

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Representative Tony Powell at 3:30 p.m. on January 24, 2001 in Room 521-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative John Toplikar, Excused

Committee staff present: Theresa Kiernan, Revisor  
Dennis Hodgins, Research  
Shirley Weideman, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Carol Williams, Executive Director, Governmental Ethics Commission

Others attending: See attached list.

Carol Williams, Executive Director of the Governmental Ethics Commission, was introduced by Chair Tony Powell. Ms. Williams reviewed the 2000 Annual Report of the Governmental Ethics Commission, which included the advisory opinions, campaign finance statistics, the lobbyist registrations and expenditures and the filing of complaints. (attachment #1)

Ms. Williams had two recommendations for bills to be introduced:

- 1) Define substantial interest as it relates to conflict of interest. The criteria of what you have a substantial interest in as a legislator or as a state employee is any business in which you have a legal or equitable interest of \$5,000. The Commission suggests that this be raised to \$15,000, due to inflation since it has not be raised for at least 11 years.

Without objection, it will be introduced as a committee bill.

- 2) Allow publications by professional and business associations that they normally sell, be made available to legislators for free and that they be excluded from the definition of a gift.

Without objection, it will be introduced as a committee bill.

Ms. Williams also reviewed the bill passed in 2000 and how it applies to legislators:

**S Sub for HB 2627** amends the Governmental Ethics Act, designates existing and new statutes as the Campaign Finance Act, and enacts the Professional Services Sunshine Act which became effective July 1, 2000. There have been many questions concerning the act, but not a substantial number of complaints were filed. Before July 1<sup>st</sup>, when a lobbyist filed a report, they listed in an aggregate amount (a singular dollar amount) all of what that lobbyist spent in a reporting period on food and beverages. It was in a total number, all the money they expended for recreation, for entertainment, for mass media communication and communication with members of their organization. After July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 a lobbyist must disclose under the category of food and beverage your names if you consumed a meal, and if you are not invited as part of the whole legislature or if you are not invited as part of the entire House or as part of the entire Senate or as part of your caucus. The same rule applies to entertainment, which has a cap of \$40 for you and a cap of \$100 if the lobbyist goes with you. Of most concern to legislators has been the amount of the gifts received. There is not an exclusion of gifts to an entire group and they must be reported. Information can be accessed by the public on the Commission's web site. The Commission sent a memo to all legislators indicating that it will not report any gifts under \$10 value. (attachment #2)

Ms. Williams responded to questions by the committee.

Chairman Powell asked for input from the committee on ethics legislation and indicated that he will visit members individually next week.

Meeting was adjourned by Chairman Powell at 4:35 p.m. Next meeting will be January 29, 2001 at 3:30 p.m.