

# Office of State Ethics



## *At a Glance*

**Carol Carson, Executive Director**

**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 - 14**

**Recurring operating expenses - \$1,413,165 for Fiscal Year 2019**

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

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

**Dena Castricone (Chair), term ending September 30, 2022; Kevin Johnston (Vice-Chair), term ending September 30, 2022; Mary Bigelow, term ending September 30, 2021; Charles Chiusano, term ending September 30, 2021; 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**

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 Codes of Ethics; public officials, state employees, lobbyists and state contractors.

## **Mission**

*The Office of State Ethics administers Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 10, Part I for Public Officials, 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 Codes of Ethics 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 officials and state employees.

## **Public Service**

The OSE 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 2018-19**

### **Education/Communications**

- In FY 2019 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 69 in-person trainings to approximately 3,000 individuals.
- The original “Ethics 101” for public officials and state employees course was updated and released to all state agencies.
- We issued press releases and e-alerts for the adoption of Advisory Board Opinions, Declaratory Rulings and enforcement action settlements.

## **Advisory Opinions**

- With assistance from the OSE's Legal Division staff, the CEAB issued four 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 980 requests for advice about the application of the Codes of Ethics; approximately 444 written staff opinions were completed during the reporting period, and legal advice via the telephone or in person was provided on 536 occasions.

## **Enforcement**

- The Enforcement Division received or opened a total of 55 confidential investigations of potential violations of the Code of Ethics.
- The Enforcement Division opened 123 enforcement matters for violations of the filing requirements of the Code of Ethics: 98 lobbyist matters, 14 SFI matters and 11 state marshal Statement of Income (SOI) matters.
- One hundred one matters were settled publicly. A total of \$40,550 in penalties were received. Six of the resolved matters resulted from confidential investigations, and involved a range of violations, including a state contractor who charged the state for work not performed; a former state employee who accepted post-state employment from a party to a state contract valued at greater than \$50,000 of which the former state employee substantially participated in the contract's negotiation or award; and, a state employee's use of her state position to receive a free hotel stay. Ninety-five 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 also successfully prosecuted one matter where the CEAB, following a hearing, found the respondent, a former state employee at a state university, had violated use of office and conflict of interest provisions of the Code of Ethics when she awarded her husband a lucrative graduate school fellowship at the university. The Board ordered the respondent to pay a civil penalty of \$20,000.
- The Enforcement Division randomly selected ten percent of the 2018 SFIs that were required to be filed by May 1, 2019, to be audited. All 2018 state marshal SOIs that were required to be filed by May 1, 2019, will also be audited.
- The OSE completed, and the CEAB approved, thirteen audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists.

## **Records: Public Access and Maintenance**

- The OSE handled 2,549 public official SFIs in paper and electronic form, with 98 percent of required filers meeting the May 1, 2019 filing deadline and 98 percent of filers using the online filing system.
- The OSE received 201 state marshal SOIs.
- Fifty-one Freedom of Information 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 Office of State Ethics principles are reflected in its logo: honesty, integrity and accountability. The Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board and the Office of State Ethics staff will continue to strive for innovation and progress that result in cost-savings and efficiency. The Office of State Ethics 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.