

Office of State Ethics



At a Glance

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 Ethics Codes; interpreting the Ethics Codes; investigating and enforcing violations of the Ethics Codes; and providing information to the public.

CAROL CARSON, *Executive Director*

Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board Members:

Charles Chiusano (*Chair*), term ending September 30, 2017; **Herbert Grant** (*Vice-Chair*), term ending September 30, 2015; **Mary Bigelow**, term ending September 30, 2017; **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 - 15

Recurring operating expenses - \$1,441,698 for Fiscal Year 2014

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

Mission

The Office of State Ethics (OSE), an independent 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 administer all lobbyist financial reports along with Statements of Financial Interests (SFIs) filed by public official and state employee.

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 2013-14

Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board

- In order to best serve Connecticut, the OSE continues to pursue its strategic plan which incorporates the OSE's mission, vision and values in determining 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 65 in-person trainings in FY 2014, nearly twice the number conducted in the previous year.
- Sent monthly liaison letters to all state agencies.
- Created and disseminated a Guide for Ethics Liaisons and Compliance Officers, one of the most important components of which is the voluntary self-audit, which was developed to assist agencies in integrating best practice management strategies in relation to the Code of Ethics.
- 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.
- Updated and reinvigorated trainings for public officials, state employees and lobbyists, and provided training sessions for approximately 1,600 people including members of various state boards and commissions as well as state agency personnel.
- Provided on-line and web-streaming video training pages, which were accessed by thousands of state employees, public officials, lobbyists and others and which resulted in over 1,200 completed trainings.

Advisory Opinions and Other Legal Division Achievements

- With assistance from the OSE's legal division staff, the CEAB issued nine Legal Opinions (eight Advisory Opinions and one Declaratory Ruling), an increase of approximately 80% over last year. 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 1,037 requests for advice about the application of the Codes of Ethics; approximately 387 written staff opinions were completed during the reporting period, and legal advice via the telephone or in person was provided on 650 occasions, with an average of 25 calls answered per day.
- The legal division staff reviewed approximately 566 Necessary Expenses reports from public officials and state employees. Over 97 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.

Administrative Agency Appeals

- The OSE successfully defended one administrative appeal before the Freedom of Information Commission, filed on July 6, 2013 against the Chairman of the CEAB, the CEAB and the Executive Director.

Enforcement

- The Enforcement Division issued or received 28 complaints and opened 28 evaluations for alleged violations of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials or Lobbyists.
- The Division opened 5 matters against public officials and state employees, and 3 matters against state marshals, for failure to timely file their 2013 annual Statement of Financial Interests (SFI).
- The Division also opened 56 matters against client and communicator lobbyists for failure to file mandatory reports.
- Fifty-seven matters were settled publicly. Five of these cases were settled by Consent Order, resulting in the collection of \$13,750 in penalties, and 52 cases were settled as UAPA matters, resulting in the collection of penalties in the amount of \$6,040. All penalties collected go 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 ten percent of the 2013 Statement of Financial Interests that were filed by May 1, 2014 to be audited. An audit report detailing the finding will be posted on the OSE website. All State Marshal 2013 Statements of Income that were filed by May 1, 2014, will also be audited.

Records: Public Access and Maintenance

- The OSE handled over 2,600 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 – one percent more than the previous year – utilized the online filing system. 81 percent of 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, 29 also achieved 100 percent online filing.
- The OSE handled over 226 State Marshal Annual Statements of Income and responded to numerous media requests for various marshal filings.
- The agency responded to 60 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.