



District of Columbia

BEGA August 2026 Newsletter

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Ethically Speaking

Board of Ethics and Government Accountability Newsletter

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A Message From the Director

Greetings BEGA Friends, I hope your summer has been filled with sunrays and relaxation. Soon school will be back in session followed by fall foliage. Along with the change in seasons, also comes changes to our schedules, daily routines, and habits. As humans we are constantly transitioning to new and sometimes familiar seasons within our lives. This is the reason its important to have a consistent ethics and compliance program.



Ashley D. Cooks
Director of Government Ethics

The importance of an ethics and compliance program goes far beyond detecting misconduct, it actually helps us to recognize and avoid unwanted risks to the

government and its reputation. The ethics program is responsible for increasing awareness of the ethics rules, advising employees, investigating suspected misconduct, and holding employees accountable for their actions. The success of any government depends on consistency within its ethics rules and employees. Be sure to join us for Ethics Week 2026 to discuss "Transitioning Ethically".

New and Notable



Ethics Week 2026

BEGA's annual Ethics Weeks is almost here. We hope you can join us for a full slate of ethics and open government programming. We will include returning favorites such as Legal Ethics for Government Attorneys as well as new programming geared towards ethics counselors. Look for a final schedule with registration links coming soon.

Financial Disclosure Enforcement

BEGA sent a Notice of Non-Compliance this week to FDS filers who failed to timely file their confidential and public disclosure reports for 2026, reporting on 2025. Late and non-filers must submit payment of the fine by Tuesday, August 25, 2026. Individuals who fail to pay the fine by the due date will be subject to either wage garnishment by the Office of Pay and Retirement Services (for current employees) or enforcement by the DC Central Collections Unit (for former employees). Individuals who have not filed their report MUST still file either the public or confidential Financial Disclosure Statement even after payment of the fine.

Upcoming Events

General Ethics Training

- 9/9/26 – 1:00 pm
- 10/14/26 – 1:00 pm
- 11/12/26 – 1:00 pm
- 12/9/26 – 1:00 pm

Local Hatch Act Training

- 8/19/26 – 2:00 pm
- 9/16/26 – 2:00 pm
- 10/21/26 – 2:00 pm

Board and Commission Training

- 10/28/26 – 11:00 am

Outside Employment Training

- 10/6/26 – 2:00 pm

Lobbyist Registration & Reporting and E-Filing Training

- 9/23/26 - 10:30 am
- 12/16/26 - 10:30 am

Ethics Counselor Brown Bag Fundraising - Hatch Act

- 9/28/26 - 1:00 pm
- How to know when you're being lobbied

Enforcement Updates

26-0030-P In re J. Zollarcoffer

The Board approved a negotiated disposition with a former Investigator with the Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Administration (ABCA) for violations of DPM §§ 1808.1, 1800.3(g), and 1803.1 for personal use of an ABCA vehicle, using his official position to obtain free or reduced good and services from an ABCA licensee, and soliciting and accepting gifts from a prohibited source. The agreement included a \$6,000 fine. [Read the agreement here.](#)

26-0013-P T. Leray Negotiated Disposition

The Board approved a negotiated disposition with a \$4,000 civil penalty with a DC Public School Speech Pathologist who was also employed as an Assistant Professor of Speech Pathology at Marymount University for violations of DPM §§ 1807.1(a) and (b). Respondent attended meetings and conducted business for Marymount University during her scheduled District tour of duty without taking appropriate leave or while claiming regular pay of telework and the frequency of these occurrences interfered with her availability to perform her official District responsibilities. [Read the agreement here.](#)

25-0116-P S. Hamlin Negotiated Disposition

The Board approved a negotiated disposition with a former Program Analyst with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education for two counts of violating DPM § 1807.1(h). Respondent owned and operated a special education consulting company and submitted proposals and invoices on behalf of that company to a DCPS high school, violating the prohibition against representing a third party in a matter before the District. [Read the agreement here.](#)

Ethics in the News

Annual financial disclosure reports filed by Supreme Court justices show several



authors among the justices along with information about outside teaching income, gifts and travel. Justices Sotomayor, Barrett, and Gorsuch reported royalty income while Justice Jackson reported income from a book advance. Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Barrett, Cavanagh, and Thomas reported teaching income while Justice Sotomayor reported receiving concert tickets and Justice Jackson reported a gift of a portrait that will hang in her chambers. Disclosure reports for the justices have received renewed attention in recent years after reports that some of the justices may have filed to report luxury travel and gifts. [Read more about the disclosures here.](#)

In other judicial ethics news, a judge on the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals continued to run a public affairs firm for at least six months after she was confirmed to her position in October 2025. The firm provided public relations and marketing services to companies and trade associations. Her management of the firm, where she inherited an ownership interest from her late husband, caused concerns with staff and clients and the firm ultimately closed in June 2026. The Code of Conduct for Judges allows judges to continue their participation in "a closely held family business" subject to potential conflicts of interest and concerns about misuse of judicial prestige. [Read more here.](#)

State and Local Ethics

Hawaii's lieutenant governor, Sylvia Luke, was indicted on charges of bribery, criminal conspiracy to commit bribery, and falsifying campaign finance reports as part of an investigation into an alleged \$35,000 bribe paid to her in 2022, when she was a state legislator. The Lt. Gov was one of five individuals, including a former state representative and a former official with the state's public utilities commission, who were charged as part of the alleged bribery scheme. The state charges stem from allegations that a business provided campaign contributions in exchange for support for state funding for Covid-19 community testing sites that he operated. [Read more here.](#)

The Detroit Board of Ethics is reviewing whether ethics rules allow the city's corporation counsel to earn more than \$300,000 a year serving on the board for Lear Corporation, an automotive supplier that receives millions in city tax breaks. Conrad Mallett currently serves as the top lawyer for Detroit City Hall while sitting on the corporate board and serving as the chairman of the board of the nonprofit Detroit Economic Group Corporation, a group that recommended the tax break for Lear Corporation. The ethics board requested that Mallett formally disclose his role on the corporate board and seek an opinion from the board on whether he is permitted to retain the position. [Read more here.](#)

The San Francisco Ethics Commission approved an agreement with a city supervisor for violations of the city's gifts and conflict of interest rules. The supervisor agreed to pay a \$4,500 fine for accepting a portrait valued at \$5,500 from a nonprofit organization that received city funding and voting to approve a \$4.8 million increase in a contract with another nonprofit organization that previously paid for him to attend a conference in Colorado. The supervisor was fined \$500 for accepting a gift over the limit, \$500 for not disclosing the gift on his annual financial disclosure report, and \$3,500 for his vote on the contract. [Read more here.](#)

Ask BEGA



Question: I serve as a Social Media Manager for the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointment. Recently, while off-duty, a Democratic candidate for a DC Council seat approached me and asked if I would post their donation link in my agency's official bio —no public post needed. I would do this in my official capacity because he supports our agency and seems aligned to what we strive for here at MOTA; however, I wanted to check in with you all first. Is this permissible under the Local Hatch Act?

Answer: While the Local Hatch Act allows District government employees to participate in political campaigns, it strictly prohibits fundraising for any District-regulated partisan campaign. Employees may not solicit, accept, or promote political contributions unless they are running for a non-partisan District office themselves. They also may not engage in fundraising for a partisan District campaign in any capacity.

Although employees may work on or manage campaigns, they cannot fundraise for a District-regulated partisan candidate. They may only fundraise for:

- Their own non-partisan District campaign, or
- Any non-District-regulated campaign (partisan or non-partisan).

Additionally, employees may not use official authority or official social media accounts to support a candidate. Placing a fundraising link in an agency bio is considered soliciting or promoting political contributions, which is expressly prohibited. BEGA's Social Media Quick Guide confirms that official accounts cannot be used to support candidates or solicit donations.

Examples of Allowed Activities (off-duty, personal capacity only):

- Working on or managing a campaign
- Volunteering, distributing literature, or signing petitions
- Contributing personal funds to campaigns or parties
- Attending political events like rallies or meetings
- Joining or holding office in political clubs or parties
- Assisting voter registration drives
- Following or commenting on a candidate's personal social media (non-fundraising content)
- Displaying campaign signs at home
- Expressing opinions about candidates or issues outside of work and government premises

What You May Not Do (even off-duty):

- Fundraise for a partisan District campaign
- Solicit or promote contributions (including via official bios or social media)
- Use your official title, position, or agency accounts to support any candidate or party

We encourage you to review the resources linked below:

- [BEGA Training and Educational Resources](#)
- [Local Hatch Act / Fundraising](#)
- [Social Media Guidance](#)



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