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# ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR CALENDAR YEAR 2023 OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS

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## Message from Executive Director Peter Lewandowski



The Connecticut Office of State Ethics is committed to serving the citizens of Connecticut. A government that maintains the highest ethical standards is integral to a well-functioning democracy.

Ethical questions and issues will inevitably arise and when they do, the Office of State Ethics is available to assist. Our mission is to encourage transparency, accountability, and integrity throughout state government. We do this by providing legal advice, guidance and education to public officials, state employees and lobbyists; by sensibly interpreting and, when necessary, fairly and impartially enforcing applicable laws; and by ensuring required disclosure through the administration of the lobbyist and financial filing systems.

***OSE's Number One Rule: Always Get Advice!***

### Office of State Ethics' Mission

The Office of State Ethics practices and promotes the highest ethical standards and accountability in state government by providing education and legal advice, ensuring disclosure, and impartially enforcing the Codes of Ethics.

### Agency's Jurisdiction

The Office of State Ethics has broad authority over Statewide elected officials, members of the General Assembly, officials and employees in all three branches of state government (except judges), registered lobbyists and state contractors.

## Introduction

Created on July 1, 2005, under Public Act 05-183, the Office of State Ethics (“OSE”) is an independent regulatory agency charged with administering and enforcing the Connecticut Codes of Ethics (“Ethics Codes”), which are found in Chapter 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

<b>Part I</b>	Code of Ethics for Public Officials General Statutes <u>§§ 1-79</u> to <u>1-90a</u>
<b>Part II</b>	Code of Ethics for Lobbyists General Statutes <u>§§ 1-91</u> to <u>1-101a</u>
<b>Part III</b>	Lobbying: Miscellaneous Provisions General Statutes <u>§§ 1-101aa</u> and <u>1-101bb</u>
<b>Part IV</b>	Ethical Considerations Concerning Bidding and State Contracts General Statutes <u>§§ 1-101mm</u> to <u>1-101rr</u>

## Staff and Budget

The OSE consists of 16 employees. These employees work in three separate divisions - Legal, Enforcement, and the Administrative Division - under the leadership of the Executive Director, Peter Lewandowski, who is appointed by the Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board. The OSE Executive Director has overall responsibility for the welfare and effectiveness of the OSE.

The agency’s managerial staff includes General Counsel Brian O’Dowd; Ethics Enforcement Officer Mark Wasielewski; and Director of Education and Communications Sarah Clark.

The OSE had a Fiscal Year 2023 appropriation of \$1,947,408. Actual expenditures for Fiscal Year 2023 were \$1,816,432. This expenditure amount translates to a cost of approximately \$0.50<sup>1</sup> for each citizen of Connecticut.

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<sup>1</sup> 2023 population estimate July 1, 2023, 3,617,716 from the United States Census Bureau.  
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## Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board (CEAB)

The OSE’s governing body is the Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board (“CEAB”), which has nine members appointed by the Governor and legislative leadership. The CEAB holds monthly meetings that are open to the public.

CEAB Members also:

- Appoint and evaluate the Executive Director of the OSE
- Issue advisory opinions to persons subject to the Ethics Codes
- Serve as Hearing Officers for non-confidential hearings
- Attend hearings to determine if violations occurred and, if so, assess penalties
- Oversee the legislative agenda

### Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board Membership

The nine members are appointed by the Governor and legislative leadership for staggered four-year terms. The CEAB members who served during calendar year 2023 are:

- **Dena Castricone of North Haven – Chair**  
Appointed by Governor Ned Lamont for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2026
- **N. Beth Cook of West Hartford - Vice Chair**  
Appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2026
- **Mary Bigelow of Northford**  
Appointed by Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2025
- **Charles F. Chiusano of Fairfield**  
Appointed by Senate Republican Leader Kevin Kelly for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2025
- **Karen Christiana of Old Saybrook**  
Appointed by Speaker of the House Joe Aresimowicz, she retired following her four-year term which expired on September 30, 2023
- **Jason K. Farrell of West Hartford**  
Appointed by Governor Ned Lamont for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2024
- **Thomas K. Jones of West Hartford**  
Appointed by Speaker of the House Matthew Ritter for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2027
- **Cheryl Lipson of Orange**  
Appointed by House Republican Leader Vincent Candelora for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2027
- **Karreem Mebane of West Haven**  
Appointed by House Majority Leader Jason Rojas for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2027
- **Nichelle Mullins of Farmington**  
Appointed by House Majority Matthew Ritter, she retired following her four-year term which expired on September 30, 2023
- **Laura A. Schuyler of West Simsbury**  
Appointed by Governor Ned Lamont for a four-year term expiring on September 30, 2024

## Legal Division

The Legal Division provides advice and opinions regarding the Ethics Codes the regulated community, which includes approximately 32,000<sup>2</sup> public officials and state employees, over 2,000 lobbyists, and all state contractors. Members of the public also request opinions by way of declaratory ruling. The Division consists of a General Counsel, who also serves as counsel to the CEAB, a Deputy General Counsel, an Associate General Counsel, an Assistant General Counsel, and a Paralegal.

### Opinions

In calendar year 2023, the OSE received 620 requests for advice about the application of the Ethics Codes. The Division staff issued 429 written staff opinions during the reporting period and handled 191 other requests for advice over the telephone or in face-to-face meetings.

### 2023 Advisory Opinion Summaries

#### **[Advisory Opinion No. 2023-1](#) Application of General Statutes § 1-84b (f) to the Former Chief Operating Officer of Connecticut Housing Finance Authority**

The Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board concluded that because the Amendment to the Agreement between CHFA and LISC did not trigger the one-year ban in § 1-84b (f), the former COO of CHFA is not barred by that provision from accepting post-state employment with LISC.

#### **[Advisory Opinion No. 2023-2](#) Application of General Statutes § 1-83 (b) (1) (G) to Student Loans Refinanced with the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority**

The Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board concluded that under § 1-83 (b) (1) (G), which requires SFI filers to disclose “any . . . contracts with . . . a quasi-public agency held or entered into by the individual,” an SFI filer must report student loans refinanced via promissory notes with CHESLA under the “Leases and Contracts” section of the form.

#### **[Advisory Opinion No. 2023-3](#) Application of the Code of Ethics’ Revolving Door Provisions to an Employee of the Department of Economic and Community Development**

The Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board concluded that the petitioner, a Department of Economic and Community Development employee who was ministerially (but not substantially) involved in the award of state contracts to a Connecticut municipality, may accept post-state employment with that municipality without violating General Statutes § 1-84b (f), but in engaging in such employment, she must abide by the three other post-state employment provisions noted.

### Freedom of Information (FOI) Compliance

In calendar year 2023, the OSE responded to 27 FOI requests.

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<sup>2</sup> Data as of Feb 1, 2024 at <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/Connecticut-State-Workforce/3hd7-ujh3/>  
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## Information Technology – Filing Systems

Another way that the OSE supports compliance with the Codes of Ethics is through documentation and disclosure. The agency administers systems for these purposes not only for the regulated community, but for the agency’s internal functions as well. The OSE has two IT specialists which split their time between OSE and the Freedom of Information Commission via a Memorandum of Understanding.

The OSE continued in 2023 to make improvements to the public official, lobbyist and Case Management System online filing systems. These improvements brought the filing systems up to current technological standards and provided users with simple, intuitive processes. The enhancements to the systems also improved the quantity and variety of information accessible to the public in real time from the filed data.

### Statement of Financial Interests (SFI)

The Code of Ethics for Public Officials § 1-83 (a) (1) requires elected officers, members of the General Assembly, and certain other state officials and employees to file yearly SFIs electronically with the OSE. The Governor’s Office also issues a standard that designates appointed officials and additional state employees in the Executive Branch who must file these financial disclosure statements and charges agency heads to determine who else among their staff and attached boards should also file.

SFI filings include information such as names of all associated businesses, sources of income over \$1,000, and a list of all real property, as well as any creditors. For the second year in a row, SFI filings were completed entirely electronically.

The SFIs serve two purposes. First, they provide a checklist or reminder to state officials and employees to be mindful of potential conflicts of interest. Second, the SFIs, which are available to the public, serve as a tool to maximize transparency and public confidence in governmental decision making. In 2023, out of 2,675 required filers, 98% filed their SFI on time. Out of 97 Agencies, Offices, Commissions and Quasi-Public Agencies, sixty-seven percent achieved 100% timely compliance. An additional fifteen percent of agencies earned the “Commitment to Excellence” designation, meaning they were unable to meet 100% timely filing threshold by one (1) filing only.

### Lobbyist Filing and Disclosure

During the 2023-2024 biennial lobbyist registration period, the OSE processed, via its electronic filing system, thousands of financial reports filed by business organizations (firms that employ communicator lobbyists), client lobbyists, and in-house communicator lobbyists.

The 2,211 lobbyist registrations in Calendar Year 2023 generated \$985,508.00 in fees collected by the OSE and deposited into the state’s General Fund.

## Enforcement and Audits

The Enforcement Division investigates and prosecutes violations of the Ethics Codes. The Division consists of the Ethics Enforcement Officer, one Deputy Ethics Enforcement Officer, one Assistant Ethics Enforcement Officer, one Legal Investigator, and one Paralegal Specialist

### Enforcement Statistics

The Enforcement Division conducted a total of 119 matters and reviews of potential violations of the Ethics Codes during 2023. In that year, the Division resolved 59 matters by consent order or other resolution, resulting in the collection of a total of \$36,520.00 in penalties. The penalties include monies paid in 49 cases by lobbyists who failed to register in a timely manner or who were delinquent in filing required financial reports.

Also included are 2 settlements of alleged Ethics Code violations, which included failure to register as lobbyists and impermissible use of a state position for financial gain; and 13 matters against public officials for failure to timely file their Statements of Financial Interests as required by law.

In 2023, the Division opened 91 matters under the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act (UAPA) regarding failure to timely file financial reports or other required filings. Of these, all were resolved informally prior to hearing. No UAPA hearings were conducted in 2023.

In 2023, the Division opened 28 confidential evaluations and filed or received 15 complaints regarding alleged violations of the Ethics Codes committed by public officials, state employees, lobbyists or contractors. In addition, the Division received multiple “tips” regarding alleged violations of the Ethics Codes that, after review, proved to be outside of the jurisdiction of the OSE.

### 2023 Lobbyist Audits

The Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board approved 18 audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists in 2023. Thirteen (or 72 %) of the approved audits contained adverse findings, compared to 60% in 2022. Corrective action was not imposed in any audits in 2023.

### Background Checks

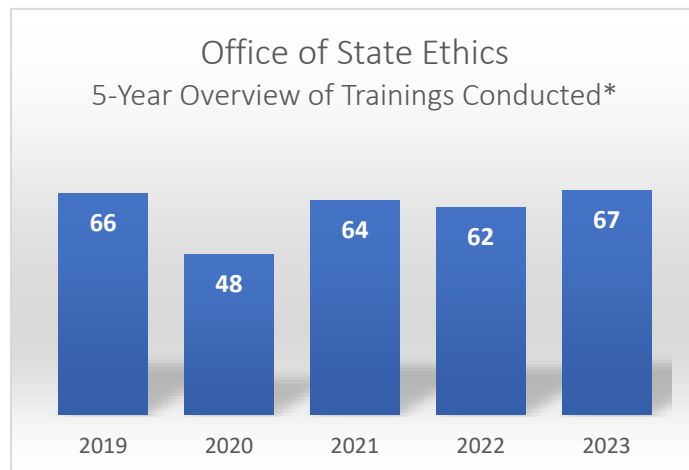
In 2023, the OSE conducted 76 background checks, typically relating to individuals being considered for appointive office.

## Education and Outreach

The Office of State Ethics works toward the goal of “**compliance through education**” by making an earnest, daily effort to put out information in writing and through training the regulated community and the public.

### Training

The OSE conducts Code of Ethics training for Public Officials, State Employees, Lobbyists and Contractors, and each training is individually tailored to address agency or office-specific needs and requirements. The Office of State Ethics completed 19 trainings in the first quarter, 18 in the second quarter, 8 in the third quarter and 22 trainings in the fourth quarter. A total of **67 trainings** were conducted in 2023.



Ethics training is required for all newly hired state employees. Additionally, in accordance with § 1-81c of the Connecticut General Statutes, the OSE administers a program of mandatory training for all members of the General Assembly every four years and upon first election. In 2023, OSE also made a bigger push to train lobbying firms and similar offices.

During 2023, the OSE continued to offer the self-service on-line training program, in-person, online, and hybrid trainings to provide option and opportunity to any resident, official and/or state employee that requested training. This flexibility has allowed the OSE to continue to effectively meet its mandate to provide yearly training to all state employees. The OSE constantly strives to expand training offerings.

### Newsletters

Consistent with the goal of being accessible and increasing awareness, the OSE fosters strong partnerships with designated ethics liaisons from every state agency and branch of state government. Nearly 150 **Ethics Liaisons** receive one of OSE’s two monthly electronic newsletters which provides timely and helpful information regarding aspects of the Code, best practices for SFI filings and updates on recent commission decisions and frequently asked questions.

In 2023 OSE began sending a second monthly newsletter to the **lobbyist community**, which reaches nearly 1500 emails registered in the OSE lobbyist filing system. This has been the first proactive communication that touches on the Code of Ethics, offers training for offices at their request and provides needed filing guidance and deadline reminders.

Our website ([ct.gov/ethics](https://ct.gov/ethics)) is continually updated and improved to ensure easy access to important information for members of the regulated communities and the public.



## Media

In 2023, the OSE enhanced our media accessibility by multiplying our media contact list fivefold (now over 500 contacts) to provide much greater coverage statewide and locally. We issued press releases and e-alerts for the adoption of Advisory Board Opinions, Declaratory Rulings, and enforcement action settlements. Additionally, we regularly received requests for information and background from members of the press and responded quickly and thoroughly.

## Partnerships

The OSE regularly collaborates with outside partners to further the confidence of Connecticut citizens in state government. The OSE strives to broaden its educational reach, creating an increased awareness of agency services through its no-cost activities.

## Proposed Legislation

The OSE submitted the following legislative proposals for consideration during the 2023 Regular Session of the Connecticut General Assembly:

1. An Act Concerning Revisions to the State Codes of Ethics – *Public Act No. 23-37 (Summary below)*
2. An Act Concerning Contracting with Quasi-Public Agencies Under the State Code of Ethics – *Passed in the Senate; did not advance in the House*
3. An Act Concerning Conflicts of Interest Due To an Employer Other Than the State under the State Code of Ethics – *Legislation did not pass either chamber*

## Public Act 23-27 Summary

[Public Act No. 23-37](#) makes the following changes to the Code of Ethics for Public Officials:

- subjects statewide officers-elect to the State Code of Ethics for Public Officials and State Employees by adding them to the code’s definition of “public official”;
- makes a parallel change to the definition of “public official” under the State Code of Ethics for Lobbyists;
- requires client lobbyists (i.e., persons on behalf of whom lobbying takes place) to include on their biennial registration forms with the Office of State Ethics the name, job title, and contact information for (1) the individual responsible for overseeing lobbying activities and (2) any other individual designated as an authorized filer. The contact information must include the individual’s phone and fax numbers, business mailing address, and email address. The act replaces provisions in prior law requiring client lobbyists to provide this information for the “person” that oversees lobbying activities; and
- makes technical changes in the ethics codes’ definition of “quasi-public agency” by referencing state law’s primary definition of quasi-public agency (i.e., the definition in CGS § 1-120, which is part of the quasi-public agency chapter of the General Statutes), rather than separately listing each quasi-public agency in the ethics codes.

## Contact Information



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