

# Ethics



National  
Association of  
Regulatory  
Utility  
Commissioners

**Ohio**

**Public Utilities  
Commission**

# Goals

- That we all follow ethics statutes and policies.
- We avoid the appearance of impropriety (even to stay away from the margins)
- Do you have the little voice that says, “*Stop, don’t do it. It is not worth losing your job.*”



# Ethics - Authority

- ORC Chapter 102 – Public Officers – Ethics
- ORC Chapter 4901 – Public Utilities Commission – Organization
- Ohio Ethics Commission Opinions





# Ethics - Employment

Commission employees cannot:

- Be employed by a public utility
- Seek employment with a public utility
- Solicit employment for someone else from a public utility
- Reference: 4901.24 O.R.C.



# Ethics – Financial Interest

Commission employees cannot:

- Own the stocks or bonds of a public utility or its parent company
- Avoid utility-oriented mutual funds



# Ethics - Gifts

- Commission Employees cannot accept any gift or gratuity from a public utility or employee of a public utility.
- There is no *de minimus* exception to the statute



# Ethics – Gifts from Others

Commission employees also cannot accept gifts from:

- Persons interested in matters before the Commission
- Intervenors in cases
- Attorneys or lobbyists of utilities or intervenors
- Persons doing or seeking to do business with Commission



# Ethics – Refuse or return a Gift

- Refuse a gift
- Return a gift





# Ethics - Meals

- You may dine with an employee of a public utility or a vendor; however, you must pay your own way.
- If a public utility employee or vendor pays, and you want to avoid a “scene”, send them a check to cover your expense.
- Notify the Ethics Officer of the situation and that you sent a check.





# Ethics – Theft of Time

- Watch your time
  - Lunch
  - Breaks
  - Start and stop time
- Work when working
  - Avoid long personal phone calls
  - Do not send personal email
  - Do not park your car on the side of the building, come in and clock in, then immediately go move your car.



# Ethics – Computer Use

- Generally, all email is a public record
- Permissible personal use only on breaks or lunch
- Do not use email to chatter with friends
- No games
- No expectation of privacy



# Ethics – Misuse of Equipment

- For-profit business activities
- Personal use
- Political Activities



# Ethics – Improper Use of Position

- Do not use your Commission employment to exert influence.



# Ethics – Outside Employment

- Not on state time
- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Teaching



# Ethics – Unauthorized Endorsements

- Commission employees, vehicles, or other identifiable resources cannot appear in advertisements for regulated entities.



# Ethics – Confidential Information

- Do not disclose confidential information
- Do not reveal how a case or issue will be decided





# Ethics – Nepotism

- Do not hire, or urge the hiring of, family members
- Do not seek employment for a family member with a regulated entity



# Ethics – Contracts

- Follow DAS procedures
- Avoid conflicts of interest





# Ethics – Revolving Door

- May not seek employment with a regulated public utility
- May not seek employment with those who do business with Commission unless withdrawal is possible
- Commissioners and attorney examiners may not represent public utilities for two years
- Confidential information may not be disclosed





# Ethics – Reporting Suspected Illegal Activity

- Within the Commission
  - Ethics Officer
  - Human Resources Director
- Ohio Highway Patrol Investigative Services – (614) 752-0234
- Ohio Inspector General – (614) 644-9110
- Ohio Ethics Commission – (614) 466-7090