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Chapter 11 Ethics Standards And Financial Disclosure

Section

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§ 1101. Short title of chapter

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act.

§ 1101.1. Purpose

(a) **Declarations.**--The Legislature hereby declares that public office is a public trust and that any effort to realize personal financial gain through public office other than compensation provided by law is a violation of that trust. In order to strengthen the faith and confidence of the people of this Commonwealth in their government, the Legislature further declares that the people have a right to be assured that the financial interests of holders of or nominees or candidates for public office do not conflict with the public trust. Because public confidence in government can best be sustained by assuring the people of the impartiality and honesty of public officials, this chapter shall be liberally construed to promote complete financial disclosure as specified in this chapter. Furthermore, it is recognized that clear guidelines are needed in order to guide public officials and employees in their actions. Thus, the General Assembly by this chapter intends to define as clearly as possible those areas which represent conflict with the public trust.

(b) **Recognition.**--It is recognized that many public officials, including most local officials and members of the General Assembly, are citizen-officials who bring to their public office the knowledge and concerns of ordinary citizens and taxpayers. They should not be discouraged from maintaining their contacts with their community through their occupations and professions. Thus, in order to foster maximum compliance with its terms, this chapter shall be administered in a manner that emphasizes guidance to public officials and public employees regarding the ethical standards established by this chapter.

(c) **Legislative intent.**--It is the intent of the General Assembly that this chapter be administered by an independent commission composed of members who are cognizant of the responsibilities and burdens of public officials and employees and who have demonstrated an interest in promoting public confidence in government.

§ 1102. Definitions

The following words and phrases when used in this chapter shall have, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the meanings given to them in this section:

"Advice." Any directive of the chief counsel of the State Ethics Commission issued under section 1107(11) (relating to powers and duties of commission) and based exclusively on prior commission opinions, this chapter, regulations promulgated pursuant to this chapter and court opinions which interpret this chapter.

"Aggregate." The total of all gifts received from a single source as provided in section 1105(b)(6) (relating to statement of financial interests).

"Authority of office or employment." The actual power provided by law, the exercise of which is necessary to the performance of duties and responsibilities unique to a particular public office or position of public employment.

"Business." Any corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, firm, enterprise, franchise, association, organization, self-employed individual, holding company, joint stock company, receivership, trust or any legal entity organized for profit.

"Business with which he is associated." Any business in which the person or a member of the person's immediate family is a director, officer, owner, employee or has a financial interest.

"Candidate." Any individual who seeks nomination or election to public office by vote of the electorate, other than a judge of elections, inspector of elections or official of a political party, whether or not such individual is nominated or elected. An individual shall be deemed to be seeking nomination or election to such office if he has:

- (1) received a contribution or made an expenditure or given his consent for any other person or committee to receive a contribution or make an expenditure for the purpose of influencing his nomination or election to such office, whether or not the individual has announced the specific office for which he will seek nomination or

election at the time the contribution is received or the expenditure is made; or

(2) taken the action necessary under the laws of this Commonwealth to qualify himself for nomination or election to such office.

The term shall include individuals nominated or elected as write-in candidates unless they resign such nomination or elected office within 30 days of having been nominated or elected.

"Commission." The State Ethics Commission.

"Confidential information." Information not obtainable from reviewing a public document or from making inquiry to a publicly available source of information.

"Conflict" or "conflict of interest." Use by a public official or public employee of the authority of his office or employment or any confidential information received through his holding public office or employment for the private pecuniary benefit of himself, a member of his immediate family or a business with which he or a member of his immediate family is associated. The term does not include an action having a de minimis economic impact or which affects to the same degree a class consisting of the general public or a subclass consisting of an industry, occupation or other group which includes the public official or public employee, a member of his immediate family or a business with which he or a member of his immediate family is associated.

"Contract." An agreement or arrangement for the acquisition, use or disposal by the Commonwealth or a political subdivision of consulting or other services or of supplies, materials, equipment, land or other personal or real property. The term shall not mean an agreement or arrangement between the State or political subdivision as one party and a public official or public employee as the other party, concerning his expense, reimbursement, salary, wage, retirement or other benefit, tenure or other matters in consideration of his current public employment with the Commonwealth or a political subdivision.

"De minimis economic impact." An economic consequence which has an insignificant effect.

"Executive-level State employee." The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, cabinet members, deputy secretaries, the Governor's office staff, any State employee with discretionary powers which may affect the outcome of a State agency's decision in relation to a private corporation or business or any employee who by virtue of his job function could influence the outcome of such a decision.

"Financial interest." Any financial interest in a legal entity engaged in business for profit which comprises more than 5% of the equity of the business or more than 5% of the assets of the economic interest in indebtedness.

"Findings report." An initial report containing findings of fact as determined by the State Ethics Commission's investigation but not containing any conclusions of law or any determination of whether there has been a violation of law.

"Frivolous complaint." A complaint filed in a grossly negligent manner without basis in law or fact.

"Gift." As defined in section 13A03 (relating to definitions).

"Governmental body." Any department, authority, commission, committee, council, board, bureau, division, service, office, officer, administration, legislative body or other establishment in the executive, legislative or judicial branch of a state, a nation or a political subdivision thereof or any agency performing a governmental function.

"Governmental body with which a public official or public employee is or has been associated." The governmental body within State government or a political subdivision by which the public official or employee is or has been employed or to which the public official or employee is or has been appointed or elected and subdivisions and offices within that governmental body.

"Honorarium." Payment made in recognition of published works, appearances, speeches and presentations and which is not intended as consideration for the value of such services which are nonpublic occupational or professional in nature. The term does not include tokens presented or provided which are of de minimis economic impact.

"Hospitality." As defined in section 13A03 (relating to definitions).

"Immediate family." A parent, spouse, child, brother or sister.

"Income." Any money or thing of value received or to be received as a claim on future services or in recognition of services rendered in the past, whether in the form of a payment, fee, salary, expense, allowance, forbearance, forgiveness, interest, dividend, royalty, rent, capital gain, reward, severance payment, proceeds from the sale of a financial interest in a corporation, professional corporation, partnership or other entity resulting from termination or withdrawal therefrom upon assumption of public office or employment or any other form of recompense or any combination thereof. The term refers to gross income and includes prize winnings and tax-exempt income. The term does not include gifts, governmentally mandated payments or benefits, retirement, pension or annuity payments funded totally by contributions of the public official or employee, or miscellaneous, incidental income of minor dependent children.

"Indirect interest in real estate." Any business entity the assets of which are 80% or more in real property.

"Ministerial action." An action that a person performs in a prescribed manner in obedience to the mandate of legal authority, without regard to or the exercise of the person's own judgment as to the desirability of the action being taken.

"Nominee." Any person whose name has been submitted to a public official or governmental body vested with the power to finally confirm or reject proposed appointments to public office or employment.

"Nonministerial actions." An action in which the person exercises his own judgment as to the desirability of the action taken.

"Opinion." A directive of the State Ethics Commission issued pursuant to section 1107(10) (relating to powers and duties of commission) setting forth a public official's or public employee's duties under this chapter.

"Order." A directive of the State Ethics Commission issued pursuant to section 1107(13) (relating to powers and duties of commission) at the conclusion of an investigation which contains findings of fact, conclusions of law and penalties.

"Person." A business, governmental body, individual, corporation, union, association, firm, partnership, committee, club or other organization or group of persons.

"Political contribution." Any advance, conveyance, deposit, distribution, transfer of funds, loan, payment, pledge, purchase of a ticket to a testimonial or similar fund-raising affair, or subscription of money or anything of value, except volunteer services, in connection with a political campaign, and any contract, agreement, promise or other obligations, whether or not legally enforceable, to make a political contribution.

"Political subdivision." Any county, city, borough, incorporated town, township, school district, vocational school, county institution district, and any authority, entity or body organized by the aforementioned.

"Public employee." Any individual employed by the Commonwealth or a political subdivision who is responsible for taking or recommending official action of a nonministerial nature with regard to:

- (1) contracting or procurement;
- (2) administering or monitoring grants or subsidies;
- (3) planning or zoning;
- (4) inspecting, licensing, regulating or auditing any person; or
- (5) any other activity where the official action has an economic impact of greater than a de minimis nature on the interests of any person.

The term shall not include individuals who are employed by this Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof in teaching as distinguished from administrative duties.

"Public official." Any person elected by the public or elected or appointed by a governmental body or an appointed official in the executive, legislative or judicial branch of this Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof, provided that it shall not include members of advisory boards that have no authority to expend public funds other than reimbursement for personal expense or to otherwise exercise the power of the State or any political subdivision thereof.

"Represent." To act on behalf of any other person in any activity which includes, but is not limited to, the following: personal appearances, negotiations, lobbying and submitting bid or contract proposals which are signed by or contain the name of a former public official or public employee.

"Solicitor." A person elected or appointed to the office of solicitor for the political subdivision.

"Source." Any person who is a provider of an item reportable under section 1105 (relating to statement of financial interests).

"State consultant." A person who, as an independent contractor, performs professional, scientific, technical or advisory service for an agency of this Commonwealth, and who receives a fee, honorarium or similar compensation for such services. A State consultant is not an executive-level employee.

§ 1103. Restricted activities

(a) **Conflict of interest.**--No public official or public employee shall engage in conduct that constitutes a conflict of interest.

(b) **Seeking improper influence.**--No person shall offer or give to a public official, public employee or nominee or candidate for public office or a member of his immediate family or a business with which he is associated, anything of monetary value, including a gift, loan, political contribution, reward or promise of future employment based on the offeror's or donor's understanding that the vote, official action or judgment of the public official or public employee or nominee or candidate for public office would be influenced thereby.

(c) **Accepting improper influence.**--No public official, public employee or nominee or candidate for public office shall solicit or accept anything of monetary value, including a gift, loan, political contribution, reward or promise of future employment, based on any understanding of that public official, public employee or nominee that the vote, official action or judgment of the public official or public employee or nominee or candidate for public office would be influenced thereby.

(d) **Honorarium.**--No public official or public employee shall accept an honorarium.

(e) **Contingent and severance payments.**--

- (1) No person shall solicit or accept a severance payment or anything of monetary value contingent upon the assumption or acceptance of public office or employment.
- (2) This subsection shall not prohibit:
 - (i) Payments received pursuant to an employment agreement in existence prior to the time a person becomes a candidate or is notified by a member of a transition team, a search committee or a person with appointive power that he is under consideration for public office or makes application for public employment.
 - (ii) Receipt of a salary, fees, severance payment or proceeds resulting from the sale of a person's interest in a corporation, professional corporation, partnership or other entity resulting from termination or withdrawal therefrom upon the assumption or acceptance of public office or employment.

(3) Payments made or received pursuant to paragraph (2)(i) and (ii) shall not be based on the agreement, written or otherwise, that the vote or official action of the prospective public official or employee would be influenced thereby.

(f) Contract.--No public official or public employee or his spouse or child or any business in which the person or his spouse or child is associated shall enter into any contract valued at \$500 or more with the governmental body with which the public official or public employee is associated or any subcontract valued at \$500 or more with any person who has been awarded a contract with the governmental body with which the public official or public employee is associated, unless the contract has been awarded through an open and public process, including prior public notice and subsequent public disclosure of all proposals considered and contracts awarded. In such a case, the public official or public employee shall not have any supervisory or overall responsibility for the implementation or administration of the contract. Any contract or subcontract made in violation of this subsection shall be voidable by a court of competent jurisdiction if the suit is commenced within 90 days of the making of the contract or subcontract.

(g) Former official or employee.--No former public official or public employee shall represent a person, with promised or actual compensation, on any matter before the governmental body with which he has been associated for one year after he leaves that body.

(h) Misuse of statement of financial interest.--No person shall use for any commercial purpose information copied from statements of financial interests required by this chapter or from lists compiled from such statements.

(i) Former executive-level employee.--No former executive-level State employee may for a period of two years from the time that he terminates employment with this Commonwealth be employed by, receive compensation from, assist or act in a representative capacity for a business or corporation that he actively participated in recruiting to this Commonwealth or that he actively participated in inducing to open a new plant, facility or branch in this Commonwealth or that he actively participated in inducing to expand an existent plant or facility within this Commonwealth, provided that the above prohibition shall be invoked only when the recruitment or inducement is accomplished by a grant or loan of money or a promise of a grant or loan of money from the Commonwealth to the business or corporation recruited or induced to expand.

(j) Voting conflict.--Where voting conflicts are not otherwise addressed by the Constitution of Pennsylvania or by any law, rule, regulation, order or ordinance, the following procedure shall be employed. Any public official or public employee who in the discharge of his official duties would be required to vote on a matter that would result in a conflict of interest shall abstain from voting and, prior to the vote being taken, publicly announce and disclose the nature of his interest as a public record in a written memorandum filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting at which the vote is taken, provided that whenever a governing body would be unable to take any action on a matter before it because the number of members of the body required to abstain from voting under the provisions of this section makes the majority or other legally required vote of approval unattainable, then such members shall be permitted to vote if disclosures are made as otherwise provided herein. In the case of a three-member governing body of a political subdivision, where one member has abstained from voting as a result of a conflict of interest and the remaining two members of the governing body have cast opposing votes, the member who has abstained shall be permitted to vote to break the tie vote if disclosure is made as otherwise provided herein.

§ 1104. Statement of financial interests required to be filed

(a) Public official or public employee.--Each public official of the Commonwealth shall file a statement of financial interests for the preceding calendar year with the commission no later than May 1 of each year that he holds such a position and of the year after he leaves such a position. Each public employee and public official of the Commonwealth shall file a statement of financial interests for the preceding calendar year with the department, agency, body or bureau in which he is employed or to which he is appointed or elected no later than May 1 of each year that he holds such a position and of the year after he leaves such a position. Any other public employee or public official shall file a statement of financial interests with the governing authority of the political subdivision by which he is employed or within which he is appointed or elected no later than May 1 of each year that he holds such a position and of the year after he leaves such a position. Persons who are full-time or part-time solicitors for political subdivisions are required to file under this section.

(b) Candidate.--

(1) Any candidate for a State-level public office shall file a statement of financial interests for the preceding calendar year with the commission on or before the last day for filing a petition to appear on the ballot for election. A copy of the statement of financial interests shall also be appended to such petition.

(2) Any candidate for county-level or local office shall file a statement of financial interests for the preceding calendar year with the governing authority of the political subdivision in which he is a candidate on or before the last day for filing a petition to appear on the ballot for election. A copy of the statement of financial interests shall also be appended to such petition.

(3) No petition to appear on the ballot for election shall be accepted by the respective State or local election officials unless the petition has appended thereto a statement of financial interests as set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2). Failure to file the statement in accordance with the provisions of this chapter shall, in addition to any other penalties provided, be a fatal defect to a petition to appear on the ballot.

(c) Nominee.--Each State-level nominee for public office shall file a statement of financial interests for the preceding calendar year with the commission and with the official or body that is vested with the power of confirmation at least ten days before the official or body shall approve or reject the nomination. Each nominee for a county-level or local office shall file a statement of financial interests for the preceding calendar year with the governing authority of the political subdivision in which he or she is a nominee and, if different, with the official or body that is vested with the power of confirmation at least ten days before the official or body shall approve or reject the nomination.

(d) Failure to file required statement.--No public official shall be allowed to take the oath of office or enter or continue upon his duties, nor shall he receive compensation from public funds, unless he has filed a statement of financial interests as required by this chapter.

(e) Public inspection and copying.--All statements of financial interests filed pursuant to the provisions of this chapter shall be made available for public inspection and copying during regular office hours, and copying facilities shall be made available at a charge not to exceed actual cost.

§ 1105. Statement of financial interests

(a) **Form.**--The statement of financial interests filed pursuant to this chapter shall be on a form prescribed by the commission. All information requested on the statement shall be provided to the best of the knowledge, information and belief of the person required to file and shall be signed under oath or equivalent affirmation.

(b) **Required information.**--The statement shall include the following information for the prior calendar year with regard to the person required to file the statement:

- (1) Name, address and public position.
- (2) Occupation or profession.
- (3) Any direct or indirect interest in any real estate which was sold or leased to the Commonwealth, any of its agencies or political subdivisions or purchased or leased from the Commonwealth, any of its agencies or political subdivisions or which was the subject of any condemnation proceedings by the Commonwealth, any of its agencies or political subdivisions.
- (4) The name and address of each creditor to whom is owed in excess of \$6,500 and the interest rate thereon. However, loans or credit extended between members of the immediate family and mortgages securing real property which is the principal or secondary residence of the person filing shall not be included.
- (5) The name and address of any direct or indirect source of income totaling in the aggregate \$1,300 or more. However, this provision shall not be construed to require the divulgence of confidential information protected by statute or existing professional codes of ethics or common law privileges.
- (6) The name and address of the source and the amount of any gift or gifts valued in the aggregate at \$250 or more and the circumstances of each gift. This paragraph shall not apply to a gift or gifts received from a spouse, parent, parent by marriage, sibling, child, grandchild, other family member or friend when the circumstances make it clear that the motivation for the action was a personal or family relationship. However, for the purposes of this paragraph, the term "friend" shall not include a registered lobbyist or an employee of a registered lobbyist.
- (7) The name and address of the source and the amount of any payment for or reimbursement of actual expenses for transportation and lodging or hospitality received in connection with public office or employment where such actual expenses for transportation and lodging or hospitality exceed \$650 in an aggregate amount per year. This paragraph shall not apply to expenses reimbursed by a governmental body or to expenses reimbursed by an organization or association of public officials or employees of political subdivisions which the public official or employee serves in an official capacity.
- (8) Any office, directorship or employment of any nature whatsoever in any business entity.
- (9) Any financial interest in any legal entity engaged in business for profit.
- (10) The identity of any financial interest in a business with which the reporting person is or has been associated in the preceding calendar year which has been transferred to a member of the reporting person's immediate family.

(c) **Reporting amounts.**--Except where an amount is required to be reported pursuant to subsection (b)(6) and (7), the statement of financial interests need not include specific amounts for the items required to be listed.

(d) **Cost-of-living adjustments.**--On a biennial basis the commission shall review the dollar amounts set forth in this section and may increase these amounts to such rates as are deemed reasonable for assuring appropriate disclosure. The commission shall publish any such adjusted threshold amounts in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

§ 1106. State Ethics Commission

(a) **Continuation of commission.**--The State Ethics Commission established under the act of October 4, 1978 (P.L. 883, No.170), referred to as the Public Official and Employee Ethics Law, is continued and shall be composed of seven members. The President pro tempore of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House and the Minority Leader of the House shall each appoint one member. Three members shall be appointed by the Governor without confirmation. No more than two of the members appointed by the Governor shall be of the same political party. No appointee shall have served as an officer in a political party for one year prior to his appointment.

(b) **Term of service.**--Members of the commission shall serve for terms of three years, except that members shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed and qualified.

(c) **Maximum number of terms.**--No member shall be appointed to more than two full three-year terms on the commission.

(d) **Prohibited activities.**--No individual while a member or employee of the commission shall:

- (1) hold or campaign for any other public office;
- (2) hold office in any political party or political committee;
- (3) actively participate in or contribute to any political campaign;
- (4) directly or indirectly attempt to influence any decision by a governmental body, other than a court of law or as a representative of the commission on a matter within the jurisdiction of the commission; or
- (5) be employed by the Commonwealth or a political subdivision in any other capacity, whether or not for compensation.

(e) **Vacancy.**--A majority of the commission by resolution shall declare vacant the position on the commission of any member who takes part in activities prohibited by subsection (d). An individual appointed to fill a vacancy

occurring other than by the expiration of a term of office shall be appointed for the unexpired term of the member he succeeds and is eligible for appointment to two full three-year terms thereafter. Any vacancy occurring on the commission shall be filled within 30 days in the manner in which that position was originally filled.

(f) Election of chairman and vice chairman.--The commission shall elect a chairman and a vice chairman. The vice chairman shall act as chairman in the absence of the chairman or in the event of a vacancy in that position.

(g) Quorum.--Four members of the commission shall constitute a quorum and except as provided in section 1108 (g) (relating to investigations by commission), the votes of a majority of the members present are required for any action or recommendation of the commission. The chairman or any four members of the commission may call a meeting provided that advance written notice is mailed to each member and to any person who requests notice of such meetings.

(h) Compensation.--Members of the commission shall be compensated at a rate of \$250 per day and shall receive reimbursement for their actual and necessary expenses while performing the business of the commission.

(i) Staff.--The commission shall employ an executive director, a chief counsel and such other staff as are necessary to carry out its duties pursuant to this chapter. The executive director shall be responsible for the administrative operations of the commission and shall perform such other duties as may be delegated or assigned to him by the commission, except that the commission shall not delegate the making of regulations to the executive director. The chief counsel shall be the chief legal officer of the commission. The commission may obtain the services of experts and consultants as necessary to carry out its duties pursuant to this chapter. The State Treasurer and the Attorney General shall make available to the commission such personnel, facilities and other assistance as the commission may request.

(j) Regulations.--The commission shall develop regulations that provide for a code of conduct to govern the activities and ethical standards of its members, which code shall subject the members of the commission to no less than is required for public officials or public employees under this chapter.

§ 1107. Powers and duties of commission

In addition to other powers and duties prescribed by law, the commission shall:

- (1) Prescribe and publish rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this chapter.
- (2) Prescribe forms for statements and reports required to be filed by this chapter and furnish such forms to persons required to file such statements and reports.
- (3) Prepare and publish guidelines setting forth recommended uniform methods of accounting and reporting for use by persons required to file statements and reports by this chapter.
- (4) Accept and file any information voluntarily supplied that exceeds the requirements of this chapter.
- (5) Inspect statements of financial interests which have been filed in order to ascertain whether any reporting person has failed to file such a statement or has filed a deficient statement. If, upon inspection, it is determined that a reporting person has failed to file a statement of financial interests or that any statement which has been filed fails to conform with the requirements of section 1105 (relating to statement of financial interests), then the commission shall in writing notify the person. Such notice shall state in detail the deficiency and the penalties for failure to file or for filing a deficient statement of financial interests.
- (6) Provide that statements and reports filed with the commission be made available for public inspection and copying during regular office hours and provide that copying facilities be made available at a charge not to exceed actual cost and advise other State and local agencies of the provisions of this paragraph.
- (7) Compile and maintain an index of all reports and statements filed with the commission to facilitate public access to such reports and statements and instruct other State and local agencies which receive and file financial interest statements in the maintenance of systems which facilitate public access to such statements.
- (8) Prepare and publish annual summaries of statements and reports filed with the commission.
- (9) Preserve statements and reports filed with the commission for a period of five years from date of receipt and advise other State and local agencies which receive and store financial interest statements to preserve such statements for a period of five years from date of receipt.
- (10) Issue to any person upon such person's request or to the appointing authority or employer of that person upon the request of such appointing authority or employer an opinion with respect to such person's duties under this chapter. The commission shall, within 14 days, either issue the opinion or advise the person who made the request whether an opinion will be issued. No person who acts in good faith on an opinion issued to him by the commission shall be subject to criminal or civil penalties for so acting, provided that the material facts are as stated in the opinion request. The commission's opinions shall be public records and may from time to time be published. The person requesting the opinion may, however, require that the opinion shall contain such deletions and changes as shall be necessary to protect the identity of the persons involved.
- (11) Provide written advice to any person or the appointing authority or employer of such person, upon their request with respect to such person's duties under this chapter. Such advice shall be provided within 21 working days of the request, provided that the time may be extended for good cause. It shall be a complete defense in any enforcement proceeding initiated by the commission, and evidence of good faith conduct in any other civil or criminal proceeding, if the requester, at least 21 working days prior to the alleged violation, requested written advice from the commission in good faith, disclosed truthfully all the material facts and committed the acts complained of either in reliance on the advice or because of the failure of the commission to provide advice within 21 days of the request or such later extended time. The person requesting the advice may, however, require that the advice shall contain such deletions and changes as shall be necessary to protect the identity of the persons involved.
- (12) Initiate an inquiry, pursuant to section 1108(a) (relating to investigations by commission), where a

complaint has not been filed but where there is a reasonable belief that a conflict may exist.

(13) Issue findings, reports and orders relating to investigations initiated pursuant to section 1108, which set forth the alleged violation, findings of fact and conclusions of law. An order may include recommendations to law enforcement officials. Any order resulting from a finding that a public official or public employee has obtained a financial gain in violation of this chapter may require the restitution plus interest of that gain to the appropriate governmental body. The commission or the Office of Attorney General shall have standing to apply to the Commonwealth Court to seek enforcement of an order requiring such restitution. This restitution requirement shall be in addition to any other penalties provided for in this chapter.

(14) Hold hearings, take testimony, issue subpoenas and compel the attendance of witnesses.

(15) Make recommendations to law enforcement officials either for criminal prosecution or dismissal of charges arising out of violations of this chapter.

(16) Prepare and publish special reports, educational materials, and technical studies to further the purposes of this chapter.

(17) Prepare and publish, prior to June 1 of each year, an annual report summarizing the activities of the commission.

(18) Transmit, free of charge, copies of each order, advice and opinion which has become a matter of public record quarterly to the law library of each county, one public library in each county, the State Library, the State Senate Library, each authority appointing commission members under this chapter, the Pennsylvania Association of County Commissioners, the Pennsylvania Association of Boroughs, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association and the Pennsylvania League of Cities.

(19) Hold at least two public hearings each year, of which at least one shall be held in Harrisburg and at least one shall be held in a location other than Harrisburg, to seek input from persons and organizations who represent any individual subject to the provisions of this chapter and from other interested parties.

§ 1108. Investigations by commission

(a) Preliminary inquiry.--Upon a complaint signed under penalty of perjury by any person or upon its own motion, the commission, through its executive director, shall conduct a preliminary inquiry into any alleged violation of this chapter. The commission shall keep information, records and proceedings relating to a preliminary inquiry confidential. The commission shall, however, have the authority to refer the case to law enforcement officials during a preliminary inquiry or anytime thereafter without providing notice to the subject of the inquiry. The commission shall complete its preliminary inquiry within 60 days of its initiation.

(b) Termination of preliminary inquiry.--If a preliminary inquiry fails to establish reason to believe that this chapter has been violated, the commission shall terminate the inquiry and so notify the complainant and the person who had been the subject of the inquiry. If the commission determines that a complaint is frivolous, it shall so state.

(c) Initiation of investigation.--If a preliminary inquiry establishes reason to believe that this chapter has been violated, the commission may, through its executive director, initiate an investigation to determine if there has been a violation. The commission shall keep information, records and proceedings relating to an investigation confidential until a final determination is made, except as otherwise provided in subsection (g). No investigation may be commenced until the person who is the subject of the investigation has been notified and provided a general statement of the alleged violation or violations of this chapter and other applicable statutes with respect to such investigation. Service of notice is complete upon mailing which shall be by certified or registered mail. The commission shall notify the complainant within 72 hours of the commencement of an investigation, and, thereafter, the commission shall advise the complainant and the person who is the subject of the investigation of the status of the investigation at least every 90 days until the investigation is terminated. The commission shall, within 180 days of the initiation of an investigation, either terminate the investigation pursuant to subsection (d) or issue a findings report pursuant to subsection (e). Upon a showing by the executive director of the need for extension of this period, the commission may extend an investigation for up to two 90-day periods, provided that each 90-day extension shall be approved by a majority vote of members present. In no event shall a findings report be issued later than 360 days after initiation of an investigation.

(d) Termination of investigation.--If an investigation conducted under this chapter indicates that no violation has been committed, the commission shall immediately terminate the investigation and send written notice of such determination to the complainant and the person who was the subject of the investigation.

(e) Findings report.--The commission, upon the completion of an investigation, shall issue a findings report to the subject of the investigation setting forth the pertinent findings of fact. The subject shall have the right to respond to said findings and to request an evidentiary hearing on said matter. The commission shall grant any request for a hearing. Said hearing shall be held in Harrisburg or, at the request of the subject, in either Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. Any response to the findings report must either admit or deny by corresponding number and letter the pertinent facts set forth. The subject of the investigation shall have access to any evidence intended to be used by the commission at the hearing and any exculpatory evidence developed by the commission in the course of its investigation. Matters not specifically denied in the response shall be deemed admitted. The response must be filed within 30 days of the issuance of the findings report unless the time period is extended by the commission for good cause shown. Hearings conducted upon request shall be instituted within 45 days after the filing of the response.

(f) Final order.--Within 30 days of the receipt by the commission of the hearing record, or, if no hearing is to be held, within 30 days of the receipt by the commission of the response to the findings report, the commission shall issue an order which shall be final. Upon receipt of a final order, the subject shall have the right to file a petition for reconsideration in accordance with the regulations of the commission.

(g) Procedure for hearing.--Hearings conducted pursuant to this section shall be closed to the public unless the subject requests an open hearing. Any person who appears before the commission shall have all of the due process rights, privileges and responsibilities of a party or witness appearing before an administrative agency of this

Commonwealth. All witnesses summoned for such hearings shall receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses in accordance with 42 Pa.C.S. § 5903 (relating to compensation and expenses of witnesses). At the conclusion of a hearing concerning an alleged violation and in a timely manner, the commission shall deliberate on the evidence and determine whether there has been a violation of this chapter. At least four members of the commission present at a meeting must find a violation by clear and convincing proof. The names of the members finding a violation and the names of those dissenting and abstaining shall be listed in the order. The determination of the commission, in the form of a final order and findings of fact, shall be a matter of public record.

(h) Availability of final orders, files and records.--Orders which become final in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be available as public documents, but the files and records of the commission relating to the case shall remain confidential.

(i) Appeal.--Any person aggrieved by an opinion or order which becomes final in accordance with the provisions of this chapter who has direct interest in such opinion or order shall have the right to appeal therefrom in accordance with law and general rules.

(j) Retaliation prohibited.--No public official or public employee shall discharge any official or employee or change his official rank, grade or compensation or deny him a promotion or threaten to do so for filing a complaint with or providing information to the commission or testifying in any commission proceeding. No member of the commission and no employee of the commission shall discharge any employee of the commission or change his official rank, grade or compensation or threaten to do so for providing any information about the internal operations of the commission, not required by law to be kept secret, to any legislator or legislative staff member or testifying in any legislative proceeding.

(k) Confidentiality.--As a general rule, no person shall disclose or acknowledge, to any other person, any information relating to a complaint, preliminary inquiry, investigation, hearing or petition for reconsideration which is before the commission. However, a person may disclose or acknowledge to another person matters held confidential in accordance with this subsection when the matters pertain to any of the following:

- (1) final orders of the commission as provided in subsection (h);
- (2) hearings conducted in public pursuant to subsection (g);
- (3) for the purpose of seeking advice of legal counsel;
- (4) filing an appeal from a commission order;
- (5) communicating with the commission or its staff, in the course of a preliminary inquiry, investigation, hearing or petition for reconsideration by the commission;
- (6) consulting with a law enforcement official or agency for the purpose of initiating, participating in or responding to an investigation or prosecution by the law enforcement official or agency;
- (7) testifying under oath before a governmental body or a similar body of the United States of America;
- (8) any information, records or proceedings relating to a complaint, preliminary inquiry, investigation, hearing or petition for reconsideration which the person is the subject of; or
- (9) such other exceptions as the commission by regulation may direct.

(l) Frivolous complaints and wrongful disclosure.--If a public official or public employee has reason to believe the complaint is frivolous as defined by this chapter, or without probable cause and made primarily for a purpose other than that of reporting a violation of this chapter, or a person publicly disclosed or caused to be disclosed that a complaint against the public official or public employee has been filed with the commission, the public official or public employee shall notify the commission and the commission, through its executive director, shall conduct an investigation.

(m) Limitation of time.--The commission may conduct an investigation within five years after the alleged occurrence of any violation of this chapter.

§ 1109. Penalties

(a) Restricted activities violation.--Any person who violates the provisions of section 1103(a), (b) and (c) (relating to restricted activities) commits a felony and shall, upon conviction, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$10,000 or to imprisonment for not more than five years, or both.

(b) Financial interests statement violation.--Any person who violates the provisions of section 1103(d) through (j), 1104 (relating to statement of financial interests required to be filed) or 1105(a) (relating to statement of financial interests) commits a misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$1,000 or to imprisonment for not more than one year, or both.

(c) Treble damages.--Any person who obtains financial gain from violating any provision of this chapter, in addition to any other penalty provided by law, shall pay a sum of money equal to three times the amount of the financial gain resulting from such violation into the State Treasury or the treasury of the political subdivision. Treble damages shall not be assessed against a person who acted in good faith reliance on the advice of legal counsel.

(d) Impeachment and disciplinary action.--The penalties prescribed in this chapter do not limit the power of either house of the Legislature to discipline its own members or impeach a public official and do not limit the power of agencies or commissions to discipline officials or employees.

(e) Other violations of chapter.--Any person who violates the confidentiality of a commission proceeding pursuant to section 1108 (relating to investigations by commission) commits a misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$1,000 or to imprisonment for not more than one year, or both. Any person who engages in retaliatory activity proscribed by section 1108(j) commits a misdemeanor and, in addition to any other penalty provided by law, shall, upon conviction, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than

\$1,000 or to imprisonment for not more than one year, or both. Any person who willfully affirms or swears falsely in regard to any material matter before a commission proceeding pursuant to section 1108 commits a felony and shall, upon conviction, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$5,000 or to imprisonment for not more than five years, or both.

(f) Civil penalty.--In addition to any other civil remedy or criminal penalty provided for in this chapter, the commission may, after notice has been served in accordance with section 1107(5) (relating to powers and duties of commission) and upon a majority vote of its members, levy a civil penalty upon any person subject to this chapter who fails to file a statement of financial interests in a timely manner or who files a deficient statement of financial interests, at a rate of not more than \$25 for each day such statement remains delinquent or deficient. The maximum penalty payable under this paragraph is \$250.

(g) Reliance on solicitor's opinion.--A public official of a political subdivision who acts in good faith reliance on a written, nonconfidential opinion of the solicitor of the political subdivision or upon an opinion of the solicitor of the political subdivision, publicly stated at an open meeting of the political subdivision and recorded in the official minutes of the meeting, shall not be subject to the penalties provided for in subsections (a) and (b) nor for the treble damages provided for in subsection (c). However, this subsection shall not apply in situations where the solicitor's opinion has been rendered under duress or where the parties seeking and rendering the solicitor's opinion have colluded to purposefully commit a violation of this chapter.

§ 1110. Wrongful use of chapter

(a) Liability.--A person who signs a complaint alleging a violation of this chapter against another is subject to liability for wrongful use of this chapter if:

- (1) the complaint was frivolous, as defined by this chapter, or without probable cause and made primarily for a purpose other than that of reporting a violation of this chapter; or
- (2) he publicly disclosed or caused to be disclosed that a complaint against a person had been filed with the commission.

(b) Probable cause.--A person who signs a complaint alleging a violation of this chapter has probable cause for doing so if he reasonably believes in the existence of the facts upon which the claim is based and either:

- (1) reasonably believes that under those facts the complaint may be valid under this chapter; or
- (2) believes to this effect in reliance upon the advice of counsel, sought in good faith and given after full disclosure of all relevant facts within his knowledge and information.

(c) Commission procedures.--When the commission determines that a complainant has violated the provisions set forth in subsection (a), the commission, upon receiving a written request from the subject of the complaint, shall provide the name and address of the complainant to said subject. If the commission determines that a complainant has not violated the provisions of subsection (a), the commission shall notify the subject accordingly. The subject shall have the right to appeal the commission's determination, and the commission shall schedule an appeal hearing. The subject shall show cause why the complainant violated the provisions of this section. If the commission grants the appeal, the commission shall immediately release the complainant's name and address to the subject. If the commission denies the appeal, it shall present evidence why the complainant's name and address shall not be released.

(d) Damages.--When the essential elements of an action brought pursuant to this section have been established, the plaintiff is entitled to recover for the following:

- (1) The harm to his reputation by a defamatory matter alleged as the basis of the proceeding.
- (2) The expenses, including any reasonable attorney fees, that he has reasonably incurred in proceedings before the commission.
- (3) Any specific pecuniary loss that has resulted from the proceedings.
- (4) Any emotional distress that has been caused by the proceedings.
- (5) Any punitive damages according to law in appropriate cases.

§ 1111. Supplemental provisions

Any governmental body may adopt requirements to supplement this chapter, provided that no such requirements shall in any way be less restrictive than the chapter.

§ 1112. Conflict of law

Except as otherwise provided in Chapter 13 (relating to lobby regulation and disclosure), if the provisions of this chapter conflict with any other statute, ordinance, regulation or rule, the provisions of this chapter shall control.

§ 1113. Severability

If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this chapter and the application of such provisions to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

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Chapter 15. Statements Of Financial Interests, Applicability

Sec.

[15.1. Federal officials, employes and candidates.](#)[15.2. Public officials and public employes.](#)[15.3. Candidates/nominees.](#)

§15.1. Federal officials, employes and candidates.

(a) Federal officials, employes and candidates are not required to file the Statement of Financial Interests with regard to their Federal position.

(b) Federal officials, employes and candidates who serve with the Commonwealth or a political subdivision as part of an exchange or comparable program are required to file a Statement of Financial Interests.

§15.2. Public officials and public employes.

(a) Public officials and employes shall file a Statement of Financial Interests for the preceding calendar year by May 1 of each year during which they hold office or a position and by May 1 for the year after they leave the position.

(b) A public official may not take the oath of office, continue upon his duties or receive compensation for holding office unless a Statement of Financial Interests has been filed.

(c) Public officials in State level offices shall file with the Commission and as follows:

(1) Executive branch public officials, board and commission members shall file with the Governor's office.

(2) Legislative branch public officials shall file with either the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives or the Secretary of the Senate, depending upon in which body the official serves.

(3) Independent agency public officials and other public officials shall file with their agency.

(d) Public employes of the Commonwealth shall file with the State agency with which they are employed.

(e) County and local officials, and employes, shall file with the governing body of the political subdivision in which they serve or are employed.

(f) In an election year, public officials, public employes who are also candidates, shall, in addition, file at the times and locations required by candidates.

(g) Full- or part-time solicitors are required to file Statements of Financial Interests.

(h) If a law firm or engineering firm is designated solicitor or engineer, the persons primarily responsible for providing the services in the firm are responsible for filing a Statement of Financial Interests.

§15.3. Candidates/nominees.

(a) A candidate for State level public office shall file a Statement of Financial Interests with the Commission on or before the last day for filing a petition to appear on the ballot and a copy of the Statement shall be appended to the petition.

(b) A candidate for county and local public office shall file a Statement of Financial Interests with the governing authority of the political subdivision wherein the candidate is seeking office on or before the last day for filing a petition to appear on the ballot and a copy of the Statement shall be appended to the petition.

(c) A candidate running for office as a substitute nominee shall file a Statement of Financial Interests on or before the last day for filing a substitute nomination certificate as follows:

(1) A nominee for State level office shall file the Statement with the Commission and a copy shall be appended to the substitute nomination certificate.

(2) A nominee for county or local level public office shall file the Statement with the governing authority of the political subdivision wherein the person is seeking office and a copy of the Statement shall be appended to the substitute nomination certificate.

(d) An independent candidate not running in a primary election shall file a Statement of Financial Interests on or before the last day for filing a petition to appear on the ballot for election. The filing shall be made in accordance with subsections (a) and (b).

(e) A write-in-candidate shall file a Statement of Financial Interests within 30 days of having been nominated or elected unless the person declines the nomination or office within that period of time.

(1) The Statement shall be filed with the Commission for State level public office and with the governing authority of the political subdivision wherein the person has been elected or nominated for county or local level office.

(2) For the purposes of calculating the 30-day period during which the Statement of Financial Interests shall be filed, the time shall commence on the date that the appropriate board of elections certifies the individual as the winner of a nomination or election.

(f) A petition to appear on the ballot will not be accepted unless a copy of the Statement of Financial Interests is attached thereto.

(g) A nominee for public office shall file a Statement of Financial Interests for the preceding calendar year at least 10 days prior to the date of approval or rejection by the confirming body.

(1) A nominee for Commonwealth positions requiring Senate confirmation shall file with the Commission and the Secretary of the Senate.

(2) A nominee for county or local level public office shall file with the governing authority of the political subdivision in which the person is a nominee and, if different, with the official or body vested with the power of confirmation.

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(a) A complaint alleging a violation of the act shall contain the name, position or office held by the respondent and the basis of the complaint which would delineate the facts and circumstances of the alleged violation.

[Publications](#)

(b) A complaint shall be sworn and signed by the complainant.

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(c) The identity of the complainant will remain confidential unless there is a wrongful use of the act.

[Right To Know](#)

(d) The Commission will acknowledge, in writing, the receipt of the complaint.

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(e) The Commission through its Executive Director will review complaints and proceed only if the complaint:

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(1) Contains sufficient information.

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(2) Is sworn and signed.

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(3) Is within the Commission's jurisdiction.

(4) Concerns an alleged violation of the act having a greater than de minimis economic impact.

(f) A complaint not meeting the requirements of subsection (e) will be dismissed without prejudice to refile if the requirements are satisfied.

(g) Upon the receipt of a complaint which satisfies the criteria of subsection (e), the Commission, through its Executive Director, will initiate a preliminary inquiry. If the preliminary inquiry establishes reason to believe that the act was violated, the Commission, through its Executive Director, may initiate a full investigation.

(h) A complainant will be notified of the dismissal of a complaint under subsection (f).

(i) In the case of sworn complaints alleging a violation of the Statements of Financial Interests filing requirements, the Commission may elect to proceed under §19.3 (relating to late or deficient filings), in which event this chapter does not apply.

(j) This section supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.9 (relating to formal complaints generally).

§21.2. Initiation of investigation by the Commission.

The Commission through its Executive Director may, on its own motion, conduct a preliminary inquiry regarding an alleged violation of the act.

§21.3. Preliminary inquiries.

(a) A preliminary inquiry will be terminated or opened as a full investigation within 60 days of the initiation thereof. A preliminary inquiry is considered initiated at the time when it is officially docketed.

(b) The Commission will keep information, records and proceedings relating to a preliminary inquiry confidential. The Commission will, however, have the authority to refer the case to law enforcement officials during a preliminary inquiry or any time thereafter without providing notice to the subject of the inquiry.

(c) If, after preliminary inquiry, there is reason to believe that the act has been violated, the Executive Director will commence an investigation. An investigation will be considered commenced when the respondent is notified under §21.5(b) (relating to conduct of investigations).

(d) The Commission, through its Executive Director, will close the preliminary inquiry if:

(1) The occurrence giving rise to the complaint is not within the purview of the act as having been committed and completed prior to the act.

(2) The occurrence giving rise to the complaint is clearly not within the purview of the act.

(3) The respondent is not a person subject to the act.

(4) There is no reason to believe that the act has been violated.

(5) The violation complained of has a de minimis economic impact.

(e) If the preliminary inquiry is closed, the Commission will notify the complainant and the respondent.

§21.4. Frivolous complaints; complaints without probable cause; disclosure of complaints.

(a) If a public official or public employe has reason to believe a complaint is frivolous due to its having been filed in a grossly negligent manner without basis in law or fact, or without probable cause and made primarily for a purpose other than that of reporting a violation of the act, or that a person has publicly disclosed or caused to be disclosed that a complaint against the public official or public employee has been filed with the Commission, the public official or public employee shall notify the Commission and the Commission, through its Executive Director, will conduct an investigation.

(b) These matters will be processed by the Commission in accordance with Chapter 25 (relating to wrongful use of the act).

§21.5. Conduct of investigations.

(a) Within 72 hours of the commencement of an investigation, the complainant will be provided notification thereof by first class mail.

(b) The respondent will be provided with a general statement of the alleged violation of the act and other applicable statutes under investigation. Service of the notice is complete upon mailing which will be by certified or registered mail.

(c) The complainant and respondent will be notified of the status of the investigation every 90 days until it is complete.

(d) The Commission may employ or be assigned staff, including attorneys, investigators and hearing officers, as may be required to properly investigate, review and dispose of complaints and investigations.

(e) The Executive Director, staff counsel, director of investigations and special investigators have the authority to conduct interviews, take statements, receive and inspect documents and records and otherwise obtain evidence and gather information by lawful means.

(f) Commission staff members identified in subsection (e) are designated to administer oaths or affirmations for the purpose of obtaining voluntary sworn statements with regard to matters which may properly come before the Commission.

(g) A person having possession or control of documents or records deemed relevant to an investigation that the Commission is authorized to conduct may be required to produce the materials for inspection by subpoena served by the members of the Commission staff designated in subsection (e). These Commission staff members have the right to retain or have access to subpoenaed documents and records for a reasonable period, and to make copies thereof.

(h) The Commission may authorize one or more members of the Commission staff designated in subsection (e) to obtain by subpoena the sworn statement of a person deemed to have information relevant to an investigation that the Commission is authorized to conduct.

(1) Sworn statements may be conducted by and before one or more of the staff members in subsection (e).

- (2) Testimony received in the preparation of a sworn statement will be under oath or affirmation administered and recorded by a stenographer.
 - (3) The authority to question a witness appearing for a sworn statement will be limited to staff members taking the sworn statement, the hearing officer and counsel for the witness.
 - (4) Persons permitted to be in attendance at the preparation of a sworn statement will be limited to staff members of the Commission, the hearing officer, the witness, counsel for the witness and a stenographer.
 - (5) A witness giving a sworn statement may object to a question if it is irrelevant or privileged.
 - (6) A witness subpoenaed by the Commission is entitled to compensation as fixed by 42 Pa.C.S. §5903 (relating to compensation and expenses of witnesses).
- (i) Subpoenas issued under subsection (g) or (h) will be authorized by the Commission and signed by the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson. Subpoenas may be served by a person empowered to do so or as designated by the Executive Director.
- (j) Within 180 days of commencing the investigation, the Commission will do one of the following:
- (1) Terminate the investigation and notify the complainant and respondent.
 - (2) Rule upon a request for an extension by the Executive Director, upon a showing of need, not to exceed 90 days.
 - (i) The granting of or denial of a request for an extension requires a majority vote of a quorum of the Commission.
 - (ii) A maximum of two extensions may be granted.
 - (iii) A findings report will be issued within 180 days after the commencement of an investigation or within the time period of a granted extension.
 - (3) Issue a findings report which sets forth the pertinent facts, and affords the subject of the investigation an opportunity to respond to the findings and to request an evidentiary hearing.
- (k) The respondent shall file a response to the findings report of the Commission within 30 days, unless an application for an extension is made to the Commission and granted for good cause shown.
- (1) The respondent shall admit or deny the allegations in the findings report by number. Anything not specifically denied or general denials will be deemed an admission of the individual factual finding.
 - (2) New matter raised by a respondent in his answer does not require a reply by the Commission.
- (l) Investigations by the Commission and the information gained therein will be confidential subject to the exceptions in section 8(k)(1)-(8) of the act (65 P.S. §408(k)(1)-(8)).
- (m) If an investigation conducted under the act indicates that no violation has been committed, the Commission will immediately terminate the investigation and send written notice of the determination to the complainant and the person who was the subject of the investigation.
- (n) Subsection (h) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §§35.142- 35.145 (relating to subpoenas; and depositions).

§21.6. Confidentiality.

- (a) As a general rule, a person may not disclose or acknowledge, to any other person, any information relating to a complaint, preliminary inquiry, investigation, hearing or petition for reconsideration which is before the Commission. However, a person may disclose or acknowledge to another person matters held confidential in accordance with this chapter or 65 Pa.C.S. §1108 (relating to investigations by commission), when the matters pertain to any of the following:
- (1) Final orders of the Commission as provided in 65 Pa.C.S. §1108(h).
 - (2) Hearings conducted in public under 65 Pa.C.S. §1108(g).
 - (3) For the purpose of seeking advice of legal counsel.
 - (4) Filing an appeal from a Commission order.
 - (5) Communicating with the Commission or its staff, in the course of a preliminary inquiry, investigation, hearing or petition for reconsideration by the Commission.
 - (6) Consulting with a law enforcement official or agency for the purpose of initiating,

participating in or responding to an investigation or prosecution by the law enforcement official or agency.

(7) Testifying under oath before a governmental body or a similar body of the United States of America.

(8) Information, records or proceedings relating to a complaint, preliminary inquiry, investigation, hearing or petition for reconsideration which the person is the subject of.

(9) The publication or broadcast of information legally obtained by the news media regarding a confidential Commission proceeding.

(10) The divulgence by individuals who are interviewees or witnesses as to confidential Commission proceedings regarding information that was already in their possession or the disclosure of their own statements.

HEARINGS

§21.21. General.

(a) The Commission will conduct hearings upon the request of a respondent. A respondent shall request a hearing in his answer to the findings report or separately within 30 days of the issuance of the findings report. Failure to request a hearing within the time period will be deemed a waiver.

(1) The respondent may be granted an extension for filing an answer upon application to the Chief Counsel and for good cause shown. The Chief Counsel may grant an extension up to 30 days.

(2) Further requests shall be made to the Chairperson 2 weeks prior to the extended deadline. The Chairperson may grant a second extension if extraordinary circumstances are demonstrated in writing.

(3) Extensions granted will correspondingly advance other deadlines provided for in the act.

(4) A hearing will be held within 45 days after the respondent's answer to the Findings Report unless the time is extended upon application for good cause shown.

(5) A notice of hearing will be issued to the respondent unless represented by counsel in which case to counsel within a reasonable period of time prior thereto. The notice will advise of the date, time and location of the hearing, and of the hearing rights, privileges, process and procedures in this section.

(6) Hearings will be conducted in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. For cases to which the act applies, a request for a hearing in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh will be granted, if filed with the Commission within 7 days after the notice of hearing is mailed. Failure to request a hearing in those locations within the time period will be deemed a waiver of the right.

(b) Hearings will be conducted before one or more members of the Commission. The Commission may appoint a hearing officer for the conduct of the hearings.

§21.22. Discovery.

(a) The respondent will be given access to evidence intended to be used by the Commission at the hearing, as well as exculpatory evidence developed during the investigation.

(b) Access to evidence does not include the original complaint or the name of the complainant, information which is otherwise privileged or information not within subsection (a).

§21.23. Scope of hearing.

(a) Hearings may be conducted as follows based upon the express agreement of the parties:

(1) Full evidentiary hearing.

(2) Oral argument based on stipulated findings.

(3) Submission on briefs.

(4) Limited hearing based on partially stipulated facts.

(b) The respondent has the right to a full hearing, if so requested.

(c) The Commission and the respondent may stipulate one or more of the facts.

(d) Motions for dismissal made by the respondent will be deferred to the full Commission for consideration.

(e) This section supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.126 (relating to presentation by the parties).

§21.24. Hearing officer.

(a) It is the duty of the hearing officer and he has the power to do one or more of the following:

- (1) Schedule and conduct a hearing as required to resolve the matter and to provide the parties with proper notice of the hearing.
- (2) Administer oaths or affirmations to witnesses.
- (3) Rule on motions, objections or other matters arising during the hearing.
- (4) Insure that all parties have a full and fair opportunity to be heard.
- (5) Insure that a record of the proceedings is available for review by the Commission.
- (6) Advise witnesses and parties to the hearing of the confidentiality requirements of the act.
- (7) Advise witnesses or the respondents, when not represented by counsel, of their rights as witnesses.
- (8) Issue subpoenas upon written request for the production of documents, records and persons needed for the proceeding. The hearing officer will be provided with the name and addresses of the persons and a description of the documents or records involved, and will be satisfied that the documents, records or testimony are relevant and are not protected by privilege.
- (9) Arrange for the payment of witness fees and mileage expenses or pay other related expenses as required by law.

(b) The presiding officer will make the following available to the Commission to the extent applicable:

- (1) A transcript of the hearing, including exhibits.
- (2) Motions, briefs, memorandums or documents filed by a party to the proceeding.

(c) Subsection (a) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.187 (relating to authority delegated to presiding officers).

§21.25. Conduct of the hearing.

(a) The formal rules of evidence will not apply to hearings. Relevant probative evidence except properly objected-to hearsay will be admitted.

(b) Testimony shall be given under oath or affirmation and witnesses shall be subject to cross-examination.

(c) The investigative staff of the Commission will present its case followed by the case of the respondent.

(d) Each party may make an opening and closing statement.

(e) Parties to the proceeding will be afforded a full and fair opportunity to be heard and may be represented by counsel.

(f) The hearing will be closed to the public unless the respondent requests an open hearing.

(g) Witnesses summoned for hearings shall receive reimbursement for expenses under 42 Pa.C.S. §5903 (relating to compensation and expenses of witnesses).

(h) Subpoenas may be issued at the request of the parties to the hearing on the approval of the Commission or hearing officer. Information subpoenaed shall be relevant and not privileged.

(i) The hearing and papers, records and disclosures therein will be confidential except for the contents of the final order as provided in §21.29 (relating to finality; reconsideration).

(j) If one or more of the participants in a hearing become disrespectful, disorderly or disruptive, the hearing officer may continue the hearing to allow the full Commission to rule on the proper limitations or sanctions for the person whose behavior does not conform to minimum standards required for an orderly proceeding.

(k) Subsection (a) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.161 (relating to form and admissibility of evidence). Subsection (b) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.137 (relating to oral examination). Subsection (c) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.125 (relating to order of procedure).

§21.26. Motions.

(a) A motion filed prior to the issuance of a notice of hearing will be submitted to the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson or designated hearing officer who will rule on the matter unless in the exercise of his discretion the motion should be submitted to the Commission for a determination at the next scheduled

executive session of the Commission.

(b) A motion filed will correspondingly advance other deadlines provided for in the act by an amount of time equal to the period between the date of filing of the motion and the date of disposition.

(c) A motion filed immediately prior to or at hearing will be submitted to the hearing officer. The hearing officer will rule on the motion except that which would involve a final determination which will be deferred and submitted to the Commission as part of the record for final disposition of the case.

(d) This section supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.177 (relating to scope and contents of motions).

§21.27. Briefs.

(a) The hearing officer or the parties may request that briefs, proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law be presented. The hearing officer will establish a schedule for the presentation of this material. The parties have the right to request a schedule for the filing of briefs. Failure to comply with this schedule without reasonable excuse, as determined by the hearing officer, shall operate as a waiver of the opportunity to present this material.

(b) The hearing officer will provide the specifications for briefs which will be in conformity with 1 Pa. Code Chapter 35 (relating to formal proceedings).

(c) Subsection (a) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.191 (relating to proceedings in which briefs are to be filed).

§21.28. Decision.

At the conclusion of a hearing concerning an alleged violation and in a timely manner, the Commission will deliberate on the evidence to determine whether there has been a violation of the act.

(1) At least four members of the Commission present at a meeting must find a violation of the act by clear and convincing proof.

(2) The names of the members finding a violation and the names of those dissenting and abstaining will be listed in the order.

(3) The determination of the Commission, in the form of a final order and findings of fact, will be a matter of public record.

§21.29. Finality; reconsideration.

(a) An order disposing of an investigation will be a final order when issued. Public release of the order will occur 30 days after the date of issuance, unless reconsideration is requested within that 30-day time period.

(b) Any party may ask the Commission to reconsider an order or opinion within 30 days of service of the order or opinion. The requestor shall present a detailed explanation setting forth the reason why the order or opinion should be reconsidered.

(c) A request for reconsideration filed with the Commission will delay the public release of an order, but will not suspend the final order unless reconsideration is granted by the Commission.

(d) A request for reconsideration may include a request for a hearing before the Commission.

(e) Reconsideration may be granted at the discretion of the Commission if:

(1) A material error of law has been made.

(2) A material error of fact has been made.

(3) New facts or evidence are provided which would lead to reversal or modification of the order or opinion and if these could not be or were not discovered by the exercise of due diligence.

(f) If the Commission grants reconsideration the Commission may do one or more of the following:

(1) Order new hearings.

(2) Schedule and conduct oral argument.

(3) Take other action or issue an order or opinion in final disposition of the case.

(g) Pending reconsideration or request for reconsideration, an order will remain confidential.

(h) An order which becomes final in accordance with this section will be available as a public document, but the files and records relating thereto will remain confidential.

(i) This section supersedes 1 Pa. Code §§35.231 - 35.233 and 35.241 (relating to reopening of record; and application for rehearing or reconsideration).

§21.30. Effect of order.

In addition to deciding the case before it, the Commission may take one or more of the following actions, if appropriate. The Commission may:

- (1) Order the respondent to make restitution or impose a monetary penalty in accordance with the act.
- (2) Order the respondent to cease and desist from engaging in a particular activity deemed to be in contravention of the act.
- (3) Order the respondent to take specified action to bring himself in compliance with the act.
- (4) Refer the matter for review or with a specific recommendation for action to law enforcement, regulatory or other authorities with jurisdiction over the matters.
- (5) Institute restitution order enforcement proceedings through the Office of Attorney General or the Commission's legal staff.
 - (i) The hearing and papers, records and disclosures therein will be confidential except for the contents of the final order as provided in §21.29 (relating to finality; reconsideration).
 - (j) If one or more of the participants in a hearing become disrespectful, disorderly or disruptive, the hearing officer may continue the hearing to allow the full Commission to rule on the proper limitations or sanctions for the person whose behavior does not conform to minimum standards required for an orderly proceeding.
 - (k) Subsection (a) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.161 (relating to form and admissibility of evidence). Subsection (b) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.137 (relating to oral examination). Subsection (c) supersedes 1 Pa. Code §35.125 (relating to order of procedure).

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Restricted Activities

The Public Official and Employee Ethics Act delineates certain restricted activities in which persons subject to the Ethics Act may not engage. These restrictions provide the basis upon which Commission rulings are issued.

(a) No public official or public employee shall engage in conduct that constitutes a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is defined as use by a public official or public employee of the authority of his office or employment or any confidential information received through his holding public office or employment for the private pecuniary benefit of himself, a member of his immediate family, or a business with which he or a member of his immediate family is associated. "Conflict" or "conflict of interest" does not include an action having a de minimis economic impact or which affects to the same degree a class consisting of the general public or a subclass consisting of an industry, occupation, or other group which includes the public official or public employee, a member of his immediate family, or a business with which he or a member of his immediate family is associated.

(b) No person shall offer or give to a public official, public employee, or nominee or candidate for public office or a member of his immediate family or a business with which he is associated, anything of monetary value, including a gift, loan, political contribution, reward or promise of future employment based on the offeror's or donor's understanding that the vote, official action, or judgment of the public official or public employee or nominee or candidate for public office would be influenced thereby.

(c) No public official, public employee or nominee or candidate for public office shall solicit or accept anything of monetary value, including a gift, loan, political contribution, reward, or promise of future employment based on any understanding of that public official, public employee or nominee that the vote, official action, or judgment of the public official or public employee or nominee or candidate for public office would be influenced thereby.

(d) No public official or public employee shall accept an honorarium.

(e)(1) No person shall solicit or accept a severance payment or anything of monetary value contingent upon the assumption or acceptance of public office or employment.

(e)(2) This subsection shall not prohibit:

(i) Payments received pursuant to an employment agreement in existence prior to the time a person becomes a candidate or is notified by a member of a transition team, a search committee, or a person with appointive power that he is under consideration for public office or makes application for public employment.

(ii) Receipt of a salary, fees, severance payment, or proceeds resulting from the sale of a person's interest in a corporation, professional corporation, partnership, or other entity resulting from termination or withdrawal therefrom upon the assumption or acceptance of public office or employment.

(e)(3) Payments made or received pursuant to paragraph (2)(i) and (ii) shall not be based on the agreement, written or otherwise, that the vote or official action of the prospective public official or public employee would be influenced thereby.

(f) No public official or public employee or his spouse or child or any business in which the person or his spouse or child is associated shall enter into any contract valued at \$500 or more with the governmental body with which the public official or public employee is associated or any subcontract valued at \$500 or more with any person who has been awarded a contract with the governmental body with which the public official or public employee is associated, unless the contract has been awarded through an open and public process, including prior public notice and subsequent public disclosure of all proposals considered and contracts awarded. In such a case, a public official or public employee shall not have any supervisory or overall responsibility for the implementation or administration of the contract. Any contract or subcontract made in violation of this subsection shall be voidable by a court of competent jurisdiction if the suit is commenced within 90 days of the making of the contract or subcontract.

(g) No former public official or public employee shall represent a person, with promised or actual compensation, on any matter before the governmental body with which he has been associated for one year after he leaves that body.

(h) No person shall use for any commercial purpose information copied from statements of financial interests required by the Ethics Act or from lists compiled from such statements.

(i) No former executive-level state employee may for a period of two years from the time that he terminates his state employment be employed by, receive compensation from, assist or act in a representative capacity for a business or a corporation that he actively participated in recruiting to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or that he actively participated in inducing to open a new plant, facility, or

branch in the Commonwealth or that he actively participated in inducing to expand an existent plant or facility within the Commonwealth, provided that the above prohibition shall be invoked only when the recruitment or inducement is accomplished by a grant or loan of money or a promise of same from the Commonwealth to the business or corporation recruited or induced to expand.

(j) Where voting conflicts are not otherwise addressed by the Constitution of Pennsylvania or by any law, rule, regulation, order or ordinance, the following procedure shall be employed. Any public official or public employee, who in the discharge of his official duties, would be required to vote on a matter that would result in a conflict of interest shall abstain from voting and, prior to the vote being taken, publicly announce and disclose the nature of his interest as a public record in a written memorandum filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting at which the vote is taken, provided that whenever a governing body would be unable to take any action on a matter before it because the number of members of the body required to abstain from voting under the provisions of this section makes the majority or other legally required vote of approval unattainable, then such members shall be permitted to vote if disclosures are made as otherwise provided herein. In the case of a three-member governing body of a political subdivision, where one member has abstained from voting as a result of a conflict of interest, and the remaining two members of the governing body have cast opposing votes, the member who has abstained shall be permitted to vote to break the tie vote if disclosure is made as otherwise provided herein.

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Wrongful Use Of The Act**

Sec.

- 25.1. Wrongful use of the act.
- 25.2. Initiation of proceedings.
- 25.3. Disposition.
- 25.4. Appeal of determination.

§25.1. Wrongful use of the act.

Wrongful use of the act is established by one or more of the following elements:

- (1) The filing of a frivolous complaint which is a complaint filed in a grossly negligent manner without basis in law or fact.
- (2) The filing of a complaint without probable cause, primarily for a purpose other than reporting a violation of the act.
- (3) Disclosing publicly or causing to be publicly disclosed the fact that an individual is the subject of a complaint or Commission investigation.

§25.2. Initiation of proceedings.

(a) The Commission may initiate proceedings to determine whether there has been a wrongful use of the act through the filing of a notification by a public official/public employe as provided for in section 8(1) of the act (65 P.S. §408(1)), which notification shall contain the following:

- (1) A reference identifying the complaint/ investigation involved.
- (2) A detailed explanation as to the reasons, information, facts or evidence establishing the elements of wrongful use of act as outlined in §25.1 (relating to wrongful use of the act).
- (3) If applicable, identification of the person publicly disclosing the existence of Commission proceedings and the specific nature of the disclosure.
- (4) Additional information necessary to the resolution of the matter.

(b) Failure to provide information as outlined in this section will be cause for dismissal of the notification.

§25.3. Disposition.

(a) Pursuant to a notification containing the requisite information outlined in §25.2 (relating to initiation of proceedings), the Commission will initiate proceedings by conducting an investigation to determine whether there has been a wrongful use of act.

(b) The investigation will be conducted in a confidential manner.

(c) The investigation may incorporate information which the Commission has already obtained.

(1) If the Commission determines a complaint has been filed in violation of the act, it will release the name and address of the complainant to the respondent after giving the complainant notice and an opportunity to be heard on the issue of whether the complainant wrongfully used the act.

(2) If the Commission determines that a complaint was proper, it will so notify the respondent who may appeal that determination and the Commission will schedule a hearing.

(d) Upon completion of the investigation, the Commission will make a preliminary determination as to wrongful use of the act. The Commission will notify the complainant and subject of the preliminary determination.

§25.4. Appeal of determination.

(a) Both the complainant and the subject have standing and either may appeal the preliminary determination to the Commission.

(1) Any appeal shall be filed with the Commission within 30 days of service of the preliminary determination.

(2) If there is no timely appeal filed, the Commission's initial determination will become absolute and will become the final determination of the Commission in the matter as to wrongful use of the act.

(b) The issuance of Orders to Show Cause is governed by the following:

(1) If a subject appeals, the Commission will issue an Order to Show Cause requiring the respondent to set forth reasons why the rule should not be made absolute as to a finding of no wrongful use of the act. The answer to the rule shall contain specific factual averments which establish a basis for believing the act was wrongfully used. One or more of the following are inadequate to establish wrongful use:

- (i) Dismissal of the complaint.
- (ii) Dismissal for lack of probable cause.
- (iii) Dismissal on jurisdictional grounds.

(2) The Commission will schedule a hearing for the subject's appeal at which the subject shall bear the burden of proving wrongful use of the act by clear and convincing evidence. The investigative staff of the Commission will present the case opposing the subject's appeal.

(c) If the complainant appeals, the Commission will issue a Rule to Show Cause requiring the complainant to file an answer to the averments in the Rule as to why the Rule should not be made absolute as to a finding of wrongful use of the act. The Commission will schedule a hearing for the complainant's appeal. The investigative staff of the Commission will present the Commission's case and will have the burden of proving wrongful use of the act by clear and convincing evidence.

(d) If the Commission makes a final determination that the act has been wrongfully used, it will release to the subject the name and address of the complainant solely for the purpose of initiating an action for wrongful use of the act. The complainant's identity will not otherwise be publicly released.

(e) If the Commission makes a final determination that the act was not wrongfully used, it will issue a final determination setting forth the reasons and evidence for its finding.

(f) The procedures of §§21.21 - 21.29 (relating to hearings) will apply to the hearing to the extent applicable.

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