

State of Wisconsin
Ethics Commission

ETHICS AND LOBBYING LAW FOR EMPLOYEE TRUST FUNDS, TEACHER RETIREMENT, AND WISCONSIN RETIREMENT BOARD MEMBERS

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Staff Counsel



POLITICAL MARKET

Conscientious Railroad President to Dealer:

"Ah! Let me see. I think I'll take this bunch of Legislators at \$5000 a head. The Senators, at what price did you say?"

Dealer: "Can't afford 'em less than \$10,000 each."

R.R.P.: "Well, hand them over. I suppose I'll have to take the lot."

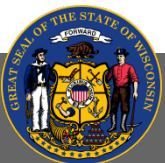
Dealer: "Anything else to-day? I have a lot of Editors, at various prices, from a Thousand down to Fifty Cents."

R.R.P.: "No, nothing in that way, to-day. But I want a Governor very much indeed, and will stand \$50,000 for him. Get me a Wisconsin one, if possible!"

Cartoon published in *Harper's Weekly* of June 12, 1858, at the time of the Land Grant Investigation

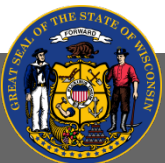
ABOUT THE ETHICS COMMISSION

- Created by 2015 Wisconsin Act 118
- 6 members – Partisan Appointments
 - 2 former judges, 4 others
 - 5-year terms
- All actions require four votes
- Staff Headed by Commission Administrator
- Small agency- Asst. Administrator, Staff Counsel; Five Other Staff Positions
- Confidentiality: Advice & Investigations



RESPONSIBILITIES

- Administer Wisconsin Statutes
 - Chapter 11: Campaign Finance
 - Subchapter III, Chapter 13: Lobbying
 - Subchapter III, Chapter 19: Code of Ethics

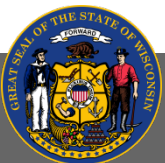




IMPORTANT LAWS TO KNOW

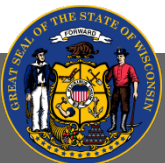
IMPORTANT LAWS TO KNOW

- Lobbying
 - Limits on soliciting or accepting something of value from lobbyists or lobbying principals
- Code of Ethics
 - Use of office for financial gain
 - Influence and reward
 - Food, drink, transportation, lodging
 - Use of confidential information for private gain
 - Unlawful benefit
 - Conflicts of Interest
 - Statements of Economic Interest (SEI)



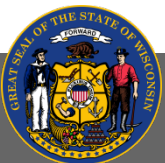
LOBBYING: PROHIBITED PRACTICES

- WIS. STAT. § 13.625
- No lobbyist or lobbying principal may give to an agency official, legislative employee, any elective state official, or candidate for state elective office, or to the candidate committee of the official, employee or candidate:
 - Lodging
 - Transportation
 - Food, meals, beverages
 - Money or any other thing of pecuniary value
- Except...



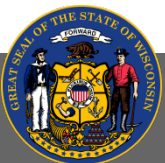
EXCEPTIONS

- Items and services made available to the general public
- Providing or receiving any thing of pecuniary value involving a relative or an individual who resides in the same household
- Lobbyists may provide educational/informational materials
- Providing or receiving payment or reimbursement for actual and reasonable expenses allowed under WIS. STAT. § 19.56: Honorariums, Fees and Expenses
- **NEW!** Meetings with groups to discuss governmental processes, proposals, and issues...Can accept admission, but must pay for food, beverages, or other items included in the cost of admission



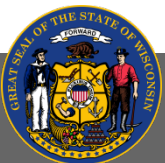
USE OF OFFICE FOR FINANCIAL GAIN

- WIS. STAT. § 19.45(2)
 - No state public official may use his or her public position or office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for the private benefit of himself or herself or his or her immediate family, or for an organization with which he or she is associated.
 - “Organization” does NOT include bodies politic
 - “Associated” includes any organization in which an individual or a member of his or her immediate family is a director, officer, or trustee, or owns or controls at least 10% of the equity, or of which an individual or family member is an authorized representative or agent
- Exceptions:
 - Campaign contributions
 - Candidates/officeholders may solicit for donations to nonprofits



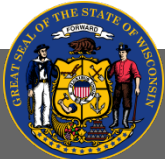
INFLUENCE AND REWARD

- WIS. STAT. § 19.45(3)
 - No person may offer or give to a state public official, directly or indirectly, and no state public official may accept from any person, directly or indirectly, anything of value if it could reasonably be expected to influence the state public official's vote, official actions, or judgment, or could reasonably be considered as a reward for any official action or inaction on the part of the state public official.
 - As a general rule officials should not accept anything of more than nominal value from organizations that have a special or specific interest in an item or matter likely to be before the official.



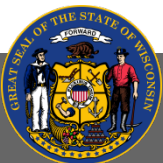
FOOD, DRINK, TRANSPORTATION, AND LODGING

- WIS. STAT. § 19.45(3m)
 - No state public official may accept or retain any transportation, lodging, meals, food or beverage, or reimbursement therefor, except in accordance with § 19.56(3).
- Exceptions (see Guideline ETH-1211):
 - Official talk or meeting
 - Unrelated to holding public office
 - State benefit
 - Reported as an expense by a political committee
 - WEDC/Department of Tourism
- Remember that items from lobbying principals must also meet an exception of the lobbying law.



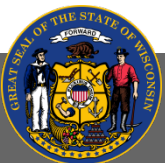
USE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FOR PRIVATE GAIN

- WIS. STAT. § 19.45(4)
 - No state public official may intentionally use or disclose information gained in the course of or by reason of his or her official position or activities in any way that could result in the receipt of anything of value for himself or herself, for his or her immediate family, or for any other person, if the information has not been communicated to the public or is not public information.



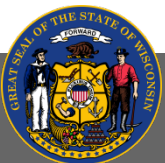
UNLAWFUL BENEFITS

- WIS. STAT. § 19.45(5)
 - No state public official may use or attempt to use the public position held by the public official to influence or gain unlawful benefits, advantages or privileges personally or for others.



CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

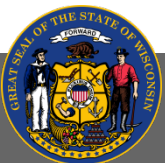
- WIS. STAT. § 19.46(1): No state public official may:
 - Take any official action substantially affecting a matter in which the official, a member of his or her immediate family, or an organization with which the official is associated has a substantial financial interest.
 - Use his or her office or position in a way that produces or assists in the production of a substantial benefit, direct or indirect, for the official, one or more members of the official's immediate family either separately or together, or an organization with which the official is associated.
 - Except...



OFFICIAL MAY ACT IF...

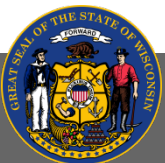
- The official action affects a whole class of similarly-situated interests; and,
- Neither the interests of the official, a member of the official's immediate family, nor a business or organization with which the official is associated is significant when compared to all affected interests in the class; and
- The action's effect on the interests of the official, of a member of their immediate family, or of an associated business or organization is neither significantly greater nor less than upon other members of the class.

[Ethics Commission Guideline 1232](#)



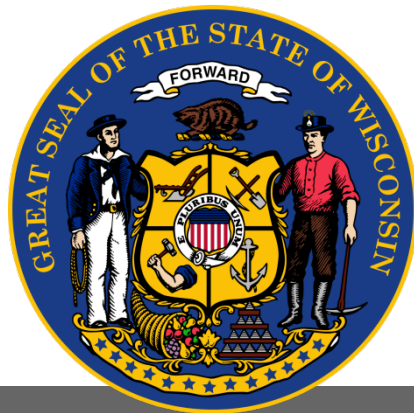
STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

- Annual requirement
- Must identify certain investments, real estate, businesses, and creditors as of the last day of the prior year.
- All direct sources of family income from prior year of \$1,000 or more.
- All sources of income from prior year of \$10,000 or more received from partnerships, sub S corporations, service corporations, and LLCs (including customers, clients, and tenants) in which your family has a 10% or greater interest.
- **NEW!!** - Final SEI Requirement



WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

- **Wisconsin Statutes**
 - <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov>
- **Advisory Opinions**
 - Prompt, Confidential, Authoritative
- **Guidelines**
 - <https://ethics.wi.gov>



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