



The Voice of Ethics

January/February 2014

2013: The Year in Review

The Ohio Ethics Commission kept a busy schedule last year in all areas of its statutory responsibilities. Highlighted below are the efforts and accomplishments of the Commission in 2013.



Advisory

One of the core functions of the Ohio Ethics Commission is to render advisory opinions and provide general guidance regarding ethics, conflicts of interest, and financial disclosure for the public officials and employees under its jurisdiction.

In 2013, the Commission issued one Formal Advisory Opinion and one new Travel Rule. In addition, staff Advisory Attorneys issued 158 Staff Advisory Opinions, provided guidance via e-mail to more than 1,500 people and responded to approximately 3,000 telephone inquiries.

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.

In 2013, the Investigative Staff responded to nearly 1,000 telephone investigative inquiries and processed 431 allegations of wrongdoing. Eighty-six new cases were opened last year while 85 were closed, which includes some settlement and censure cases.





Types of Violations - Total 185 Cases

Type	Percentage
Public Contract	45%
Conflict of Interest	32%
Public Contract & Conflict	15%
Supplemental Compensation	2%
Conflict of Interest & Supplemental Compensation	1%
FDS	1%
Revolving Door	2%
Combo Other	1%
Confidentiality	1%



Advisory Phone Calls by Type

Type	Percentage
FDS	52.0%
Revolving Door	4.5%
Selling Goods/Services	3.7%
Gifts	3.6%
Nepotism	3.0%
Supplemental Compensation	1.9%
Travel	1.7%
Land Use	0.9%
Other	10.5%
Referred to Appropriate Agency	18.0%



Types of Entities - Total 185 Cases

Type	Percentage
City/Villages	27%
Public Schools	23%
County	12%
Townships	12%
Charter Schools	12%
State	12%
College Universities	2%



Financial Disclosure

Ohio's law requires many public officials and employees to file personal financial disclosure statements each year. The Financial Disclosure section of the Ethics Commission administers the financial disclosure requirement for those officials and employees. The Commission prepares the form each year, provides assistance to filers, receives forms, and makes filed forms available to the public.

The image shows a hand holding a pen over a 'FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT' form. The form is from the Ohio Ethics Commission, Form No. OEC-2012, and is intended for filing in 2013. It includes sections for personal contact information, status, and public position. The form is titled 'FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT' and includes the text 'This statement is to be filed in 2013' and 'Financial information for calendar year 2012'. The form is divided into three main sections: SECTION A. PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION, SECTION B. STATUS (Check all that apply), and SECTION C. PUBLIC POSITION, OFFICE, OR JOB. SECTION A includes fields for Last Name, First Name, MI, Address, City, County, and E-mail Address. SECTION B includes 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. SECTION C includes a field for Position/Title and a section for Public Salary with checkboxes for Uncompensated, Less than \$16,000, and \$16,000 or more. The form also includes a section for Public Entity and a section for Start Date.

Last year saw the very successful launch of the [Online Financial Disclosure](#) filing system. Of the approximately 11,000 people who filed statements with the Commission in 2013, 46 percent did so electronically. The Commission received very positive feedback regarding the online filing system and has introduced the most recent form on its web site.

Here are just some of the benefits provided by Electronic filing:

- No postage costs
- Instant filing confirmation and the ability to save a time-stamped copy of your filed statement
- Payments can be made via credit card or electronic check (ACH)
- Import your responses from the prior year's statement*
- View previously filed statements at any time*
- Upload attachments (PDF format only)
- 24/7 availability, statements filed prior to midnight are time-stamped the same day
- Elect to receive annual filing reminders via e-mail

*Only applies to statements filed electronically

Questions about online filing? Contact the Ethics Commission at (614) 466 – 7090.

Education

The Ethics Commission conducts proactive educational outreach to help both the public and the private sectors understand and comply with the Ohio Ethics Law.

The Education Section offered 205 presentations in 2013 to approximately 17,000 people. These efforts included “classroom” events, webinars, e-courses and continuing legal education courses. Click [here](#) for more information on obtaining training and information on the Ohio Ethics Law.



Training

The Ohio Ethics Commission is offering numerous options to meet your Ethics Education needs in 2014. Do you have a large audience and like live interaction? Our Education and Communications Administrator can come to you for a lively and informative presentation. Do you prefer computer based training? We've got you covered there, too! See below for information on our monthly live webinars and our newly released e-course. Questions? Contact Susan Willeke at (614) 466- 7090 or susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov

ON-SITE TRAINING

The Ohio Ethics Commission conducts approximately 200 ethics education sessions annually to an average 20,000 attendees. Our presentation options 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. The Commission's presentations consistently receive very positive feedback and speakers are routinely invited to return.

Our obligation to be fiscally responsible, however, requires that travel be reserved for speeches with larger groups. If you are interested in having the Commission speak at your agency or office outside Columbus, we request a minimum of 75-100 people be in attendance. To schedule a presentation for your agency or to discuss other appropriate options, please contact Susan Willeke at the contact information above.

ANNOUNCING THE 2014 ETHICS LAW E-COURSE!

The Ohio Ethics Commission is pleased to unveil the newest tool in our ethics educational toolbox! The 2014 e-course "The Ohio Ethics Law: Review and Oversight" summarizes the Ohio Ethics Law in an educational and engaging manner. Click [here](#) to "attend" the e-course. Stay tuned for topic specific e-courses in 2014!

WEBINARS

Back by popular demand! The six live webinars conducted by the Ethics Commission last year attracted more than 1,500 learners from all over the state! This education option is 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." Therefore, the Commission is pleased to once again offer webinars in 2014. [Click here to register.](#)

- March 13, 2014
- April 3, 2014
- May 16, 2014
- June 11, 2014
- July 10, 2014
- August 18, 2014
- September 23, 2014
- October 10, 2014
- November 20, 2014
- December 18, 2014

STATE FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE FILERS

Public officials and employees who serve at the state level and annually file financial disclosure statements (FDS) with the Ethics Commission are required by a state Executive Order to attend an Ethics Education session that provides an in-depth review of the Ethics Law. The Ethics Commission conducts classroom sessions to assist state FDS filers in meeting this requirement. [Click here to register.](#)

Date	Location
March 24, 2014	Columbus, Ohio
March 31, 2014	Toledo, Ohio
June 12, 2014	Columbus, Ohio
June 20, 2014	Warrensville Heights, Ohio
September 23,	Columbus, Ohio
October 3, 2014	Cincinnati, Ohio
December 16, 2014	Columbus, Ohio

CLE for Public Practice Attorneys

The Ohio Ethics Commission is sponsoring three CLE sessions in 2014 in conjunction with the Supreme Court of Ohio. These sessions are free classes 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 ethics instruction.



Please see the attached link for information on dates, locations, and registration information:

<http://ethics.ohio.gov/education/cleminars.shtml>

Registrants will receive an automatic confirmation email. Approximately one week before the class, registrants will receive a reminder email with the corresponding handouts.



"I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man."

-George Washington