

Office of State Ethics



At a Glance

(Public Act 11-48 created the Office of Governmental Accountability, which is made up of nine formerly independent agencies including the Office of State Ethics. The nine divisions continue to have independent decision-making authority, including budgeting and staffing).

CAROL CARSON, Executive Director

Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board Members: David Gay, (Chair), term ending September 30, 2013; Charles Chiusano (Vice-Chair), term ending September 30, 2013; Thomas H. Dooley, term ending September 30, 2012; Dennis Riley, term ending September 30, 2013; Martin Margulies, term ended September 30, 2011; Herbert Grant, term ending September 30, 2015; Mary Bigelow, term ending September 30, 2013; Roger Kemp, term ending September 30, 2015; Daniel Young, term ending September 30, 2012; and Susan Gruen, term ending September 30, 2015.

Established - July 1, 2005

Statutory authority - Public Act 05-183, as amended by Public Act 11-48

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

Number of full-time employees - 13

Recurring operating expenses - \$1,293,638 for Fiscal Year 2012

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

Mission

The Office of State Ethics (OSE), a division of the Office of Governmental Accountability, administers Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 10, Part I for Public Officials and Part II for Lobbyists, with limited jurisdiction over 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 receive, process, and maintain records of all lobbyist filings along with public official and state employee Statements of Financial Interests (SFIs).

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 2011-12

Education/Communications

- Provided a full range of communication and education services to ensure high ethical standards among our public servants, including 35 in-person trainings and monthly liaison letters to all state agencies.
- Responded to hundreds of media inquiries, and provided timely information with a focus on preserving public trust through accurate disclosure and transparency.
- Issued press releases and e-alerts for the adoption of Advisory Board Opinions, Declaratory Rulings and enforcement action resolutions.
- Redesigned and streamlined website navigation according to current web standards to provide the public easy and immediate access to information and notifications.
- The OSE on-line and web-streaming video training pages were accessed over 3,500 times.

Advisory Opinions and Other Legal Division Achievements

- With assistance from the OSE's legal division staff, the CEAB issued 11 advisory opinions. Summaries as well as the full text of all opinions and rulings are available on the OSE's website.

- The legal division staff issued approximately 1,048 written staff opinions during the reporting period, in addition to providing legal advice via the telephone on a daily basis, with an average of 26 calls answered per day.
- The legal division staff reviewed approximately 1,131 Necessary Expense reports from public officials and state employees. Over 97 percent of those reports were filed electronically, seven points higher than the previous year. These reports detail who is paying for the lodging and/or out-of-state travel expenses for a state official or employee actively participating at an event.

Court and Administrative Agency Appeals

- The OSE successfully defended in the Connecticut Supreme Court the Board's decision in Advisory Opinion No. 2009-3, "Application of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials to Workers' Compensation Commission Hearing Reporters". This was the first legal challenge of a Board Advisory Opinion. The opinion was appealed by Council 4, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) on behalf of the reporters.
- The OSE successfully defended in Superior Court the Board's finding that a state employee had used her public office and position to run two private businesses in violation of the state ethics code. That matter is currently pending in the Appellate Court.

Enforcement

- The Enforcement Division issued or received 47 complaints and opened 30 evaluations for alleged violations of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials or Lobbyists.
- The Division opened five matters against public officials and state employees for failure to timely file the annual Statement of Financial Interests (SFI) and 93 matters against client and communicator lobbyists for failure to file mandatory reports.
- Eighty-five matters were settled publicly. Three of these cases were settled by Consent Order, resulting in \$10,510 in penalties. In addition, 83 cases were settled as UAPA matters, resulting in \$20,040 in penalties to the state. (All penalty money goes directly into Connecticut's General Fund).
- The OSE completed, and the CEAB approved, 11 audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists.
- The Enforcement Division randomly selected and audited ten percent of the Statement of Financial Interests that were filed by May 1, 2012. An audit report detailing the finding will be posted on the OSE website. All State Marshal Statements of Income were also audited in 2012. The [audit report](#) noted significant declines in errors from the two previous years' filings.

Records: Public Access and Maintenance

- The OSE handled over 2,500 public official Statements of Financial Interests in paper and electronic form, with 97 percent of required filers meeting the May 1, 2012 filing deadline and 89 percent of those – five percent more than the previous year – utilized the online filing system. Sixty state agencies had 100 percent timely filing compliance and received certificates recognizing their efforts to ensure that their employees complied with the filing deadline. Of these agencies, 16 also achieved 100 percent online filing.
- The OSE handled over 225 State Marshal Annual Statements of Income and responded to numerous media requests for various marshal filings.

- The agency responded to 56 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act.

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 non-exempt 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.