



VIRGINIA
CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND
ETHICS ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Created for the
Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Annual Meeting
December 5, 2023**

I. Council Membership

Council membership as of September 2023:

Speaker of the House Appointees

The Honorable Del. M. Keith Hodges

The Honorable Del. Vivian E. Watts

The Honorable Bruce D. White (Chair)

Senate Committee on Rules Appointees

The Honorable Sen. Adam Ebbin

The Honorable Sen. Thomas K. Norment, Jr.

The Honorable Malfourd W. Trumbo (Vice-Chair)

Gubernatorial Appointees

John C. Blair

Sharon E. Pandak

Tracy Retchin

II. Council Duties

The Council shall perform the following duties:

1. Furnish formal and informal guidance to all persons required to comply with the Acts
2. Conduct training seminars and educational programs and publish educational materials for all persons required to comply with the Acts
3. Serve as liaison between state agencies, boards, commissions, and local government entities for administering the filings of all disclosure forms
4. Redact personal information from any form prior to making the form available to the public
5. Establish and maintain a searchable database of disclosure forms filed with the Council
6. Notify the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Attorney General concerning late or failure-to-file penalties
7. Receive and review requests for approval of travel submitted by individuals required to file a Statement of Economic Interests

III. Prohibited Conduct and Personal Interests

A. Prohibited Conduct

No state or local government officer or employee shall:

1. Solicit or accept money or other thing of value for services performed within the scope of your official duties except for compensation paid by your agency
2. Offer or accept any money or other thing of value for obtaining employment, appointment, or promotion of any person with any governmental or advisory agency

3. Offer or accept any money or other thing of value for the use of your public position to obtain a contract for any person or business with any governmental or advisory agency
 4. Use confidential information that you have acquired by reason of your public position and that is not available to the public for your or another party's economic benefit
 5. Accept any money, loan, gift, favor, service, or business or professional opportunity that reasonably tends to influence you in the performance of your official duties; this does not include political contributions actually used for a political campaign or constituent services and reported as required by campaign finance laws
 6. Accept any business or professional opportunity when you know that there is a reasonable likelihood that the opportunity is being given to influence you in the performance of your official duties
 7. Accept any honoraria for any appearance, speech, or article in which you provide expertise or opinions related to the performance of your official duties (this only applies to the Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Governor's Secretaries, and heads of departments of state government)
 8. Accept a gift from a person who has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance of your duties under circumstances where the timing and nature of the gift would cause a reasonable person to question your impartiality in the matter affecting the donor
 9. Accept gifts from sources on a basis so frequent as to raise an appearance of the use of your public office for private gain
 10. Use your public position to retaliate or threaten to retaliate against any person for expressing views on matters of public concern or for exercising any right that is otherwise protected by law, provided, however, that this does not restrict the authority of any public employer to govern conduct of its employees, and to take disciplinary action, in accordance with applicable law, and provided further that this does not limit the authority of a constitutional officer to discipline or discharge an employee with or without cause
- B. "Personal interest" is a financial benefit or liability accruing to an officer or employee or to a member of his immediate family.

Personal interests exist due to:

1. Ownership in a business if the ownership interest exceeds three percent of the total equity of the business;
2. Annual income that exceeds, or may reasonably be anticipated to exceed, \$5,000 from ownership in real or personal property or a business;
3. Salary, other compensation, fringe benefits, or benefits from the use of property, or any combination thereof, paid or provided by a business or governmental agency that exceeds, or may reasonably be anticipated to exceed, \$5,000 annually;

4. Ownership of real or personal property if the interest exceeds \$5,000 in value and excluding ownership in a business, income, or salary, other compensation, fringe benefits or benefits from the use of property;
5. Personal liability incurred or assumed on behalf of a business if the liability exceeds three percent of the asset value of the business; or
6. An option for ownership of a business or real or personal property if the ownership interest will consist of subdivision (1) or (4) above.

C. Personal Interest in a Contract

1. You may not have a personal interest in a contract with your agency other than your own contract of employment.
2. You are also prohibited from having a personal interest in certain contracts with other state agencies.

For contracts with other state agencies, an exception is made for:

- i. contracts awarded using competitive sealed bidding or negotiation following Procurement Act procedures
- ii. contracts awarded after a written finding by the administrative head of the agency that competitive sealed bidding or negotiation is contrary to the best interest of the public.

There are many exceptions to this prohibition. It is recommended that you contact the Council regarding the application of an exception.

D. Personal Interest in a Transaction

A personal interest in a transaction means a personal interest in any matter considered by your agency, when official action is taken or contemplated.

Such a personal interest exists when you or a member of your immediate family has a personal interest in:

1. property or a business, or
2. represents or provides services to any individual or business

and the property, business, or represented or served individual or business

1. is the subject of the transaction or
2. may realize a reasonably foreseeable direct or indirect benefit or detriment as a result of the action on the transaction.

You must publicly disqualify yourself if the transaction applies solely to the entity in which you have a personal interest, or if you have a personal interest in a transaction and do not qualify for participation.

It is recommended that you contact the Council if you have a question about a possible personal interest in a transaction.

Contact Information:

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