
SENATE BILL 6009

State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2012 Regular Session

By Senators Carrell, Schoesler, Becker, Morton, Fain, Holmquist
Newbry, Swecker, Delvin, Hill, and Roach

Read first time 01/09/12. Referred to Committee on Government
Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to ethics in public service; amending RCW 42.52.420
2 and 42.52.520; reenacting and amending RCW 42.52.010; adding a new
3 section to chapter 42.52 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that ensuring public
6 trust in government is among its paramount duties. The public expects
7 its elected officials and state employees to adhere to the highest
8 ethical standards during their service, and this includes a commitment
9 to full and independent investigations, with proper penalties, in cases
10 where the ethics in public service act is violated.

11 **Sec. 2.** RCW 42.52.010 and 2011 c 60 s 28 are each reenacted and
12 amended to read as follows:

13 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in
14 this section apply throughout this chapter.

15 (1) "Agency" means any state board, commission, bureau, committee,
16 department, institution, division, or tribunal in the legislative,
17 executive, or judicial branch of state government. "Agency" includes

1 all elective offices, the state legislature, those institutions of
2 higher education created and supported by the state government, and
3 those courts that are parts of state government.

4 (2) "Assist" means to act, or offer or agree to act, in such a way
5 as to help, aid, advise, furnish information to, or otherwise provide
6 assistance to another person, believing that the action is of help,
7 aid, advice, or assistance to the person and with intent so to assist
8 such person.

9 (3) "Beneficial interest" has the meaning ascribed to it under the
10 Washington case law. However, an ownership interest in a mutual fund
11 or similar investment pooling fund in which the owner has no management
12 powers does not constitute a beneficial interest in the entities in
13 which the fund or pool invests.

14 (4) "Compensation" means anything of economic value, however
15 designated, that is paid, loaned, granted, or transferred, or to be
16 paid, loaned, granted, or transferred for, or in consideration of,
17 personal services to any person.

18 (5) "Confidential information" means (a) specific information,
19 rather than generalized knowledge, that is not available to the general
20 public on request or (b) information made confidential by law.

21 (6) "Contract" or "grant" means an agreement between two or more
22 persons that creates an obligation to do or not to do a particular
23 thing. "Contract" or "grant" includes, but is not limited to, an
24 employment contract, a lease, a license, a purchase agreement, or a
25 sales agreement.

26 (7) "Ethics" means adherence to the standards laid out in the
27 ethics in public service law and includes a commitment by all state
28 officers and employees to promote public trust in government, avoid
29 both actual and apparent conflicts of interest in discharging their
30 duties, and safeguard state resources.

31 (8) "Ethics boards" means the commission on judicial conduct, the
32 legislative ethics board, and the executive ethics board.

33 ((+8)) (9) "Family" has the same meaning as "immediate family" in
34 RCW 42.17A.005.

35 ((+9)) (10) "Gift" means anything of economic value for which no
36 consideration is given. "Gift" does not include:

37 (a) Items from family members or friends where it is clear beyond

1 a reasonable doubt that the gift was not made as part of any design to
2 gain or maintain influence in the agency of which the recipient is an
3 officer or employee;

4 (b) Items related to the outside business of the recipient that are
5 customary and not related to the recipient's performance of official
6 duties;

7 (c) Items exchanged among officials and employees or a social event
8 hosted or sponsored by a state officer or state employee for coworkers;

9 (d) Payments by a governmental or nongovernmental entity of
10 reasonable expenses incurred in connection with a speech, presentation,
11 appearance, or trade mission made in an official capacity. As used in
12 this subsection, "reasonable expenses" are limited to travel, lodging,
13 and subsistence expenses incurred the day before through the day after
14 the event;

15 (e) Items a state officer or state employee is authorized by law to
16 accept;

17 (f) Payment of enrollment and course fees and reasonable travel
18 expenses attributable to attending seminars and educational programs
19 sponsored by a bona fide governmental or nonprofit professional,
20 educational, trade, or charitable association or institution. As used
21 in this subsection, "reasonable expenses" are limited to travel,
22 lodging, and subsistence expenses incurred the day before through the
23 day after the event;

24 (g) Items returned by the recipient to the donor within thirty days
25 of receipt or donated to a charitable organization within thirty days
26 of receipt;

27 (h) Campaign contributions reported under chapter 42.17A RCW;

28 (i) Discounts available to an individual as a member of an employee
29 group, occupation, or similar broad-based group; and

30 (j) Awards, prizes, scholarships, or other items provided in
31 recognition of academic or scientific achievement.

32 ((+10+)) (11) "Head of agency" means the chief executive officer of
33 an agency. In the case of an agency headed by a commission, board,
34 committee, or other body consisting of more than one natural person,
35 agency head means the person or board authorized to appoint agency
36 employees and regulate their conduct.

37 ((+11+)) (12) "Honorarium" means money or thing of value offered to

1 a state officer or state employee for a speech, appearance, article, or
2 similar item or activity in connection with the state officer's or
3 state employee's official role.

4 ~~((+12+))~~ (13) "Official duty" means those duties within the
5 specific scope of employment of the state officer or state employee as
6 defined by the officer's or employee's agency or by statute or the
7 state Constitution.

8 ~~((+13+))~~ (14) "Participate" means to participate in state action or
9 a proceeding personally and substantially as a state officer or state
10 employee, through approval, disapproval, decision, recommendation, the
11 rendering of advice, investigation, or otherwise but does not include
12 preparation, consideration, or enactment of legislation or the
13 performance of legislative duties.

14 ~~((+14+))~~ (15) "Person" means any individual, partnership,
15 association, corporation, firm, institution, or other entity, whether
16 or not operated for profit.

17 ~~((+15+))~~ (16) "Regulatory agency" means any state board,
18 commission, department, or officer, except those in the legislative or
19 judicial branches, authorized by law to conduct adjudicative
20 proceedings, issue permits or licenses, or to control or affect
21 interests of identified persons.

22 ~~((+16+))~~ (17) "Responsibility" in connection with a transaction
23 involving the state, means the direct administrative or operating
24 authority, whether intermediate or final, and either exercisable alone
25 or through subordinates, effectively to approve, disapprove, or
26 otherwise direct state action in respect of such transaction.

27 ~~((+17+))~~ (18) "State action" means any action on the part of an
28 agency, including, but not limited to:

- 29 (a) A decision, determination, finding, ruling, or order; and
30 (b) A grant, payment, award, license, contract, transaction,
31 sanction, or approval, or the denial thereof, or failure to act with
32 respect to a decision, determination, finding, ruling, or order.

33 ~~((+18+))~~ (19) "State employee" means an individual who is employed
34 by an agency in any branch of state government. For purposes of this
35 chapter, employees of the superior courts are not state officers or
36 state employees.

37 ~~((+19+))~~ (20) "State officer" means every person holding a position
38 of public trust in or under an executive, legislative, or judicial

1 office of the state. "State officer" includes judges of the superior
2 court, judges of the court of appeals, justices of the supreme court,
3 members of the legislature together with the secretary of the senate
4 and the chief clerk of the house of representatives, holders of
5 elective offices in the executive branch of state government, chief
6 executive officers of state agencies, members of boards, commissions,
7 or committees with authority over one or more state agencies or
8 institutions, and employees of the state who are engaged in
9 supervisory, policy-making, or policy-enforcing work. For the purposes
10 of this chapter, "state officer" also includes any person exercising or
11 undertaking to exercise the powers or functions of a state officer.

12 ~~((+20+))~~ (21) "Thing of economic value," in addition to its
13 ordinary meaning, includes:

14 (a) A loan, property interest, interest in a contract or other
15 chose in action, and employment or another arrangement involving a
16 right to compensation;

17 (b) An option, irrespective of the conditions to the exercise of
18 the option; and

19 (c) A promise or undertaking for the present or future delivery or
20 procurement.

21 ~~((+21+))~~ (22)(a) "Transaction involving the state" means a
22 proceeding, application, submission, request for a ruling or other
23 determination, contract, claim, case, or other similar matter that the
24 state officer, state employee, or former state officer or state
25 employee in question believes, or has reason to believe:

26 (i) Is, or will be, the subject of state action; or

27 (ii) Is one to which the state is or will be a party; or

28 (iii) Is one in which the state has a direct and substantial
29 proprietary interest.

30 (b) "Transaction involving the state" does not include the
31 following: Preparation, consideration, or enactment of legislation,
32 including appropriation of moneys in a budget, or the performance of
33 legislative duties by an officer or employee; or a claim, case,
34 lawsuit, or similar matter if the officer or employee did not
35 participate in the underlying transaction involving the state that is
36 the basis for the claim, case, or lawsuit.

37 ~~((+22+))~~ (23) "University" includes "state universities" and
38 "regional universities" as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 and also includes

1 any research or technology institute affiliated with a university,
2 including (~~without limitation, the Spokane Intercollegiate Research~~
3 ~~and Technology Institute and the Washington Technology Center~~)
4 innovate Washington.

5 ((+23)) (24) "University research employee" means a state officer
6 or state employee employed by a university, but only to the extent the
7 state officer or state employee is engaged in research, technology
8 transfer, approved consulting activities related to research and
9 technology transfer, or other incidental activities.

10 **Sec. 3.** RCW 42.52.420 and 2000 c 211 s 1 are each amended to read
11 as follows:

12 (1) After the filing of any complaint, except as provided in RCW
13 42.52.450, the staff of the appropriate ethics board shall investigate
14 the complaint as provided in this subsection (1).

15 (a) The investigation shall (~~be limited to~~) investigate the
16 allegations contained in the complaint but may also, in the discretion
17 of the investigating ethics board, investigate other potential ethics
18 violations discovered during the course of its investigation.

19 (b) Agency staff may assist ethics board staff in carrying out the
20 investigation, but in all cases ethics board staff must oversee the
21 investigation. Agency staff with actual or apparent conflicts of
22 interest because of a relationship with the persons under investigation
23 must disclose this relationship. Should the ethics board determine
24 that there is a conflict of interest that may affect the investigation,
25 the agency shall designate an independent employee with no conflict of
26 interest to assist the ethics board with its investigation.

27 (c) In the discretion of the ethics board, the office of the
28 attorney general or a contracted investigator may be used to conduct or
29 assist with an investigation.

30 (2) The results of the investigation shall be reduced to writing
31 and the staff shall either make a determination that the complaint
32 should be dismissed pursuant to RCW 42.52.425, or recommend to the
33 board that there is or that there is not reasonable cause to believe
34 that a violation of this chapter or rules adopted under it has been or
35 is being committed.

36 (3) The board's determination on reasonable cause shall be provided
37 to the complainant and to the person named in such complaint.

1 **Sec. 4.** RCW 42.52.520 and 1994 c 154 s 222 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (1) A violation of this chapter or rules adopted under it is
4 grounds for disciplinary action. In cases where an ethics board makes
5 specific findings that it designates a serious violation, a state
6 employee who has made such a serious violation shall be terminated by
7 the agency.

8 (2) The procedures for any such action shall correspond to those
9 applicable for disciplinary action for employee misconduct generally;
10 for those state officers and state employees not specifically exempted
11 in chapter 41.06 RCW, the rules set forth in chapter 41.06 RCW shall
12 apply. Any action against the state officer or state employee shall be
13 subject to judicial review to the extent provided by law for
14 disciplinary action for misconduct of state officers and state
15 employees of the same category and grade.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 42.52 RCW
17 to read as follows:

18 (1) Each agency shall designate an ethics advisor or advisors to
19 provide informal ethics advice to state officers and employees and to
20 ensure uniformity in the agency's operations with respect to the ethics
21 in public service law. Agencies shall inform the appropriate ethics
22 board of their designated advisors, and the advisors shall receive
23 regular training from the appropriate ethics board on a schedule to be
24 determined by the appropriate ethics board. Ethics advisors may
25 solicit informal and formal advice from the appropriate ethics board
26 and may also serve as a point of contact within an agency to assist
27 with ethics investigations or to coordinate ethics trainings and
28 updates.

29 (2) Every state officer and employee shall attend an ethics
30 training approved by the appropriate ethics board within one month of
31 taking office or employment, and at least every two years thereafter.

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