

Office of State Ethics



At a Glance

(CGS section 1-300 et. seq. established 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:

Charles Chiusano (Chair), term ending September 30, 2013; Herbert Grant (Vice-Chair), term ending September 30, 2015; Mary Bigelow, term ending September 30, 2013; David Gay, term ending September 30, 2014; Susan Gruen, term ending September 30, 2015; Reverend Tommie Jackson, term ending September 30, 2016; Roger Kemp, term ending September 30, 2015; Dennis Riley, term ending September 30, 2014; Daniel Young, term ending September 30, 2016.

Established - July 1, 2005

Statutory authority – Chapter 10, CGS 1-79 et. seq., as amended by CGS 1-300 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 - \$1,282,580 for Fiscal Year 2013

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, 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 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 2012-13

Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board

- In order to best serve Connecticut, the OSE created a strategic plan in 2012 which focuses on four key initiatives to improve operations: efficiency, technology, communication and board operations.
- The strategic plan is the effort of the OSE leaders, staff and members of the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board. It highlights our key initiatives and goals to be achieved.
- A detailed action plan adds objectives, timelines and working groups responsible for meeting the objectives.
- This strategic plan incorporates our mission, vision and values in determining our priorities for 2012 to 2015, when OSE will celebrate its 10 year anniversary.

Education/Communications

- Provided a full range of communication and education services to ensure high ethical standards among our public servants, including 38 in-person trainings in 2012 and monthly liaison letters to all state agencies.

- Responded to hundreds of media inquires, 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 branded six plain language guides and one new guide, which have been made fully interactive with our website and applicable statutes, regulations and filing disclosure systems.
- Developed and published Governor Malloy's Statement of Financial Interests Standard and Guidelines for agency heads.
- Updated and reinvigorated trainings for public officials and lobbyists.
- Held a conference for public officials and state employees in December 2012.
- Held a conference for business organization and client lobbyists in December 2012 where they were provided, for the first time, lobbyist system training which included a complete interface between our disclosure system and the applicable provisions from the Codes of Ethics.
- Provided on-line and web-streaming video training pages, which were accessed over 5,000 times and resulted in over 1,600 completed trainings.

Advisory Opinions and Other Legal Division Achievements

- With assistance from the OSE's legal division staff, the CEAB issued 5 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 1,132 written staff opinions during the reporting period, in addition to providing legal advice via the telephone on a daily basis, with an average of 25 calls answered per day.
- The legal division staff reviewed approximately 636 Necessary Expense reports from public officials and state employees. Over 92 percent of those reports were filed electronically. 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 Appellate Court the Board's decision that a former state employee had used her public office and position to run two private businesses in violation of the state ethics code. The Connecticut Supreme Court declined the plaintiff's request for further review on May 1, 2013. This was the first legal challenge of a Board decision arising out of an ethics enforcement action.

Enforcement

- The Enforcement Division issued or received 34 complaints and opened 39 evaluations for alleged violations of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials or Lobbyists.
- The Division opened 8 matters against public officials and state employees, and 7 matters against state marshals, for failure to timely file their 2012 annual Statement of Financial Interests (SFI).
- The Division also opened 164 matters against client and communicator lobbyists for failure to file mandatory reports.

- Ninety-four matters were settled publicly. Six of these cases were settled by Consent Order, resulting in the collection of \$12,000 in penalties, and 88 cases were settled as UAPA matters, resulting in the collection of penalties in the amount of \$11,373.50. All penalties collected go directly into Connecticut's General Fund.
- The OSE completed, and the CEAB approved, 12 audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists.
- The Enforcement Division randomly selected ten percent of the 2012 Statement of Financial Interests that were filed by May 1, 2013 to be audited. An audit report detailing the finding will be posted on the OSE website. All State Marshal 2012 Statements of Income that were filed by May 1, 2013, will also be audited.

Records: Public Access and Maintenance

- The OSE handled over 2,500 public official Statements of Financial Interests in paper and electronic form, with 98 percent of required filers meeting the May 1, 2013 filing deadline and 92 percent of those – three percent more than the previous year – utilized the online filing system. Fifty-two 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, 23 also achieved 100 percent online filing.
- The OSE handled over 243 State Marshal Annual Statements of Income and responded to numerous media requests for various marshal filings.
- The agency responded to 68 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 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.