

# STATE ETHICS COMMISSION PUBLIC OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

2025

## WHO IS A PUBLIC OFFICIAL?

A public official is an elected or appointed official of the State, a county, a municipality, or a political subdivision thereof.

## QUARTERLY CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURES

Continue filing Campaign Disclosure Reports until your campaign checking account balance reaches \$0.00.

## IMPORTANT DATES

April 10th – First Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

July 10th – Second Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

October 10th – Third Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

January 10th – Fourth Quarter Campaign Disclosure due.

Pre-Election Campaign Disclosures must be filed by all candidates fifteen – twenty days before the election.

File your Statement of Economic Interests before you are sworn in and then by March 30<sup>th</sup> of every year that you serve.

## REQUIRED FILINGS

As a public official, you are subject to the Ethics Reform Act and are under the jurisdiction of the State Ethics Commission. During your run for office, you may have accepted campaign contributions and spent money on your race. If you accepted campaign contributions or spent any money on your race, you were required to open a campaign checking account – even if you only spent your own money.

Failure to open a campaign checking account is a violation of state law. All campaign contributions (even your own) must go into your campaign checking account and all campaign expenditures must come out of your campaign checking.

Candidates are required to file campaign disclosures disclosing all campaign contributions and expenditures. An initial campaign disclosure was due when you raised or spent a total of \$500.00. For example, if you raised \$300.00 and spent \$200.00 you should have immediately filed an Initial Campaign Disclosure.

You must continue to file campaign disclosures every quarter. Even though your race is over, you must continue to file campaign disclosures every quarter as long as you have a balance in your campaign checking account. Once your campaign checking account balance reaches \$0.00, you can file a final campaign disclosure.

In order to bring your campaign checking account balance to \$0.00, you can donate your remaining campaign funds to a 501(c)(3), donate the remaining campaign funds to the state's general fund, return campaign funds to your contributors at a pro-rated rate, or by a combination of all three methods.



If you were elected in a partisan race, you should have already filed a Statement of Economic Interests disclosing sources of income to your household. If you were elected in a non-partisan race, you must file a Statement of Economic Interests prior to taking the oath of office.

Failing to file these required documents can be costly. For every filing that you fail to file, you are looking at a penalty of up to \$5,000.00. These penalties can really add up – if you fail to file campaign disclosures and a Statement of Economic Interests over the course of one year, you can be penalized up to \$25,000.00. Please be aware that these penalties must be paid from your personal funds – not campaign funds.

If you need assistance filing your campaign disclosures or your Statement of Economic Interests, please contact the Commission at 803-253-4192.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Over the course of your service, it is possible that a conflict of interest will arise. If you are faced with a conflict of interest, you must recuse yourself in writing and make your written recusal a part of your body's meeting minutes. A conflict of interest arises when you vote on or participate in making a government decision that affects the economic interests of yourself, a family member, a business with which you are associated, or an individual with whom you are associated. "Economic interest," "family member," "business with which he is associated," and "individual with whom is associated" are all defined in Section 8-13-100 of the Ethics Reform Act.

Should you need assistance navigating a potential conflict of interest, please do not hesitate to call the Commission – just remember to seek guidance *before* you take any action.

## YOU MAY NEVER:

- 1) Accept or request anything of value that is given with the intent to influence you in your official capacity – do not take a bribe.
- 2) Accept an honorarium for speaking in your official capacity.
- 3) Use government resources in your re-election campaign. For example, you cannot use your official government email address to advocate for or against a candidate for office or for or against an issue that will appear on the ballot. Likewise, you cannot use public time, such as a county council or city council meeting, to advocate for or against a candidate for office or for or against an issue that will appear on the ballot.

## FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Videos to assist you with filing campaign disclosures and Statements of Economic Interests are available on the Commission's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/@scstateethicscommission9226>.

Please contact us at [candidateinformation@ethics.sc.gov](mailto:candidateinformation@ethics.sc.gov) if you have any questions about the Ethics Act.