



House of Representatives Legislative Ethics Committee (HEC)

Public Employee Brochure

(as of 1/17/2024)

What is the HEC?

The HEC is a legislative committee charged with enforcing the Ethics, Government Accountability and Campaign Reform Act of 1991 for Members, Staff, or Candidates of the House as well as the Members and staff of a legislative caucus committee.

Why Are You Receiving This Brochure?

You are receiving this brochure because you are a public employee, as defined by the Ethics Reform Act (Act), and you are subject to the Act. See S.C. Code Ann. Section 8-13-100 et seq. Public employees include all the House employees, such as employees who are full-time, part-time (legislative aides, law clerks, pages, and interns), or by contract.

This brochure contains some of the Act's highlights, but in no way encompasses all the Act's requirements or prohibitions. **This brochure is not a comprehensive explanation of the Ethics Act.** All employees are required to comply with the full requirements of the Ethics Act as set forth in the statute. Thus, we encourage you to read the Act in its entirety in addition to reading this brochure.

When in Doubt. . .

If you have any questions about the Act — do not hesitate to contact us. As a public employee, you may request a confidential, informal opinion about any issue within our jurisdiction as it relates to your own conduct. For an informal opinion, email HEC Counsels: Lauren Trask at LaurenTrask@schouse.gov or Julia Foster at JuliaFoster@schouse.gov.

Your Time Versus the People's Time

Over the course of your legislative service, you may not: use government equipment, personnel, materials, or time to work on a second business; receive anything of value given in an attempt to influence your actions, or receive money from any person for advice or assistance given as a part of your official duties.

All In The Family

Nepotism (favoritism based on kinship) is strictly forbidden by the Act. Over the course of your legislative service, you may not: cause the employment, appointment, promotion or transfer of a family member to a position you supervise or manage; or participate in the discipline of a family member. Family members include: spouses, parents, brothers, sisters, children, in-laws, grandparents, or grandchildren.

Getting Political

You may not use government time, equipment, resources, or property to influence the outcome of an election. Do not print campaign materials, make campaign calls, or send campaign related emails using any government issued equipment.

No employee of the House shall personally interest or concern himself with the passage or consideration of any measure whatsoever. If any employee does so, **it shall be grounds for summary dismissal.**

Leaving the Public Sector

You may not serve as a lobbyist or represent clients on a matter in which you directly or substantially participated for a period of one year.

As A Legislative Employee, Never...

- 1) Solicit or receive money in addition to that received in your official capacity for advice or assistance given during your legislative employment.
- 2) Use confidential information obtained over the course of your service to obtain an economic benefit for you, a family member or a business/individual with whom you are associated.
- 3) Solicit or receive anything of value to influence your decision making in the discharge of your duties or responsibilities.
- 4) Solicit or receive lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, money or any other thing of value from a lobbyist principal. However, a lobbyist principal may provide these aforementioned items to a legislative employee if certain group invitation requirements are met (all members of the House and staff, all members of a committee and staff, all members of a subcommittee and staff, etc.) A legislative employee may accept an invitation to an event sponsored by a lobbyist or lobbyist principle **so long as they pay their own way.** This includes paying face value for any ticket event. Provided, that a legislative employee may not accept from

a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist principal, the value of the aforementioned items exceeding sixty dollars in a day or four hundred eighty dollars in a year.

5) Solicit or receive lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value from a lobbyist. (This is the "No Cup of Coffee" Rule) **A legislative employee who violates this code section is guilty of a felony and subject to imprisonment for up to 10 years and a fine not more than \$10,000.** However, this prohibition does not apply to the furnishing of these items when the items are also furnished on the same terms or at the same expense to a member of the general public without regard to status as a legislative employee.

This prohibition does not apply to the rendering of emergency assistance given gratuitously and in good faith by a lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or any person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist principal to a legislative employee.

6) Receive anything of value (i.e. honorarium) for speaking before a public or private group in his/her official capacity. A meal can be accepted if provided in conjunction with the speaking engagement where all participants are entitled to the same meal and the meal is incidental to the speaking engagement. A legislative employee may receive payment or reimbursement for **actual expenses incurred.**

How to Contact the HEC

Room 519, Blatt Building

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