



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

VOLUME 8, ISSUE #2

APRIL 2023

A Message from the Director

Inside this issue:

Director's Message	1
Upcoming Events	1
New and Notable	2
Enforcement Updates	2
Ethics in the News	3
State and Local Ethics	3
Ask BEGA	4

BEGA's mission includes administering and enforcing the Code of Conduct. Financial Disclosure — providing the financial interests of public officials and particular employees — is fundamental to furthering each aspect of our mission.

In the coming weeks, some of you will be required to file a financial disclosure statement which details your financial interests. Specifically, you will disclose information regarding your outside employment, ongoing economic interest,

securities, debts, real estate, licensures, and gifts, as well as the same for your spouse, domestic partner or dependent children. There is an important reason for the disclosure.



Ashley D. Cooks
. Director of Government Ethics
The financial conflicts of interest rule prohibits employees from participating in matters that they know will likely

have a direct effect on their financial interests or the financial interests of a person closely affiliated with the employee. The answers you provide are evaluated to determine and prevent real and potential financial conflicts of interest.

Therefore, it is in your best interest to provide a complete and accurate financial statement. I encourage your compliance with the financial disclosure filing requirements. The deadline to file a financial disclosure statement or certification is May 15, 2023.

Upcoming Events

General Ethics Training

5/10/23 - 1:00 pm
[Register here](#)

6/14/23 - 1:00 pm
[Register here](#)

Ethics Counselor Brown Bag

4/24/23 - 1:00 pm
Seeking and Negotiating
Employment

5/22/23 - 1:00 pm
New BEGA website

Boards and Commissions Quarterly Training

4/26/23 - 11:00 am
[Register here](#)

New and Notable



Financial Disclosure Season in Progress

Lists of public and confidential filers were due to BEGA on March 1st.

Some key upcoming dates:

- **April 15** - Ethics Counselors should send notices to confidential filers by this date.
- **May 15** - All FDS Forms (public and confidential) are due.
- **June 1** - Financial Disclosure Review Reports are due to OGE.

A Draft Advisory Opinion - Guidance on the Financial Disclosure Filing Process is available for public

comment. Review the draft opinion [here](#) and submit information or comments to OGE at bega@dc.gov.

Join us at BEGA

BEGA is hiring. We are currently looking to hire an Attorney Advisor to serve as a part of our financial disclosure team. The posting closes on May 12, 2023. Learn more and apply for the position [here](#).

We are also seeking to hire an Information Technology Specialist (Data Management). The posting closes on April 16, 2023. Learn more and apply for the position [here](#).

Welcome Franshun Vann!

Franshun Vann joined OGE as an Attorney Advisor in March. Ms. Vann was previously in private practice as a civil litigation associate. Prior to that, Ms. Vann served as an Attorney Advisor at the Small Business Administration and as a Judicial Law Clerk for the Honorable ShaRon M. Grayson Kelsy at Prince George's County Circuit Court. Ms. Vann began her legal career as an Assistant State's Attorney for Charles County State's Attorney's Office.

Enforcement Updates

22-0100-P In re K. Boodlal

Respondent agreed to pay a \$3,000 civil penalty in connection with a violation of DPM § 1807.1 stemming from her work for a company owned by her husband which had business with her agency while she was employed by that agency.

Respondent attended meetings at which her husband and his company were present and submitted documents to the federal government on behalf of her agency, which included satisfied invoices and documents from her husband's company.

Respondent was also employed part-time with the company. Read the agreement [here](#).

23-0012-P In re C. Troxler

Respondent agreed to pay a \$500 civil penalty in connection with a financial conflict of interest in violation of D.C. Official Code § 1-1162.23(a) and use of government property for other than authorized purposes in violation of DPM § 1801.

Respondent recommended her own company to fulfill an order with her employer, the University of the District of Columbia's College of

Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences, and used a District Purchase Card to purchase the items. Read the agreement [here](#).

Ethics in the News



All three branches of the federal government have been busy on the ethics front.

Legislative

Both the House and Senate Ethics Committees have been active recently.

The Senate Ethics Committee issued a Public Letter of Admonition to Senator Lindsey Graham for soliciting campaign contributions in a federal building for statements he made

during a televised interview. Read the letter [here](#).

The House Ethics Committee established a subcommittee to investigate multiple potential violations of ethics rules and related federal statutes by Rep. George Santos. The committee also released the referral of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez from the Office of Congressional Ethics. The House Ethics Committee is investigating whether Rep. Ocasio-Cortez accepted impermissible gifts in connection with her attendance at the 2021 Met Gala.

Read the committee's statement regarding Rep. Santos [here](#). Read the statement and related documents relating to Rep. Ocasio- Cortez [here](#).

Executive

The federal Office of Government Ethics is soliciting comments on its proposed rule revising the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 C.F.R. part 2635). These standards may serve as guidance for BEGA in advising District employees. Read the proposed rule [here](#).

Judiciary

The Supreme Court has adopted new rules that would require increased disclosure of gifts and travel accepted by the justices. This comes amid increasing attention to the ethics rules that apply to the court. Read more about the new rules [here](#).

State and Local Ethics

Former Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder and former Ohio Republican Party chair Matthew Borges were convicted of participating in a federal racketeering conspiracy. The federal jury convicted Householder and Borges of conspiring to violate the racketeering statute through honest services wire fraud, receipt of millions of dollars in bribes and money laundering.

The conspiracy involved paying nearly \$61 million in bribes to a 501(c)(4) associated with Householder to secure his support to pass an uphold a billion-dollar bailout of a nuclear plant in the state. Read more about the convictions [here](#).

The Louisiana Board of Ethics entered into an agreement with the District Defender in the state's 36th Judicial District Public Defender's Office in connection with his participation in the hiring and supervision of his two daughters. After an investigation, the Board of Ethics found violations of the nepotism provisions and financial conflicts of interests provisions of the Louisiana Ethics Code. The Board entered into a Consent Opinion and agreed to the payment of a \$5,000 civil penalty.

District employees should be mindful that they are subject to similar nepotism provisions in the District's Code of Conduct. The opinion is available [here](#).

A federal judge upheld Missouri's revolving door restrictions on lawmakers and legislative staff becoming lobbyists. In 2018, the "Clean Missouri" law imposed a two year restriction on lawmakers and legislative staff working as lobbyists. A former lawmaker and legislative staffer sued the Missouri Ethics Commission arguing that the ban violates their First Amendment rights and improperly limits their employment opportunities. The court ruled that the two year restriction was a reasonable limit that did not overly burden free speech rights. Read more about the case [here](#).



Ashley D. Cooks, Director of Government Ethics
Rashee Raj, General Counsel
Asia Stewart-Mitchell, Supervisory Attorney for Advice and Education
Maurice Echols, Attorney Advisor
Franshun Vann, Attorney Advisor
Lynn Y. Tran, Senior Attorney Advisor to BEGA's Board

Board of Ethics and Government Accountability

Office of Government Ethics
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 830 South
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-481-3411
Email: bega@dc.gov
Website: bega.dc.gov

For more information about BEGA, you can find us at:



To subscribe to this newsletter, email us at bega@dc.gov.

Ask BEGA

Question: A trade association has invited me to attend their annual conference and said the event is a widely attended gathering under the ethics rules. The group's members have business before my agency. Can I accept the invitation?

A gathering is widely attended if it is expected that a large number of persons will attend and that persons with a diversity of views or interests will be present. See DPM § 1803.5 (e).

For example, if it is open to members from throughout the interested industry or profession or if those in attendance represent a range of persons interested in a given matter.

If you have been assigned by your agency head or their designee to

speak, serve on a panel or present information on behalf of your agency, you may attend the conference. DPM § 1803.5(d)



If you are not a participant in the conference and are merely attending the event, you can accept an invitation to a WAG from the sponsor of an event if

- the Mayor or her designee approves your attendance in writing based on a determination that your attendance will further agency programs and operations. DPM § 1803.5(e).

OR

You can accept an invitation to a WAG from someone other than the sponsor if:

- Your attendance is in the interest of your agency and you receive written approval from the Mayor or her designee in advance;
- More than 50 persons are expected to attend the event; and
- The gift of free attendance has a fair market value of \$350 or less.

DPM § 1803.5(e).

Contact OGE at bega@dc.gov for advice about attending WAGs and your specific situation.