

Legislative Ethics Board

BOARD MEMBERS:
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REP. DAVID HACKNEY
TOM HOEMANN
LARRY HOFF
STEVE O'BAN
SEN. JAMIE PEDERSEN
PAM TAJIMA PRAEGER
REP. MIKE STEELE



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LEGISLATIVE ETHICS BOARD MINUTES October 15, 2024

Present were: Tom Hoemann, Chair; Pam Tajima Praeger, Vice-Chair (virtual); Sen. Jamie Pedersen; Sen. Chris Gildon; Larry Hoff; Rep. David Hackney (virtual); Steve O'Ban (virtual); Jennifer Strus, Board Counsel; Jeannie Gorrell, Senate Counsel; Suchi Sharma, Senate Counsel (virtual); Ohad Lowy, House Counsel (virtual)

The chair called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

The minutes for the September 11, 2024 Board meeting were approved.

The Board reviewed two Employment Disclosure forms, one submitted by Spencer Smith and the other filed by Sarada Ross. The Board found no conflict with either.

The Board continued its discussion about the request for an Advisory Opinion from John Handy. Member O'Ban explained his email to the Board regarding whether legislative staff need to remove public comments on official social media posts. He explained that the Board's jurisdictional statute RCW 42.52.320 applies only to legislators and legislative staff. It does not apply to outside citizens who happen to comment on an official social media post. Member O'Ban recommended that a disclaimer be included with each post stating that the comments are the positions of the people who comment not that of the particular caucus that posted the original post.

Senator Pedersen indicated that the jurisdictional statute is susceptible to multiple interpretations. He commented that if the original post was appropriate and had sufficient legislative nexus then he believed there was no ethics issue if the public commented on the original post.

It was moved and seconded that the above comments be written up as an Advisory Opinion to be reviewed at the next meeting of the Board. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board then discussed the memo about the acceptance of gift cards. Board counsel explained the rules used by the Executive Ethics Board on this topic. After some discussion, the Board approved putting these rules into an Advisory Opinion to be discussed at the Board's next meeting.

Board counsel discussed the changes to the Contract/Grant Disclosure Form. The purpose of the changes is to gather more information about the grant or contract and the filer's role. After further discussion by the Board, Board counsel is to make changes to the form for further review by the Board at the next meeting.

The Board then discussed the potential proposed amendments to the Ethics Act. Board counsel went through and explained the amendments. It was decided that the title of the bill should be broad. The Board discussed a more explicit definition of "beneficial interest" as well as adding definitions of "emergency" and "awards of extraordinary distinction." The chair asked the Board to think about the amendments and be ready to discuss them at the next meeting. Board counsel will add the above definitions and work on the definition of "beneficial interest" to be discussed at the next meeting of the Board.

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 11:23 am.

The Board then moved into executive session to discuss pending complaints.

The executive session was adjourned at 11:45am.



Tom Hoemann, Chair

Date: Nov 4, 2024

The entirety of the public portion of this meeting can be viewed on TVW at the attached link <https://tvw.org/video/legislative-ethics-board-2024101147/?eventID=2024101147>