City Enforcement

SEC. 15.100. **ETHICS COMMISSION** .

The **Ethics Commission** shall consist of five members who shall serve six-year terms; provided that the first five commissioners to be appointed to take office on the first day of February, 2002 shall by lot classify their terms so that the term of one commissioner shall expire at 12:00 o'clock noon on each of the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth anniversaries of such date, respectively; and, on the expiration of these and successive terms of office, the appointments shall be made for six-year terms.

The Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, the City Attorney, the District Attorney and the Assessor each shall appoint one member of the Commission. The member appointed by the Mayor shall have a background in public information and public meetings. The member appointed by the City Attorney shall have a background in law as it relates to government ethics. The member appointed by the Assessor shall have a background in campaign finance. The members appointed by the District Attorney and Board of Supervisors shall be broadly representative of the general public.

In the event a vacancy occurs, the officer who appointed the member vacating the office shall appoint a qualified person to complete the remainder of the term. Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation. Members of the Commission shall be officers of the City and County, and may be removed by the appointing authority only pursuant to Section 15.105.

No person may serve more than one six-year term as a member of the Commission, provided that persons appointed to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term with less than three years remaining or appointed to an initial term of three or fewer years shall be eligible to be appointed to one additional six-year term. Any term served before the effective date of this Section shall not count toward a member's term limit. Any person who completes a term as a Commissioner shall be eligible for reappointment six years after the expiration of his or her term. Notwithstanding any provisions of this Section or any other section of the Charter to the contrary, the respective terms of office of the members of the Commission who shall hold office on the first day of February, 2002, shall expire at 12 o'clock noon on said date, and the five persons appointed as members of the Commission as provided in this Section shall succeed to said offices on said first day of February, 2002, at 12 o'clock noon; provided that if any appointing authority has not made a new appointment by such date, the sitting member shall continue to serve until replaced the new appointee.

During his or her tenure, members and employees of the **Ethics Commission** are subject to the following restrictions:

(a) Restrictions on Holding Office. No member or employee of the **Ethics Commission** may hold any other City or County office or be an officer of a political party.

(b) Restrictions on Employment. No member or employee of the **Ethics Commission** may be a registered lobbyist or campaign consultant, or be employed by or receive gifts or other compensation from a registered lobbyist or campaign consultant. No member of the **Ethics Commission** may hold employment with the City and County and no employee of the Commission may hold any other employment with the City and County.

(c) Restrictions on Political Activities. No member or employee of the **Ethics Commission** may participate in any campaign supporting or opposing a candidate for City elective office, a City ballot measure, or a City officer running for any elective office. For the purposes of this section, participation in a campaign includes but is not limited to making contributions or soliciting contributions to any committee within the Ethics Commission's jurisdiction, publicly endorsing or urging endorsement of a candidate or ballot measure, or participating in decisions by organizations to participate in a campaign.

The Commission may subpoena witnesses, compel their attendance and testimony, administer oaths and affirmations, take evidence and require by subpoena the production of any books, papers, records or other items material to the performance of the Commission's duties or exercise of its powers.

(Amended November 2001; November 2002; November 2003)

SEC. 15.101. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND COMMISSION STAFF.

The Commission shall appoint and may remove an Executive Director. The Executive Director shall have a background in campaign finance, public information and public meetings and the law as it relates to governmental ethics. The Executive Director shall be the chief executive of the department and shall have all the powers provided for department heads. Subject to the civil service provisions of this Charter, the Executive Director shall have the power to appoint and remove other employees of the Commission. In addition to any other conflict of interest provisions applicable to City employees, the Executive Director and all other employees of the Commission shall be subject to the conflict of interest provisions in Section 15.100, except that the post-employment restrictions contained therein shall apply only to the Executive Director and management-level employees.

(Amended November 2001)

SEC. 15.102. RULES AND REGULATIONS.

The Commission may adopt, amend and rescind rules and regulations consistent with and related to carrying out the purposes and provisions of this Charter and ordinances related to campaign finances, conflicts of interest, lobbying, campaign consultants and governmental ethics and to govern procedures of the Commission. In addition, the Commission may adopt rules and regulations relating to carrying out the purposes and provisions of ordinances regarding open meetings and public records. The Commission shall transmit to the Board of Supervisors rules and regulations adopted by the Commission within 24 hours of their adoption. A rule or regulation adopted by the Commission shall become effective 60 days after the date of its adoption unless before the expiration of this 60- day period two-thirds of all members of the Board of Supervisors vote to veto the rule or regulation.

The City Attorney shall be the legal advisor of the Commission.

Any ordinance which the Supervisors are empowered to pass relating to conflicts of interest, campaign finance, lobbying, campaign consultants or governmental ethics may be submitted to the electors at the next succeeding general election by the **Ethics Commission** by a four-fifths vote of all its members.

(Amended November 2001)

SEC. 15.103. CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

Public office is a public trust and all officers and employees of the City and County shall exercise their public duties in a manner consistent with this trust. The City may adopt conflict of interest and governmental ethics laws to implement this provision and to prescribe penalties in addition to discipline and removal authorized in this Charter. All officers and employees of the City and County shall be subject to such conflict of interest and governmental ethics laws and the penalties prescribed by such laws.

(Amended November 2003)

SEC. 15.104.

(Repealed November 2003)

SEC. 15.105. SUSPENSION AND REMOVAL.

(a) ELECTIVE AND CERTAIN APPOINTED OFFICERS. Any elective officer, and any member of the Airport Commission, Asian Art Commission, Civil Service Commission, Commission on the Status of Women, Golden Gate Concourse Authority Board of Directors, Health Commission, Human Services Commission, Juvenile Probation Commission, Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors, Port Commission, Public Utilities Commission, Recreation and Park Commission, Fine Arts Museums Board of Trustees, Taxi Commission, War Memorial and Performing Art Center Board of Trustees, Board of Education or Community College Board is subject to suspension and removal for official misconduct as provided in this section. Such officer may be suspended by the Mayor and the Mayor shall appoint a qualified person to discharge the duties of the office during the period of suspension. Upon such suspension, the Mayor shall immediately notify the **Ethics Commission** and Board of Supervisors thereof in writing and the cause thereof, and shall present written charges against such suspended officer to the **Ethics Commission** and Board of Supervisors at or prior to their next regular meetings following such suspension, and shall immediately furnish a copy of the same to such officer, who shall have the right to appear with counsel before the **Ethics Commission** in his or her defense. The **Ethics Commission** shall hold a hearing not less than five days after the filing of written charges. After the hearing, the **Ethics Commission** shall transmit the full record of the hearing to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation as to whether the charges should be sustained. If, after reviewing the complete record, the charges are sustained by not less than a three-fourths vote of all members of the Board of Supervisors, the suspended officer shall be removed from office; if not so sustained, or if not acted on by the Board of Supervisors within 30 days after the receipt of the record from the **Ethics Commission** , the suspended officer shall thereby be reinstated.

(b) BUILDING INSPECTION COMMISSION, PLANNING COMMISSION, BOARD OF APPEALS, ELECTIONS COMMISSION, **ETHICS COMMISSION** , AND ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSION. Members of the Building Inspection Commission, the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, the Elections Commission, the **Ethics Commission** , and the Entertainment Commission may be suspended and removed pursuant to the provisions of subsection (a) of this section except that the Mayor may initiate removal only of the Mayor's appointees and the appointing authority shall act in place of the Mayor for all other appointees.

(c) REMOVAL FOR CONVICTION OF A FELONY CRIME INVOLVING MORAL TURPITUDE.

(1) Officers Enumerated in Subsections (a) and (b).

(A) An appointing authority must immediately remove from office any official enumerated in subsections (a) or (b) upon:

(i) a court's final conviction of that official of a felony crime involving moral turpitude; and

(ii) a determination made by the **Ethics Commission** , after a hearing, that the crime for which the official was convicted warrants removal.

(B) For the purposes of this subsection, the Mayor shall act as the appointing authority for any elective official.

(C) Removal under this subsection is not subject to the procedures in subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

(2) Other Officers and Employees.

(A) At will appointees. Officers and employees who hold their positions at the pleasure of their appointing authority must be removed upon:

(i) a final conviction of a felony crime involving moral turpitude; and

(ii) a determination made by the **Ethics Commission** , after a hearing, that the crime for which the appointee was convicted warrants removal.

(B) For cause appointees. Officers and employees who by law may be removed only for cause must be removed upon:

(i) a final conviction of a felony crime involving moral turpitude; and

(ii) a determination made by the **Ethics Commission** , after a hearing, that the crime for which the appointee was convicted warrants removal.

(3) Penalty for Failure to Remove. Failure to remove an appointee as required under this subsection shall be official misconduct.

(d) DISQUALIFICATION.

(1) (A) Any person who has been removed from any federal, state, County or City office or employment upon a final conviction of a felony crime involving moral turpitude shall be ineligible for election or appointment to City office or employment for a period of ten years after removal.

(B) Any person removed from any federal, state, County or City office or employment for official misconduct shall be ineligible for election or appointment to City office or employment for a period of five years after removal.

(2) (A) Any City department head, board, commission or other appointing authority that removes a City officer or employee from office or employment on the grounds of official misconduct must invoke the disqualification provision in subsection (d)(1)(B) and provide notice of such disqualification in writing to the City officer or employee.

(B) Upon the request of any former City officer or employee, the **Ethics Commission** may, after a public hearing, overturn the application of the disqualification provision of subsection (d)(1)(B) if: (i) the

decision that the former officer or employee engaged in official misconduct was not made after a hearing by a court, the Board of Supervisors, the **Ethics Commission** , an administrative body, an administrative hearing officer, or a labor arbitrator; and (ii) if the officer or employee does not have the right to appeal his or her restriction on holding future office or employment to the San Francisco Civil Service Commission.

(e) OFFICIAL MISCONDUCT. Official misconduct means any wrongful behavior by a public officer in relation to the duties of his or her office, willful in its character, including any failure, refusal or neglect of an officer to perform any duty enjoined on him or her by law, or conduct that falls below the standard of decency, good faith and right action impliedly required of all public officers and including any violation of a specific conflict of interest or governmental ethics law. When any City law provides that a violation of the law constitutes or is deemed official misconduct, the conduct is covered by this definition and may subject the person to discipline and/or removal from office.

(Amended November 2001; March 2002; November 2003)

SEC. 15.106.

(Repealed November 2003)

SEC. 15.107. REPORTING OF CAMPAIGN FINANCING.

The Board of Supervisors shall, by ordinance, prescribe requirements for campaign contributions and expenditures and any limitations thereon with respect to candidates for elective office and ballot measures in the City and County.

SEC. 15.108.

(Repealed November 2003)

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SF SEC. 1.164. DUTIES OF ETHICS COMMISSION.

In addition to other duties required under the Charter and the terms of this Chapter, the Ethics Commission shall:

(a) Prepare and publish written instructions explaining the duties of persons, candidates and committees under this Chapter.

(b) Determine whether required statements and declarations have been filed with the Ethics Commission, and, if so, whether they conform on their face with the requirements of this Chapter.

(c) Notify promptly all persons, candidates and committees known to the Ethics Commission who have failed to file a statement in the form and at the time required by State and local law.

(d) Report apparent violations of this Chapter to the District Attorney.

(e) Compile and maintain a current list of all statements or parts of statements filed with the Ethics Commission pertaining to each candidate and each measure.

(f) Cooperate with the District Attorney and the City Attorney in the performance of their duties as they are related to this Chapter.

(g) Enforce or cause to be enforced the provisions of this Chapter.

(h) Prepare and publish adequate procedures to notify all persons, candidates and committees in advance relative to filing dates and forms required by State and local law.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered by Proposition O, 11/7/2000; amended by Ord. 141-03, File No. 030034, App. 6/27/2003)

SEC. 1.166. DUTIES OF ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY.

In addition to the other duties required of him or her under the provisions of this Chapter, the enforcement authority for civil enforcement shall review such campaign statements filed with the Ethics Commission as the Commission shall refer to him or her for legal compliance with the provisions of this Chapter.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered by Proposition O, 11/7/2000)

SEC. 1.168. ENFORCEMENT; ADVICE.

(a) ENFORCEMENT – GENERAL PROVISIONS. Any person who believes that a violation of this Chapter has occurred may file a complaint with the Ethics Commission, City Attorney or District Attorney. The Ethics Commission shall investigate such complaints pursuant to Charter Section C3.699-13 and its implementing regulations. The City Attorney and District Attorney shall investigate, and shall have such investigative powers as are necessary for the performance of their duties under this Chapter.

(b) ENFORCEMENT – CIVIL ACTIONS. The City Attorney, or any voter, may bring a civil action to enjoin violations of or compel compliance with the provisions of this Chapter.

No voter may commence an action under this Subsection without first providing written notice to the City Attorney of intent to commence an action. The notice shall include a statement of the grounds for believing a cause of action exists. The voter shall deliver the notice to the City Attorney at least 60 days in advance of filing an action. No voter may commence an action under this Subsection if the Ethics Commission has issued a finding of probable cause that the defendant violated the provisions of this Chapter, or if the City Attorney or District Attorney has commenced a civil or criminal action against the defendant, or if another voter has filed a civil action against the defendant under this Subsection.

A Court may award reasonable attorney's fees and costs to any voter who obtains injunctive relief under this Subsection. If the Court finds that an action brought by a voter under this Subsection is frivolous, the Court may award the defendant reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

(c) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.

(1) **Criminal.** Prosecution for violation of this Chapter must be commenced within four years after the date on which the violation occurred.

(2) **Civil.** No civil action alleging a violation in connection with a campaign statement required under this Chapter shall be filed more than four years after an audit could begin, or more than one year after the Executive Director submits to the Commission any report of any audit conducted of the alleged violator, whichever period is less. Any other civil action alleging a

violation of any provision of this Chapter shall be filed no more than four years after the date on which the violation occurred.

(3) **Administrative.** No administrative action alleging a violation of this Chapter and brought under Charter Section C3.699-13 shall be commenced more than four years after the date on which the violation occurred. The date on which the Commission forwards a complaint or information in its possession regarding an alleged violation to the District Attorney and City Attorney as required by Charter Section C3.699-13 shall constitute the commencement of the administrative action.

(4) **Collection of Fines and Penalties.** A civil action brought to collect fines or penalties imposed under this Chapter shall be commenced within four years after the date on which the monetary penalty or fine was imposed. For purposes of this Section, a fine or penalty is imposed when a court or administrative agency has issued a final decision in an enforcement action imposing a fine or penalty for a violation of this Chapter or the Executive Director has made a final decision regarding the amount of a late fine or penalty imposed under this Chapter. The Executive Director does not make a final decision regarding the amount of a late fine or penalty imposed under this Chapter until the Executive Director has made a determination to accept or not accept any request to waive a late fine or penalty where such waiver is expressly authorized by statute, ordinance, or regulation.

(d) ADVICE. Any person may request advice from the Ethics Commission or City Attorney with respect to any provision of this Chapter. The Ethics Commission shall provide advice pursuant to Charter Section C3.699-12. The City Attorney shall within 14 days of the receipt of said written request provide the advice in writing or advise the person who made the request that no opinion will be issued. The City Attorney shall send a copy of said request to the District Attorney upon its receipt. The City Attorney shall within nine days from the date of the receipt of said written request send a copy of his or her proposed opinion to the District Attorney. The District Attorney shall within four days inform the City Attorney whether he or she agrees with said advice, or state the basis for his or her disagreement with the proposed advice.

No person other than the City Attorney who acts in good faith on the advice of the City Attorney shall be subject to criminal or civil penalties for so acting; provided that, the material facts are stated in the request for advice and the acts complained of were committed in reliance on the advice.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered and amended by Proposition O, 11/7/2000; Ord. 141-03, File No. 030034, App. 6/27/2003; Ord. 3-06, File No. 051439, App. 1/20/2006; Ord. 234-09, File. No. 090989, App. 11/20/2009)

SEC. 1.170. PENALTIES.

(a) CRIMINAL. Any person who knowingly or willfully violates any provision of this Chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not more than $5,000 for each violation or by imprisonment in the County jail for a period of not more than six months or by both such fine and imprisonment; provided, however, that any willful or knowing failure to report contributions or expenditures done with intent to mislead or deceive or any willful or knowing violation of the provisions of Section 1.114 of this Chapter shall be punishable by a fine of not less than $5,000 for each violation or three times the amount not reported or the amount received in excess of the amount allowable pursuant to Section 1.114 of this Chapter, or three times the amount expended in excess of the amount allowable pursuant to Section 1.130 or 1.140.5, whichever is greater.

(b) CIVIL. Any person who intentionally or negligently violates any of the provisions of this Chapter shall be liable in a civil action brought by the civil prosecutor for an amount up to $5,000 for each violation or three times the amount not reported or the amount received in excess of the amount allowable pursuant to Section 1.114 or three times the amount expended in excess of the amount allowable pursuant to Section 1.130 or 1.140.5, whichever is greater.

(c) ADMINISTRATIVE. Any person who intentionally or negligently violates any of the provisions of this Chapter shall be liable in an administrative proceeding before the Ethics Commission held pursuant to the Charter for any penalties authorized therein.

(d) LATE FILING FEES

(1) **Fees for Late Paper Filings.** In addition to any other penalty, any person who files a paper copy of any statement or report after the deadline imposed by this Chapter shall be liable in the amount of ten dollars ($10) per day after the deadline until the statement is filed.

(2) In addition to any other penalty, any person who files an electronic copy of a statement or report after the deadline imposed by this Chapter shall be liable in the amount of twenty-five dollars ($25) per day after the deadline until the electronic copy or report is filed.

(3) **Limitation on Liability.** Liability imposed by Subsection (d)(1) shall not exceed the cumulative amount stated in the late statement or report, or one hundred dollars ($100), whichever is greater. Liability imposed by Subsection (d)(2) shall not exceed the cumulative amount stated in the late statement or report, or two hundred fifty dollars ($250), whichever is greater.

(4) **Reduction or Waiver.** The Ethics Commission may reduce or waive a fee imposed by this subsection if the Commission determines that the late filing was not willful and that enforcement will not further the purposes of this Chapter.

(e) MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS. Any person who willfully or knowingly uses public funds, paid pursuant to this Chapter, for any purpose other than the purposes authorized by this Chapter shall be subject to the penalties provided in this Section.

(f) PROVISION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION TO THE ETHICS COMMISSION; WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION. Any person who knowingly or willfully furnishes false or fraudulent evidence, documents, or information to the Ethics Commission under this Chapter, or misrepresents any material fact, or conceals any evidence, documents, or information, or fails to furnish to the Ethics Commission any records, documents, or other information required to be provided under this Chapter shall be subject to the penalties provided in this Section.

(g) PERSONAL LIABILITY. Candidates and treasurers are responsible for complying with this Chapter and may be held personally liable for violations by their committees. Nothing in this Chapter shall operate to limit the candidate's liability for, nor the candidate's ability to pay, any fines or other payments imposed pursuant to administrative or judicial proceedings.

(h) JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY. If two or more persons are responsible for any violation of this Chapter, they shall be jointly and severally liable.

(i) EFFECT OF VIOLATION ON CANDIDACY.

(1) If a candidate is convicted, in a court of law, of a violation of this Chapter at any time prior to his or her election, his or her candidacy shall be terminated immediately and he or she shall be no longer eligible for election, unless the court at the time of sentencing specifically determines that this provision shall not be applicable. No person convicted of a misdemeanor under this Chapter after his or her election shall be a candidate for any other City elective office

for a period of five years following the date of the conviction unless the court shall at the time of sentencing specifically determine that this provision shall not be applicable.

(2) If a candidate for the Board of Supervisors certified as eligible for public financing is found by a court to have exceeded the Individual Expenditure Ceiling in this Chapter by ten percent or more at any time prior to his or her election, such violation shall constitute official misconduct. The Mayor may suspend any member of the Board of Supervisors for such a violation, and seek removal of the candidate from office following the procedures set forth in Charter Section 15.105(a).

(3) A plea of *nolo contendere*, in a court of law, shall be deemed a conviction for purposes of this Section.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered and amended by Proposition O, 11/7/2000; amended by Ord. 141-03, File No. 030034, App. 6/27/2003; Ord. 3-06, File No. 051439, App. 1/20/2006; Ord. 31-06, File No. 051773, App. 2/23/2006; Ord. 228-06, File No. 060501, App. 9/14/2006; Ord. 268-07, File No. 071003, App. 11/26/2007; Ord. 234-09, File No. 090989, App. 11/20/2009; Ord. 64-12, File No. 111082, App. 4/20/2012, Eff. 5/20/2012)

SEC. 1.171. ISSUANCE OF SUBPOENAS.

The Ethics Commission, including its Executive Director, may issue subpoenas in furtherance of its duties under the Charter including, but not limited to, audits of committees and enforcement of the provisions of this Chapter.

(Added by Ord. 234-09, File. No. 090989, App. 11/20/2009)

SEC. 1.172. EXTENSION OF DEADLINES THAT FALL ON WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS.

The Ethics Commission may, by regulation, extend any deadline imposed by this Chapter that falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday on which the Ethics Commission is authorized by law to close.

(Added by Ord. 228-06, File No. 060501, App. 9/14/2006)

(Former Sec. 1.172 added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered by Proposition O, 11/7/2000; repealed by Ord. 141-03, File No. 030034, App. 6/27/2003)

SEC. 1.174. EFFECT OF VIOLATION ON CERTIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS.

The Director of Elections shall not issue any certificate of nomination or election to any candidate until all of the candidate's campaign declarations, statements, or reports required under State and local law have been filed.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered by Proposition O, 11/7/2000; amended by Ord. 141-03, File No. 030034, App. 6/27/2003)

SEC. 1.175. IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS; FORMS.

Pursuant to Charter Section 15.102, the Ethics Commission shall adopt regulations to implement this Chapter. The Ethics Commission shall also specify the format and content of all forms and statements required to be filed under this Chapter.

(Added by Ord. 234-09, File. No. 090989, App. 11/20/2009)

SEC. 1.176. RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.

This Chapter shall be construed liberally in order to effectuate its purposes. No error, irregularity, informality, neglect or omission of any officer in any procedure taken under this Chapter which does not directly affect the jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors or the City and County to control campaign contributions shall avoid the effect of this Chapter.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered by Proposition O, 11/7/2000)

SEC. 1.178. SEVERABILITY.

If any provision of this Chapter, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of the Chapter and the applicability of such provisions to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

(Added by Ord. 71-00, File No. 000358, App. 4/28/2000; renumbered by Proposition O, 11/7/2000)

https://sfethics.org/laws/investigations