

Ethics Reform Task Force

Recommendations Part I

The Task Force recommends 34 reforms that significantly strengthen Chicago's ethics regulations, close loopholes and enhance penalties for public servants who break ethics laws. Recommendations include:

- 1. Add a “reverse revolving door” provision that prevents City employees from working on any matter that involves a former employer for the first two years of employment.**
 - Current State: The Mayor signed an executive order on his first day in office – and later passed through City Council – rules to prohibit employees from lobbying the City after leaving its employment. This additional recommendation would prohibit new City employees from working with their former private-sector employer.
- 2. Add a whistleblower protection for reporting misconduct.**
 - Current State: Current law does not include a whistleblower provision to protect employees.
- 3. Prohibit all honoraria.**
 - Current State: Honoraria are permitted with few rules.
- 4. Create a comprehensive gift cap of \$50 per year from any individual source.**
 - Current State: Current law allows for gifts of up to \$100 per year from restricted sources, and limits single gifts from such sources to \$50. The law does not cap gifts from non-prohibited sources.
- 5. Require City employees to report corrupt/criminal activity and report allegations of political discrimination in connection with City employment.**
 - Current State: The Mayor signed two executive orders requiring this reform, but they have yet to be enacted into law by City Council. The current ordinance does not require employees to report wrongdoing.
- 6. Bar public servants from working on matters involving a person with whom that employee or official is negotiating future employment.**
 - Current State: The current ethics ordinance does not prohibit City officials from working on matters involving a person with whom they are negotiating future employment.
- 7. Simplify and increase the penalties for violations of the ethics ordinance. Additionally, the maximum penalty for violations involving the transfer of money or property should be tied to the value of the transferred property.**
 - Current State: The Board of Ethics has no clear legal authority to enforce penalties prescribed by the ordinance. Penalties are also inconsistent and are capped at \$5,000.
- 8. Prohibit supervisors from soliciting political contributions from anyone they supervise. Additionally, prohibit City employees and officials from either accepting or giving campaign contributions at City Hall or on City property.**
 - Current State: The Ordinance restricts employees/officials from coercing or intimidating subordinates into making political contributions, the Task Force recommends solicitation also be bared.
- 9. Penalize Political Action Committees (“PACs”) for knowingly receiving improper campaign contributions.**
 - Current State: There is no penalty against a PAC for knowingly receiving money in violation of the campaign finance laws. The PAC should be penalized as well as the contributor, unless the PAC voluntarily returned the improper contribution within 14 days of its receipt.
- 10. Require filers of financial interest statements to disclose the amount of a particular financial interest within certain dollar ranges. Additionally, require all new reporting employees to submit a financial interest statement when hired.**
 - Current State: Financial interest statements do not require reporting individuals to disclose the actual amount of their financial interest. Additionally, new reporting employees are not required to submit a financial interest

statement at the time they are hired. Thus, a reporting employee hired on May 2nd of one year would not have to report financial interests until May 1st of the following year.

11. Add an aspirational code of conduct to the ordinance telling employees what they should do, as in the House of Representatives.

- Current State: The ethics ordinance only describes what employees cannot do.

12. Formalize and promote the role of embedded ethics officers for each department and aldermanic office, and provide relevant training for these individuals.

- Current State: The Board currently uses informal ethics liaisons within each department and aldermanic office, although these liaisons are not required by the Ordinance.