

THE VOICE OF ETHICS

A Publication of the Ohio Ethics Commission

2021 Quarter 4



The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.

- Michelangelo



New Advisory Opinion!

At its November 10, 2021 meeting, the Ohio Ethics Commission issued formal [Advisory Opinion 2021-02](#), which addresses the question of whether a member of a legislative body of a local governmental entity can vote to elect himself or herself to serve as presiding officer of the public entity, such as a city council. The question arose since in many situations, serving as a presiding officer results in additional payments for increased duties in a leadership role.

In the opinion, the Commission determined that members of city and village councils, township boards of trustees and county boards of commissioners are not prohibited from voting to elect himself or herself to serve as a presiding officer, provided that the amount of any additional payment for this service is set prior to the vote.

“The Ethics Law generally prohibits public officials and employees from using their public positions to secure or accept anything of value that could have a ‘substantial and improper influence’ on the official or employee,” stated Executive Director Paul M. Nick. “However, the Commission concluded in this advisory opinion that the election of presiding officers by a legislative body would not result in that substantial and improper influence.”

Several factors were considered in making the determination, including:

- members of local legislative bodies are required by law or statute to select a member of their public body to serve as presiding officer;
- the election of the presiding officer is a unique process devoid of outside interests since all candidates and voters are contained within a select group; and
- the amount of any additional payments that the elected presiding officer receives for performing these additional duties is set prior to voting.

Be sure to check out this and many other advisory opinions on our [website](#)! Questions? Don't hesitate to reach out to the Ethics Commission for further assistance.



Don't Forget Ethics Training (even if we forget "Auld Acquaintances!")

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot and days of auld lang syne...

In all honesty, many of us may have forgotten our "auld acquaintances" since it's been so long since we've all been together! But just in case you may have forgotten about training on the Ohio Ethics Law this year, there's still time and options for you!

E-Course: "The Ohio Ethics Law: Building a Culture of Integrity"

Our most recent [e-course](#) is a convenient and helpful way to obtain your training at whatever time works best for you. Each year, it provides an overview of the Ethics Law with relevant examples and lots of interactivity. The course also provides proof of completion for those who may need it.

Note for state employees and officials: This e-course meets the annual training requirement as outlined in the Governor's Ethics Executive Order 2019-11D for both financial disclosure filers and non-filers alike.

Note for attorneys: This e-course is approved for one general hour of self-study CLE.

Webinars

If you prefer a live class, perhaps our webinars are for you! The Ethics Commission conducts monthly live webinars that are interactive and fun! One of our webinars provides an overview of the Ethics Law and is great introductory or “refresher” course regarding the Ohio Ethics Law. This year, we also introduced our “Deeper Study” webinar for those who already have a firm foundation in the Ohio Ethics Law and want to take a closer look through often-cited advisory opinions.

There are two final webinars available this year:

- December 16, 2021 (10 - 11 am) Click [here](#) to register. (*Refresher Course*)
- December 20, 2021 (10 - 11 am) Click [here](#) to register. (*Deeper Study Course*)

Note for state employees and officials: Both types of webinars meet state employees’ Ethics Law training requirement and provide proof of attendance (filers and non-filers).

Note for attorneys: The webinars are also approved for one general hour of self-study CLE (one hour per webinar - you may take each webinar once per year).

CLE

The Ohio Ethics Commission and the Ohio Board of Professional Conduct are co-sponsoring one final CLE in 2021 for public practice attorneys who still may need ethics CLE hours by the end of the year.

Please register [here](#) to virtually attend a pre-recorded CLE that is **approved for 2.5 hours of attorney conduct credit**. This free class will be live-streamed on Friday, December 3, 2021 beginning at 9 am. The CLE was originally recorded in May but has a new activity number from the Supreme Court.

After registering, you will receive an email with log-on instructions. Questions? E-mail susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov.

2022?

Stay tuned for information regarding Ethics Law training options in the New Year!





Two New Fact Sheets for Your Perusal!

The Ohio Ethics Commission provides a plethora of information to assist public employees and officials in understanding and complying with the Ohio Ethics Law. The next time you are in an ethical “quandary,” check out our vast array of [fact sheets](#), written in layperson friendly language and designed to guide and support you, whether you serve in the public sector or you frequently work with or are regulated by a governmental entity.

Two of our newer documents can now be found on our website and may be of interest for two specific groups:

- [The Ohio Ethics Law for Public Colleges & Universities](#): This booklet provides an outline of the Ethics Law specifically as it relates to officials and employees who work for or serve public higher education institutions in Ohio.
- [Private Sector FAQs](#): Because the private sector can be subject to certain provisions of the Ethics Law, this fact sheet can be a helpful guide to understanding how the Ethics Law relates to companies and organizations that do or seek to do business with, are regulated by, or have an interest in a matter pending before a government office.

If you need more in-depth guidance on these issues, don’t forget to review the Commission’s [Advisory Opinions page](#) on our website.

Have ideas for new fact sheets that you would like to read?
E-mail your literary inspiration to susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov



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