failure to file forms in the manner required by the law. All penalties go directly into Connecticut's General Fund.
- The Enforcement Division randomly selected ten percent of the 2016 Statement of Financial Interests that were filed by May 2, 2017 to be audited. An audit report detailing the finding will be posted on the OSE website. All State Marshal 2016 Statements of Income that were filed by May 2, 2017, will also be audited.
- The OSE completed, and the CEAB approved, ten audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists

### Records: Public Access and Maintenance

- The OSE handled 2,621 public official Statements of Financial Interests in paper and electronic form, with 97 percent of required filers meeting the May 1, 2017 filing deadline and 97 percent of filers using the online filing system.
- The OSE received 224 State Marshal Annual Statements of Income.
- 50 FOI requests were completed.

## **Conclusion**

The Office of State Ethics promotes integrity in government by providing advice, guidance and education to public officials, state employees and lobbyists; by sensibly interpreting and, when necessary, fairly and impartially enforcing the applicable laws; by administering the lobbyist and financial disclosure filing systems; and by providing the public with access to certain public information. The OSE's principles are reflected in its logo: honesty, integrity and accountability. The Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board and OSE staff will continue to strive for innovation and progress that result in cost-savings and efficiency in the agency's core areas, such as increasing the percentage of financial disclosure filers who file online. The OSE will also continue to reach out to the larger community to foster a culture of ethics in the state, and an environment of public trust in which the citizens of Connecticut will have ethical state government.