

Office of State Ethics



At a Glance

Peter Lewandowski, 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 - \$1,515,986 for Fiscal Year 2020

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; Jason K. Farrell (Vice-Chair), term ending September 30, 2020; Mary Bigelow, term ending September 30, 2021; Charles Chiusano, term ending September 30, 2021; Karen Christiana, term ending September 30, 2023; Kevin P. Johnston, term ending September 30, 2022; Cheryl Lipson, term ending September 30, 2023; Nichelle Mullins, term ending September 30, 2023; 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 2019-20

Education/Communications

- In FY 2020 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 61 in-person trainings to approximately 3,000 individuals.
- An updated “Ethics 101” on-line course for public officials and state employees was 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 one Legal Opinion. A summary, 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 660 requests for advice about the application of the Codes of Ethics; approximately 312 written staff opinions were completed during the reporting period, and legal advice via the telephone or in person was provided on 348 occasions.

Enforcement

- The Enforcement Division received or opened a total of forty-two (42) confidential investigations of potential violations of the Code of Ethics.
- The Enforcement Division opened eighty-one (81) enforcement matters for violations of the filing requirements of the Code of Ethics.
- Eighty-five (85) matters were settled publicly. A total of \$16,360 in penalties were received. Three (3) of the resolved matters resulted from confidential investigations, and involved a range of violations. Eighty-two (82) 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 conducted four (4) UAPA hearings. Two hearings involved the untimely filing of the annual communicator lobbyist financial form (ETH-2A), and two hearings involved the untimely filing of the annual Statement of Income for State Marshals.
- The OSE completed, and the CEAB approved, nine (9) audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists.

Records: Public Access and Maintenance

- The OSE handled 2,506 public official SFIs in paper and electronic form, with 99 percent of required filers meeting the July 1, 2020 (Note: The statutory filing deadline is May 1, 2020 which was extended for a period of 60 days to July 1, 2020 in response to COVID-19) and 99 percent of filers using the online filing system.
- Public Act No. 19-180 repealed the requirement that State Marshals File Annual Statements of Income. Effective: October 1, 2019
- Sixteen (16) 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.