

THE VOICE OF ETHICS

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Ohio Ethics Commission

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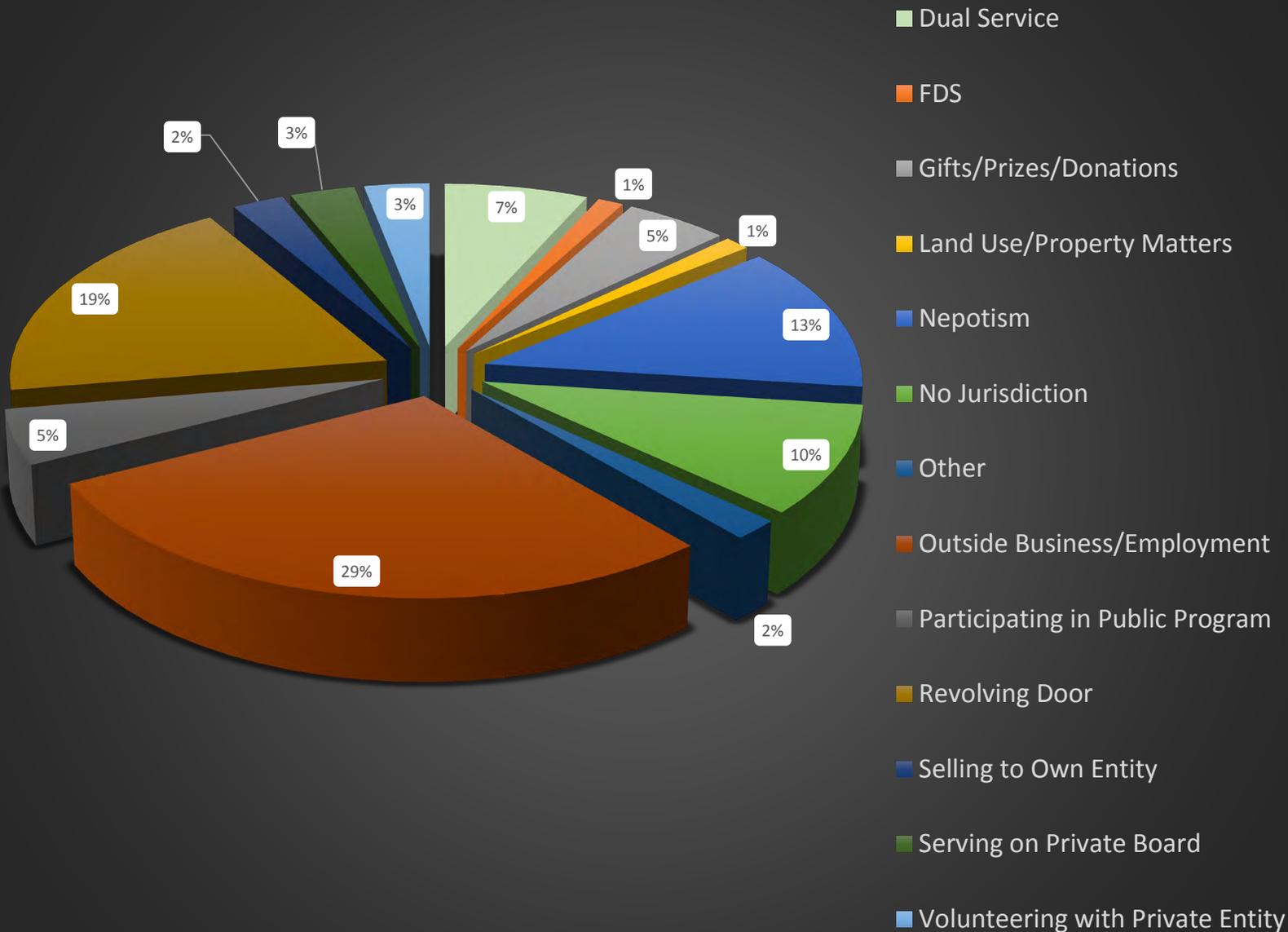
*Looking Back
&
Moving Forward!*

The Ohio Ethics Commission

Advisory Opinions

The Ohio Ethics Commission is committed to assisting public officials and employees in understanding and complying with the Ethics Law. The Commission believes that offering solid direction on how to obey the law is preferable to investigating violations that could have been avoided. To that end, the Ohio Ethics Commission renders advisory opinions and provides general guidance regarding the law on a daily basis.

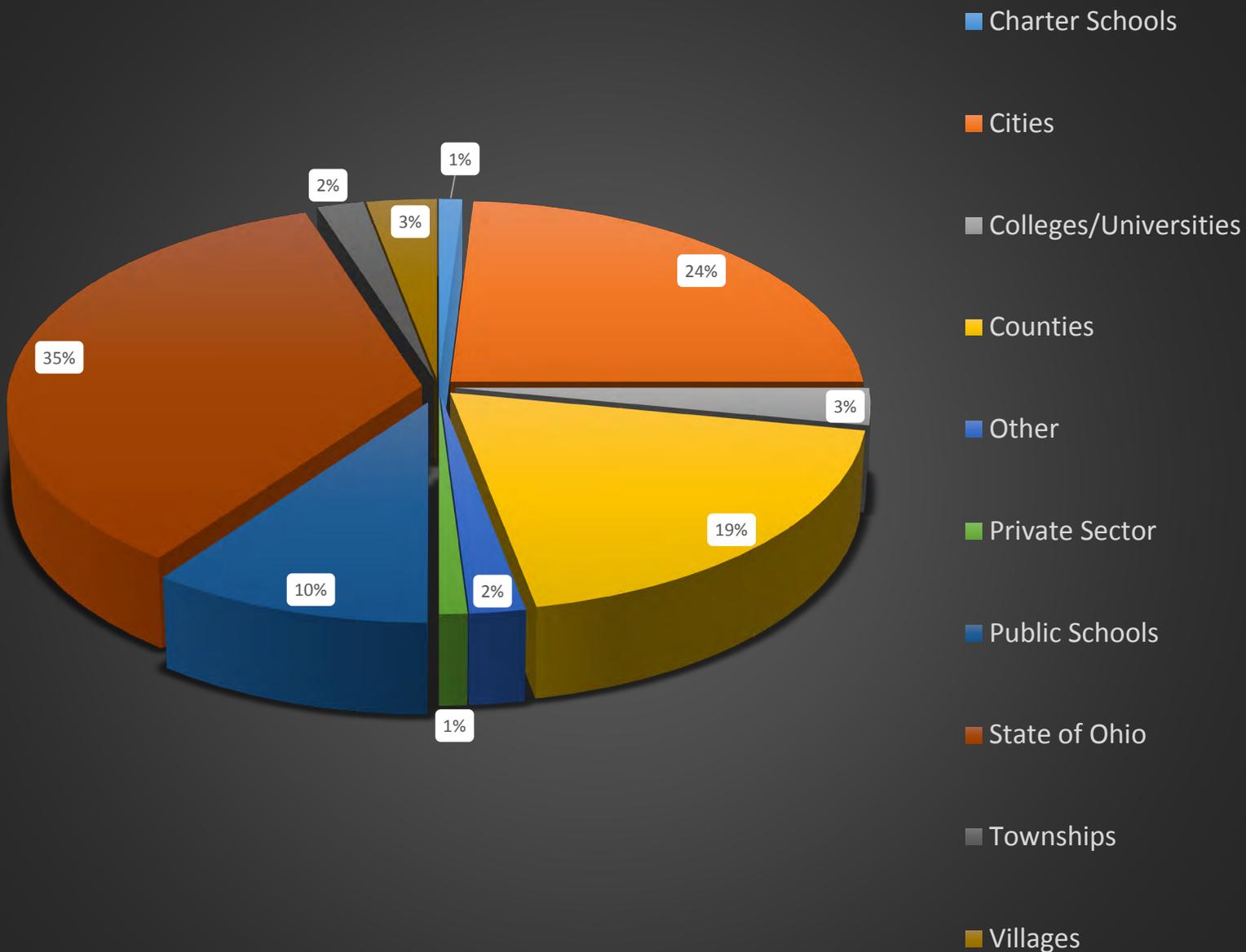
Advisory Opinions by Topic - 2014 (163 Total Staff Opinions)



Commission: A Look Back at 2014

In 2014, staff Advisory Attorneys responded to 163 written requests for opinions, provided guidance via e-mail to nearly 2,800 people and responded to approximately 2,300 telephone inquiries. The charts below represent the types of questions the Commission received in writing and the types of entities requesting written advice.

Advisory Opinions by Entity - 2014
(163 Total Staff Opinions)



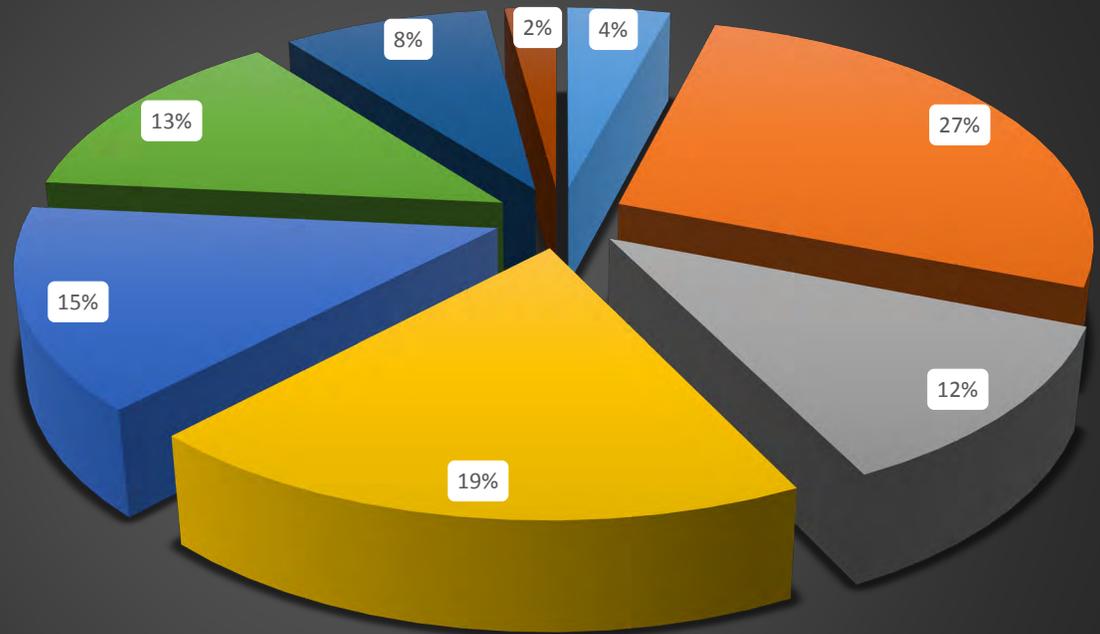
Investigations

The Commission's Investigation section is responsible for investigating alleged violations of the Ohio Ethics Law and related statutes and refers cases supported by substantial evidence for prosecution or alternative resolution.

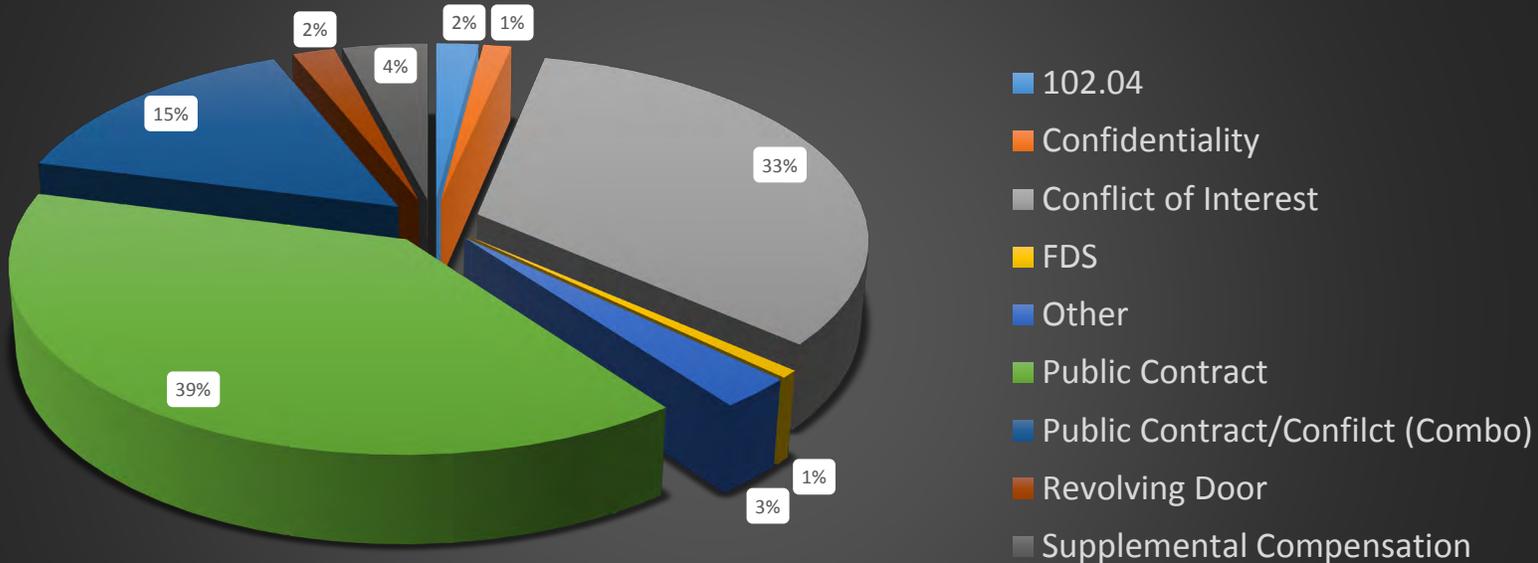
Last year, the Investigative staff responded to 865 telephone investigative inquiries and processed 388 written requests or allegations of wrongdoing. The Commission handled 155 new investigations in 2014 with 50 being closed, including settlement and censure cases.

Entities Investigated

- Charter School
- City
- County
- Public School
- State
- Township
- University
- Vendor



Violations Investigated



Ethics Education

The Ethics Commission continues to offer numerous options to those who wish to participate in education classes regarding the Ohio Ethics Law. The Commission's trainings consistently receive extremely positive feedback and thousands of people benefit annually from the Commission's education and outreach efforts.

In 2014, the Education section offered 180 "live" presentations to nearly 14,000 people. In addition, thousands of public officials and employees took advantage of the online learning opportunities on the Commission's web site for a convenient and cost-effective Ethics Education option. In addition, ten live webinars attracted 2,000 on-line attendees and the Commission conducted 11 sessions in counties where the Commission had not previously made an appearance.

Financial Disclosure

Ohio's law requires many public officials and employees to file personal financial disclosure statements each year. The Commission administers the financial disclosure requirement for those officials and employees which included receiving more than 10,000 statements in 2014 with sixty percent of these filers using the Commission's on-line filing system.

The image shows a hand holding a black marker, filling out a "FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT" form. The form is titled "Form No. OEC-2012 OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION" and includes the Ohio Ethics Commission logo. It specifies that the statement is to be filed in 2013 and covers financial information for the calendar year 2012. The form is divided into several sections: SECTION A. PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION (with fields for Last Name, First Name, MI, Address, City, County, and E-mail Address); SECTION B. STATUS (Check all that apply) with checkboxes for Candidate, Write-in Candidate, Elected to an office, Appointed to an unexpired term in elective office, Public Official, Public Employee, and Voluntary Filer, along with a "CANDIDATE" section for the first election; SECTION C. PUBLIC POSITION, OFFICE, OR JOB (with fields for Position/Title and Public Entity); and a Public Salary section with checkboxes for Uncompensated, Less than \$16,000, and \$16,000 or more, and a Start Date field with Month, Day, and Year sub-fields.

Representation: What is it? & Is it Good or Bad?

The Ohio Ethics Commission is often asked if public officials and employees can own outside businesses or have private employment. In general, the answer is yes, provided that no conflict of interest exists between the public position and private interests or the person is able to withdraw from consideration of matters that affect their private business or employment.

Further, there must be no misuse of the public office or employment. For example, the public official or employee cannot:

- use public time, facilities, personnel, or resources in conducting private business;
- use an official title on private business cards or other written materials;
- use relationships with other public servants to secure a favorable decision or action regarding private interests;
- discuss, deliberate, or vote on any matter involving private businesses; or
- use a public position or authority in any other way to secure a benefit for an outside employer or private business.

However, there is an additional, very important prohibition known as Representation. Public officials and employees may not receive compensation from anyone – including clients – to represent or perform services on any matter that is before their own public agencies.

For example, a member of a city board of building appeals may also own and operate a private architectural or engineering business. It may seem clear that the board member would be prohibited from authorizing, voting for, or otherwise using the authority of his office to secure a public contract for his own business with the city. What may not be as commonly known, though, is that the board member also may not represent anyone before the city he serves.

Even if plans, drawings or applications would be submitted to a different division within the city, the public employee or official cannot be paid by a client to perform any services on a matter that is being reviewed or decided by any city department or office. Again, this is true even if he or she will not personally appear before the city department.

State officials or employees are equally prohibited from representing someone before their own public agency. If a state official or employee wishes to represent a client before a state agency other than the agency he or she serves, a document known as a [102.04 \(D\) statement](#) must be completed in advance.

For more information regarding representation restrictions, please contact the Ohio Ethics Commission at (614) 466 – 7090.



Click image on left to view an example!

“Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.”

~Abraham Lincoln



The Ohio Ethics Commission is committed to providing timely and interactive ethics education sessions to help those both in the public and private sectors in understanding and complying with the Ethics Law. Check out our [web site](#) or see below for information on the various options available to learn more about the law. Questions? Contact Susan Willeke at (614) 466- 7090 or susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov

On-Site Training

The Ohio Ethics Commission conducts “live” ethics education sessions around the state; these presentations receive very positive feedback as some people prefer direct interaction and an opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue. These presentations vary from 30 minute keynote addresses to one to two hour sessions. Occasionally, the Commission also provides 3 – 4 hour workshops on the Ethics Law and related statutes.

Our obligation to be fiscally responsible, however, requires that travel be reserved for speeches with larger groups. If your office/agency is outside the Columbus area, we request a minimum of 75 attendees to conduct a live presentation. To schedule a speaker or to discuss other appropriate options, please contact Susan Willeke at the contact information above.

New E-Course Available!

Thousands of state and local government officials and employees took advantage of electronic learning options last year. Learners can access e-courses regarding the Ethics Law [here](#). The Commission recently unveiled its newest e-course “The Ohio Ethics Law: Promoting Integrity in Public Service.” This course provides an overview of the Ethics Law and like the other e-courses, is available on-demand and at your convenience. A special note to attorneys: beginning March 1, 2015, the newest e-course is approved for one hour of self-study CLE!

A New Electronic Way to Meet Ethics Training Needs!



This year, the Ohio Ethics Commission is introducing a new concept to meet your agency’s training needs. This “phased” Ethics Training is a six-part e-course series consisting of the following 15 – 20 minute e-courses:

- i. The Ohio Ethics Law and Conflicts of Interest
- ii. The Ohio Ethics Law and Gifts
- iii. The Ohio Ethics Law and Post-Employment
- iv. The Ohio Ethics Law and Sales to Public Agencies
- v. The Ohio Ethics Law and Public Contracts
- vi. The Ohio Ethics Law and Nepotism

Please note that proof of attendance is not electronically provided for short e-courses. Therefore, this option is not designed for individual study. Rather, this training option can be very helpful at staff meetings or board/commission meetings. If one brief e-course is viewed every other month at a staff or board meeting, by the end of the year, the primary provisions of Ethics Law have been covered! Your agency can track which course was shown on which date and note attendees in meeting minutes. [Click here](#) to access the e-course series. (link to new button in training section of web)

The Ohio Ethics Law



Promoting Integrity in Public Service

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Webinars

In 2014, the Commission conducted ten live webinars with approximately 2,000 electronic “attendees” from all across Ohio. Webinars can be especially helpful for smaller offices who cannot host a live training session or public servants who spend much of their work hours in the field. The 2015 webinar dates are:

February 24	1 pm	Overview
March 26	1 pm	Overview
April 22	11 am	Conflict of Interest
May 18	1 pm	Overview
June 11	1 pm	Overview
July 17	11 am	Overview
August 19	10 am	Public Contracts
September 1	10 am	Overview
October 9	11 am	Overview
November 9	10 am	Post-Employment
December 17	11 am	Overview

Click [here](#) to register.

Ethics Education - Regional Sessions

These sessions were originally designed for state public officials and employees who annually file financial disclosure statements with the Ethics Commission. A state Executive Order requires these filers to attend an Ethics Education session that provides an in-depth review of the Ethics Law. However, **these sessions are open to anyone in the community who would like to know more about the Ohio Ethics Law.** All state, county, city, township, and village officials and employees are welcome to attend!

Click [here](#) for session details and registration information.

March 10	10 am	Perrysburg
March 19	10 am	Columbus
June 4	10 am	Warrensville Heights
June 11	10 am	Columbus
September 1	10 am	Columbus
October 2	10 am	Cincinnati
December 11	10 am	Columbus

These courses have been approved for 1.5 hours of general CLE for attorneys.

Continuing Legal Education



The Ohio Ethics Commission will sponsor three CLE sessions in 2015 in conjunction with the Supreme Court of Ohio. These free classes are designed for public practice attorneys and have been approved by the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Continuing Legal Education for 2.50 total CLE hours of attorney professional conduct instruction.

For the past several years, the Ethics Commission has conducted two CLE classes in Columbus and another class in “rotating” cities around Ohio. This year, we are heading to Cincinnati! We hope many public practice attorneys in Southwest Ohio will be able to join us!

Our 2015 dates at locations are:

May 21	9 am	Columbus
October 2	1 pm	Cincinnati
November 23	9 am	Columbus

Please click [here](#) for more information on dates, locations, and registration information.

When you electronically register, you will receive an automatic confirmation email. Approximately one week before the class, you will receive a reminder email with handouts.



OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION
William Green Building
30 West Spring Street, L3
Columbus, Ohio 43215-2256
(614) 466-7090

www.ethics.ohio.gov

Questions? Concerns? Need more information? Contact us!