



Vermont State Ethics Commission

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Vermont State Ethics Commission Looks forward to Serving Municipalities

On May 10, 2024, the Legislature passed H.875 which establishes a statewide municipal code of ethics. It now awaits Governor Scott's signature.

The statewide municipal code of ethics sets minimum standards for cities, towns and villages. It defines and prohibits conflicts of interest, preferential treatment, misuse of position, improper gifts, unauthorized commitments, misuse of resources and self-dealing in contracts. Municipalities are empowered to establish supplemental ethics policies if those policies don't conflict with the minimum standards. Each municipality will be responsible for creating a procedure to investigate local ethics complaints.

Importantly, H.875 allows the Vermont State Ethics Commission to provide free ethics advice and training to municipalities. If a municipal official – a selectboard member, town clerk, town manager, mayor, member of a quasi-judicial body – is in a difficult or uncertain situation, unsure how best to comply with the municipal code of ethics, they will be able to contact the Ethics Commission for free, confidential guidance. The Ethics Commission will also be able to provide free ethics training. Prior to the passage of H.875, the Ethics Commission could only provide these services to State government employees.

In addition to addressing municipal ethics, H.875 authorizes the Ethics Commission to investigate ethics complaints within State government and it expands financial disclosure requirements for State and county officials. Some of these additional provisions will take effect at later dates.

Most Vermonters want to play by rules of fairness. State and municipal ethics codes make it easier to do so by clarifying those rules. Government serves the public best when its citizens are confident their State and municipal officials have the public's interest at heart. The Ethics Commission believes establishing and enforcing basic rules of ethics for everyone affiliated with State and local government is essential to ensure public trust.

To learn more, please reach out to us at ethicscommission@vermont.gov.