



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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A Message from the Director

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Are you creating an ethical culture? Creating an ethical culture is not always easy. This is especially the case given the connections between individual behaviors, agency culture, the Code of Conduct, and the obligations of employees. When you create an ethical culture you promote behavior that is in alignment with the District's values and the Code of Conduct.

There are four principles to creating an ethical culture within your agency. The first step is to commit to it. Simply commit to being a culture carrier, which means recognizing that you do make a difference and planning to actively contribute to an ethical culture. The second step is to model it. Demonstrate an ethical approach to your daily tasks and

decisions. One way to reach this goal is by referencing ethical rules in conversations and meetings and sharing your ethical decision making process. Re-



Ashley D. Cooks
Director of Government Ethics

member actions speak louder than words. The third step is to teach it. Look for opportunities to pass along information and experiences. The fourth step is to provide ongoing support by fostering open communication

and an open door policy.

When our values align, the outcome is a more ethical government and less misconduct.

While undertaking this journey, keep in mind that you are the most significant influencer of culture at your agency. We're always here to assist you along the way!

Upcoming Events

General Ethics Training

March 9, 2022 - 1:00 pm
April 13, 2022 - 1:00 pm

Hatch Act Training

March 1, 2022 - 1:00 pm
April 5, 2022 - 1:00 pm

Lobbyist E-Filing System

March 23, 2022 - 11:00 am

Register for upcoming trainings

[Ethics Training](#)
[Hatch Act Training](#)
[Lobbyist Training](#)

Ethics Counselor Brown Bag

February 28, 2022 - 1:00 pm
Financial Disclosure
March 28, 2022 - 1:00 pm
Outside Employment

New and Notable



- ◆ BEGA issued its **2021 Best Practices Report** with recommendations for changes to ethics laws in the District. Read the report [here](#) for our suggestions on how the District can strengthen its public integrity and transparency laws.
- ◆ Job seekers should check out the **Seeking and Negotiating Employment Advisory Opinion**. We explain the ethics rules to remember when searching for a job outside District government. Read the Advisory Opinion [here](#).
- ◆ Have questions about Financial Disclosure Statements (FDS) or the BEGA complaint process? Ms. Ethics is here to help. BEGA released two new Ms. Ethics videos to answer some common questions about the FDS and complaint process. You can watch the videos on our [YouTube page](#).
- ◆ Watch this space. BEGA's new Learning Management System is on the way. Soon you will be able to access customized ethics courses on demand.
- ◆ Welcome Millicent Jones! Millicent Jones is the newest addition to our team, joining BEGA in January as an Attorney Advisor. She has an extensive career in District Government, working previously at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services and most recently in the Public Safety Division of the Office of the Attorney General. Ms. Jones is a native Marylander who enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her family.

Are you wearing too many hats? Make sure your outside activity does not conflict with your District government employment

Enforcement Updates

22-0001-F M. Redmond

Respondent violated DPM § 1800.3(j)(engaging in outside activities that conflict with official duties), DPM § 1807.1 (a)(engaging in outside activities that interferes with the ability to do District government job), DPM § 1807.1(b) (using government time or resources for other than official business), and DPM § 1807.2(receiving compensation for outside teaching activity during regular working hours) when he served as a Principal of a Rhode Island School while simultaneously serving as an Assistant Principal of a District public school. Respondent received a reprimand and agreed to pay a fine

in the amount of \$10,000. The matter was also referred to the Office of the Attorney General. Read the negotiated disposition [here](#).

21-0059-P A. Reitnauer

Respondent violated DPM § 1808.1(misuse of government property) and DPM § 1807.1 (b) by conducting a private training within a Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) facility while on duty. Respondent agreed to pay a \$2,000 fine. Read the negotiated disposition [here](#).

21-0070-P T. Brooks

Respondent violated DPM 1807.1(b) when she created products for her outside business during her tour of duty at

DFS. Respondent agreed to pay a fine of \$2,500. Read the negotiated disposition [here](#).

20-0003-F H. Iida

Respondent violated DPM § 1800.3(f)(making unauthorized commitments purporting to bind the District) and DPM §§ 1807.1(b) and 1807.1(e) (capitalizing on her official title or position in connection with any outside activity) by providing Department of Health work product to an outside entity without authorization, misrepresenting the District's involvement, and using her official title, official time, and government email account. Respondent agreed to pay a \$4,000 fine. Read the negotiated disposition [here](#).

Ethics in the News



Are Members of Congress increasingly refusing to cooperate with ethics investigations? That’s the suggestion in a recent *New York Times* article, “Ethics Investigators in Congress Increasingly Run Into

Walls.” The article notes that 43% (six of 14) of the House Members under investigation in 2021 refused to cooperate with the investigation. This represents a significant shift from 2009-2010 when only 4% (three of 68) of the Members refused to cooperate.

While Congressional ethics rules do not require cooperating with investigators, that is not the case for District public officials. As District government employees, we have a duty to cooperate in investigations of ethics violations and may

not interfere or obstruct an investigation. See DPM § 1801.

Participation in an investigation is not only required, it also presents an opportunity for individuals to provide mitigating factors or the “other side” of the picture for a clearer perspective to resolve an issue. Many times a record will tell a story, but your words may change that narrative or at least give a person a chance to possibly reduce their liability. Read the entire article [here](#).

State and Local Ethics

Repeated failures to file financial disclosure reports and reports disclosing campaign contributions resulted in a \$17,000 fine for a Coroner in Orangeburg, South Carolina. The official was one of several highlighted in an investigation on the failure of public officials in South Carolina to pay required ethics fines, resulting in \$2.9 million in outstanding fines owed to the

State Ethics Commission. Read the story [here](#) and the investigation [here](#).

A former Los Angeles city councilmember was sentenced to 14 months in prison and ordered to pay a \$15,000 fine for obstructing an investigation into his acceptance of gifts, including \$15,000 in cash. The sentence was the first in connection with an ongoing investiga-

tion of a “pay-to-play” scheme where developers bribed city officials to secure official acts to benefit their development projects. Several other individuals charged in the investigation are awaiting sentencing while two corporate entities have entered into non-prosecution agreements and collectively paid \$2.25 million. Read more about this case [here](#).

Inside the Mirror

Routine exercise in introspection is arguably just as important as physical exercise. Reflecting on ethics in your everyday life will help you work out those ethical muscles so you can use them in your work for the District. There are endless questions one could use to start self reflection. In this edition, we will start with an old example.

In every human, two wolves exist and they are both trying to survive. One is good, and the other is bad. The one that survives depends on which one you feed the most. Now, how often do you feed your good wolf? Daily, monthly, or yearly... ? You may mentor those trying to find their way, make sure the actions you take reflect integrity and selflessness (avoiding conflicts

of interest in District employment), and finally, share thoughts of goodwill, and take steps to bring those thoughts to reality.





Board of Ethics and Government Accountability

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Ask BEGA

Question: Am I able to campaign for public office and keep my district employment?

Its election season in D.C. and this a good question that gets very popular around this time. The answer depends on a few factors. First, if the political office is not regulated by the D.C. Board of Elections, meaning that it is a partisan position in another jurisdiction, such as Maryland or Virginia, you may run while keeping your District employment. If the position is within the District the answer now depends on whether the position is nonpartisan or partisan.

The Local Hatch Act states that D.C. government employees who are District residents may file as candidates for non-partisan District office. See, D.C. Official Code § 1-

1171.02. There are only a few non-partisan elected positions in D.C. that a District employee may register as a candidate for while maintaining their District employment— one is a member on the



State Board of Education and the other is Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner.

As for other D.C. government elected officials, such as Mayor, Attorney General, or Council Member, they are not deemed employees, and can engage in political campaign activity while keeping those positions. However, if you are a District employee by definition, you would not be able to register as a candidate for any of

those positions or any other partisan political position.

Understandably, it may not be feasible to leave your District employment on a whim should you wish to run for public office. While a District employee may form an Exploratory Committee before becoming a candidate for a partisan political position, you would not be able to solicit, accept, or receive any political contributions. Given that fundraising limitation, any exploratory committee should be formed by other individuals. Before registration as a candidate for a partisan position, you must first resign from District employment.

Contact BEGA if you are interested in being a candidate for public office.