

Things Public Officials Should Know
About Oregon's New Government Ethics Laws

<http://www.gspc.state.or.us/>

http://www.gspc.state.or.us/OGEC/docs/Things_Public_Officials_Should_Know.doc

The following is a summary of some of the provisions of SB10 and HB 2595. It is not all inclusive and you should contact the Ethics Commission if you have questions. Additional information will be posted as soon as possible.

1. There will be more frequent reporting for those public officials who must file a yearly statement of economic interest (SEI). In addition to the yearly SEI (still due on April 15), public officials must file a quarterly report that lists 4 things: 1) expenses for conventions, missions, trips or other meetings paid for by tribes, governments, or certain non-profit organizations; 2) expenses for missions, negotiations, or economic development activities paid for by third parties; 3) honoraria greater than \$15; and 4) certain income exceeding \$1000. The first quarterly report is due April 15, 2008, for the January to March 2008 quarter.
2. Public officials may not have direct beneficial financial interest in a contract they "authorized" as a public official for two years after they cease to hold that official position.
3. The yearly gift limit from a "single source" with a legislative or administrative interest is now \$50. (It was \$100.) That limit applies to the public official's relatives and members of the household.
4. Public officials (including relatives and members of the household) may receive NO gifts of entertainment from persons with a legislative or administrative interest unless the entertainment is "incidental" to an event or the entertainment is "ceremonial". (It was \$250 per year and \$100 per event.)
5. There is no longer a general trip expense exception to the gift limits. There are several narrowly defined new trip expense exceptions for certain givers (tribes, governments, public officials and limited non-profits) and certain defined trips (officially sanctioned trade-promotion or fact-finding missions; officially designated negotiations or economic development activities).
6. Food and beverage consumed in the presence of the giver is no longer an exception. Thus, food and beverage will be subject to the \$50 per year unless another gift exception applies (e.g. reception).
7. A public body can hire the relative of a public official but a public official can neither be involved in the hiring process nor supervise a relative unless the public body authorizes such supervision.
8. Commission advisory opinions, staff opinions and staff advice now provide greater immunity or mitigation from sanctions. In addition, there are timelines for the commission and staff to issue their opinions.
9. Statewide associations may adopt rules or policies interpreting the ethics laws and submit them to the ethics commission for review. The commission shall approve or reject them, giving reasons for any rejection. Officials who act in compliance with approved rules or policies may not be sanctioned by the ethics commission.
10. The ethics commission is in the process of rulemaking to define new terms, to create new forms, and otherwise implement SB 10 and HB 2595. Information will be posted to this site as soon as it becomes available.

If you have specific questions, please call the Ethics Commission office at 503-378-5105.