~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

AMENDED

April 30, 2013

**H. 3945**

Introduced by Reps. G.M. Smith, Harrell, Lucas, Bannister, Toole, Stringer, Hamilton, Sottile, Barfield, Bingham, Spires, Hardwick, Owens, Hiott, Long, Erickson, Murphy, Horne, Willis, Gagnon, Simrill, Funderburk and Henderson

S. Printed 4/30/13--H.

Read the first time April 11, 2013.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 4 TO CHAPTER 13, TITLE 8 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON ETHICS ENFORCEMENT AND DISCLOSURE, TO PROVIDE FOR ITS POWERS, DUTIES, PROCEDURES, AND JURISDICTION, AND TO PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR CERTAIN VIOLATIONS; TO REPEAL ARTICLE 3, CHAPTER 13, TITLE 8 RELATING TO THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION; TO REPEAL ARTICLE 5, CHAPTER 13, TITLE 8 RELATING TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE ETHICS COMMITTEES; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑100, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS IN REGARD TO ETHICS, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY, AND CAMPAIGN REFORM, SO AS TO REVISE CERTAIN DEFINITIONS; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑700, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO USE OF AN OFFICIAL POSITION OR OFFICE FOR FINANCIAL GAIN, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT IF A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DETERMINES THAT HE HAS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST, HE MUST COMPLY WITH CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ABSTAINING FROM ALL VOTES ON THE MATTER, AND TO PROVIDE FOR WHEN A PUBLIC OFFICIAL WHO IS REQUIRED TO RECUSE HIMSELF FROM A MATTER MUST DO SO; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑740, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO REPRESENTATION OF ANOTHER PERSON BY A PUBLIC OFFICIAL BEFORE A GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY, SO AS TO FURTHER DELINEATE WHAT IS CONSIDERED A CONTESTED CASE WHEN REPRESENTATION BY A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS PERMITTED; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑745, RELATING TO PAID REPRESENTATION OF CLIENTS AND CONTRACTING BY A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR AN ASSOCIATE IN PARTICULAR SITUATIONS, SO AS TO DELETE A PROHIBITION AGAINST CERTAIN CONTRACTS WITH AN ENTITY FUNDED WITH GENERAL FUNDS; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑1120, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO CONTENTS OF STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTEREST, SO AS TO FURTHER PROVIDE FOR THESE CONTENTS; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑1300, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS IN REGARD TO CAMPAIGN PRACTICES, SO AS TO REVISE CERTAIN DEFINITIONS; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑1318, RELATING TO ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO RETIRE CAMPAIGN DEBTS, SO AS TO REQUIRE ANY SUCH CONTRIBUTIONS TO BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE ONLY; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑1338, RELATING TO PERSONS WHO MAY NOT SOLICIT CONTRIBUTIONS, SO AS TO INCLUDE THE HEAD OF ANY STATE AGENCY WHO IS SELECTED BY THE GOVERNOR, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, OR AN APPOINTED OR ELECTED BOARD; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑1340, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO RESTRICTIONS ON CONTRIBUTIONS BY ONE CANDIDATE TO ANOTHER OR THROUGH COMMITTEES CONTROLLED BY A CANDIDATE, SO AS TO DELETE AN EXCEPTION FOR A COMMITTEE CONTROLLED BY A CANDIDATE IF IT IS THE ONLY SUCH COMMITTEE, AND TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES; TO AMEND SECTIONS 8‑13‑1510 AND 8‑13‑1520, BOTH AS AMENDED, RELATING TO PENALTIES FOR ETHICAL AND OTHER VIOLATIONS, AND BY ADDING SECTION 8‑13‑1530 SO AS TO FURTHER PROVIDE FOR THE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS AND FOR WHERE CERTAIN WILFUL VIOLATIONS MUST BE TRIED; AND TO REPEAL SECTIONS 8‑13‑710 AND 8‑13‑715 RELATING TO REPORTING OF PARTICULAR GIFTS AND AUTHORIZED REIMBURSEMENTS FOR SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS.

Amend Title To Conform

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 5, Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Article 5

~~Senate and House of Representatives Ethics Committees~~

Joint Committee on Ethics

Section 8‑13‑510. ~~There is created a House of Representatives Legislative Ethics Committee and a Senate Legislative Ethics Committee. Each ethics committee is composed of six members. Terms are coterminous with the term for which members are elected to the House or Senate. Vacancies must be filled for the unexpired term in the manner of the original selection. The members of each ethics committee must be elected by the House or the Senate, as appropriate. One member of each ethics committee must be elected as chairman by a majority of the members of the ethics committee.~~

(A) There is created the Joint Committee on Ethics composed of sixteen members elected as follows:

(1) four members of the Senate elected by the Senate;

(2) four members of the House of Representatives elected by the House of Representatives; and

(3) eight members who may not be members of the General Assembly or other public officials, four of whom must be elected by the Senate and four of whom must be elected by the House of Representatives.

(B)(1) Of the four members of the Senate elected pursuant subsection (A)(1), two members must be from the majority party represented in the Senate and two members must be from the largest minority party represented in the Senate. Members of the Senate shall serve a term coterminous with their term of office.

(2) Of the four members of the House of Representatives elected pursuant subsection (A)(2), two members must be from the majority party represented in the House of Representatives and two members must be from the largest minority party represented in the House of Representatives. Members of the House of Representatives shall serve a term coterminous with their term of office.

(3) Of the four members elected by the Senate pursuant subsection (A)(3), two members must be persons recommended by the majority caucus and two members must be persons recommended by the minority caucus. Members shall serve four‑year terms; however, of the initial four members elected, one from each party shall serve a term of four years and one from each party shall serve a term of two years.

(4) Of the four members elected by the House of Representatives pursuant subsection (A)(3), two members must be persons recommended by the majority caucus and two members must be persons recommended by the minority caucus. Members shall serve four‑year terms; however, of the initial four members elected, one from each party shall serve a term of four years and one from each party shall serve a term of two years.

(C) Members of the committee are eligible for reelection but may not serve more than a total of eight years. Vacancies shall be filled in the manner of original election.

(D) Members of the Joint Committee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman. Each office shall be filled initially by a Senate member in one office and a House member in the other office and, thereafter, shall rotate between a House member and a Senate member every two years with a member from one house holding one office and a member from the other house holding the other office.

Section 8‑13‑520. ~~Each ethics committee~~ The Joint Committee on Ethics shall meet and recommend any changes in the law or rules relating to ethics considered proper ~~to their respective houses~~. Changes recommended must be consistent with the Constitution of the State of South Carolina, the provisions of this chapter, and any other applicable law.

Section 8‑13‑530. ~~Each ethics committee~~ The Joint Committee on Ethics shall:

(1) ascertain whether a person has failed to comply fully and accurately with the disclosure requirements of this chapter and promptly notify the person to file the necessary notices and reports to satisfy the requirements of this chapter;

(2) receive complaints filed by individuals and, upon a majority vote of the total membership of the committee, file complaints when alleged violations are identified;

(3) upon the filing of a complaint, investigate possible violations of breach of a privilege governing a member or staff of the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly, the alleged breach of a rule governing a member of, legislative caucus committees for, or a candidate, or staff for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly, misconduct of a member or staff of, legislative caucus committees for, or a candidate for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly, or a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 ~~of~~, Title 2;

(4) receive and hear a complaint which alleges a breach of a privilege governing a member or staff of the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly, the alleged breach of a rule governing a member or staff of or candidate for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly, misconduct of a member or staff of or candidate for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly, or a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 ~~of~~, Title 2. No complaint may be accepted by the ethics committee concerning a member of or candidate for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly during the fifty‑day period before an election in which the member or candidate is a candidate. During this fifty‑day period, any person may petition the court of common pleas alleging the violations complained of and praying for appropriate relief by way of mandamus or injunction, or both. Within ten days, a rule to show cause hearing must be held, and the court must either dismiss the petition or direct that a mandamus order or an injunction, or both, be issued. A violation of this chapter by a candidate during this fifty‑day period must be considered to be an irreparable injury for which no adequate remedy at law exists. The institution of an action for injunctive relief does not relieve any party to the proceeding from any penalty prescribed for violations of this chapter. The court must award reasonable attorney’s fees and costs to the nonpetitioning party if a petition for mandamus or injunctive relief is dismissed based upon a finding that the:

(i) petition is being presented for an improper purpose such as harassment or to cause delay;

(ii) claims, defenses, and other legal contentions are not warranted by existing law or are based upon a frivolous argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law; and

(iii) allegations and other factual contentions do not have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, are not likely to have evidentiary support after reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery.

Action on a complaint filed against a member or candidate which was received more than fifty days before the election but which cannot be disposed of or dismissed by the ~~ethics~~ committee at least thirty days before the election must be postponed until after the election;

(5) obtain information and investigate complaints as provided in Section 8‑13‑540 with respect to any complaint filed pursuant to this chapter or Chapter 17 ~~of~~, Title 2 and to that end may compel by subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of pertinent books and papers. Additionally, the committee may refer the complaint to the Public Integrity Unit pursuant to Section 23‑2‑60 for investigation;

(6) administer or recommend sanctions appropriate to a particular member or staff of or candidate for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly pursuant to Section 8‑13‑540 or dismiss the charges; and

(7) act as an advisory body to the General Assembly and to individual members of or candidates for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly on questions pertaining to the disclosure and filing requirements of members of or candidates for the ~~appropriate house~~ General Assembly.

Section 8‑13‑540. ~~Unless otherwise provided for by House or Senate rule, as appropriate, each ethics committee~~ The Joint Committee on Ethics must conduct its investigation of a complaint filed pursuant to this chapter or Chapter 17 ~~of~~, Title 2 in accordance with this section.

(1) When a complaint is filed with or by the ~~ethics~~ committee, a copy must promptly be sent to the person alleged to have committed the violation. If the ~~ethics~~ committee determines the complaint does not allege facts sufficient to constitute a violation, the complaint must be dismissed and the complainant and respondent notified. If the ~~ethics~~ committee finds that the complaining party wilfully filed a groundless complaint, the finding must be reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities. The wilful filing of a groundless complaint is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, a person must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year. In lieu of the criminal penalty provided by this subsection, a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars may be assessed against the complainant upon proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the filing of the complaint was wilful and without just cause or with malice. If the ~~ethics~~ committee determines the complaint alleges facts sufficient to constitute a violation, it shall promptly investigate the alleged violation and may compel by subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of pertinent books and papers.

If after such preliminary investigation, the ~~ethics~~ committee finds that probable cause exists to support an alleged violation, it shall, as appropriate:

(a) render an advisory opinion to the respondent and require the respondent’s compliance within a reasonable time; or

(b) convene a formal hearing on the matter within thirty days of the ~~respondent’s failure to comply with the advisory opinion. All ethics committee investigations and records relating to the preliminary investigation are confidential~~ finding of probable cause in the matter. No complaint shall be accepted which is filed later than four years after the alleged violation occurred.

(2)(a) All papers, documents, complaints, charges, requests for advisory opinions, and any other material required to be filed with or received by the committee are strictly confidential prior to a finding of probable cause, or a waiver of confidentiality by the respondent. No persons involved with a complaint before the committee, including complainant, respondent, counsel, counsel’s secretaries, committee members and staff, and investigators shall mention the existence of any proceeding nor disclose any information pertaining to it, unless otherwise permitted by this article. Disclosure of confidential information must be punished in a manner provided by the Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act. If the committee finds that a person has violated the provisions of this subsection, it must report its findings to the Attorney General.

(b) Information that must be made public following a finding of probable cause or waiver of confidentiality by the respondent is:

(i) the complaint;

(ii) the response by the respondent;

(iii) any exhibits introduced at a public hearing, subject to redaction of information of a personal nature when public disclosure would constitute unreasonable invasion of personal privacy; and

(iv) the final order issued by the committee.

(c) All investigations, inquiries, hearings and accompanying documents must remain strictly confidential until a finding of probable cause, unless the respondent waives the right to confidentiality.

(3) If a hearing is to be held, the respondent must be allowed to examine and make copies of all evidence in the ~~ethics~~ committee’s possession relating to the charges. At the hearing the charged party must be afforded appropriate due process protections, including the right to be represented by counsel, the right to call and examine witnesses, the right to introduce exhibits, and the right to cross‑examine opposing witnesses. All hearings must be conducted in executive session.

~~(3)~~(4) After the hearing, the ~~ethics~~ committee shall determine its findings of fact. If the ~~ethics~~ committee, based on competent and substantial evidence, finds the respondent has violated this chapter or Chapter 17 ~~of~~, Title 2, it shall:

(a) ~~administer a public or private reprimand~~ levy a penalty pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1510 or 8‑13‑1520;

(b) determine that a technical violation as provided for in Section 8‑13‑1170 has occurred; and/or

(c) ~~recommend expulsion of the member; and/or,~~

~~(d)~~ in the case of an alleged criminal violation, refer the matter to the Attorney General for investigation. The ~~ethics~~ committee shall report its findings in writing to the Speaker of the House or President Pro Tempore of the Senate, as appropriate. The report must be accompanied by an order of punishment and supported and signed by a majority of the ~~ethics~~ committee members. If the ~~ethics~~ committee finds the respondent has not violated a code or statutory provision, it shall dismiss the charges.

~~(4)~~(5) An individual has ten days from the date of the notification of the ~~ethics~~ committee’s action to appeal the action to the full legislative body.

~~(5)~~(6) No ~~ethics~~ committee member may participate in any matter in which he is involved.

~~(6)~~(7) The ~~ethics~~ committee shall establish procedures which afford respondents appropriate due process protections, including the right to be represented by counsel, the right to call and examine witnesses, the right to introduce exhibits, and the right to cross‑examine opposing witnesses.

Section 8‑13‑550. (A) Upon receipt of a recommendation of expulsion or an appeal from an order of the ~~ethics~~ committee made pursuant to the provisions of Section 8‑13‑540, the presiding officer of the House or Senate shall call the House or Senate into open session at a time to be determined at his discretion or in executive session if the House or Senate chooses, as a committee of the whole, to consider the action of the ~~ethics~~ committee. The House or Senate shall sustain or overrule the ~~ethics~~ committee’s action or order other action consistent with this chapter or Chapter 17 ~~of~~, Title 2.

(B) Upon consideration of ~~an ethics~~ a committee report by the House or the Senate, whether in executive or open session, the results of the consideration, except in the case of the issuance of a private reprimand, are a matter of public record.

Section 8‑13‑560. ~~Unless otherwise currently or hereafter provided for by House or Senate rule, as is appropriate:~~

(1) A member of the General Assembly who is indicted in a state court or a federal court for a crime that is a felony, a crime that involves moral turpitude, a crime that has a sentence of two or more years, or a crime that violates election laws must be suspended immediately without pay by the presiding officer of the House or Senate, as appropriate. The suspension remains in effect until the public official is acquitted, convicted, pleads guilty, or pleads nolo contendere. In the case of a conviction, the office must be declared vacant. In the event of an acquittal or dismissal of charges against the public official, he is entitled to reinstatement and back pay.

(2) If the public official is involved in an election between the time of the suspension and final conclusion of the indictment, the presiding officer of the House or Senate, or the Governor, as appropriate, shall again suspend him at the beginning of his next term. The suspended public official may not participate in the business of his public office.”

SECTION 2. Section 2‑17‑10(12) and (13) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(12) ‘Lobbying’ means promoting or opposing through direct communication with public officials or public employees:

(a) the introduction or enactment of legislation before the General Assembly or the committees or members of the General Assembly;

(b) covered gubernatorial actions;

(c) covered agency actions; ~~or~~

(d) consideration of the election or appointment of an individual to a public office elected or appointed by the General Assembly; or

(e) the introduction or enactment of ordinances or other local initiatives by county or municipal governing bodies, including those actions taken by mayors or municipal or county administrators and school districts.

‘Lobbying’ does not include the activities of a member of the General Assembly, a member of the staff of a member of the Senate or House of Representatives, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or a member of the executive staff of the Governor or Lieutenant Governor acting in his capacity as a public official or public employee with regard to his public duties.

(13) ‘Lobbyist’ means any person who is employed, appointed, or retained, with or without compensation, by another person to influence by direct communication with public officials or public employees: (i) the action or vote of any member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or any other statewide constitutional officer concerning any legislation; (ii) the vote of any public official on any state agency, board, or commission concerning any covered agency actions; ~~or~~ (iii) the action of the Governor or any member of his executive staff concerning any covered gubernatorial actions; or (iv) the introduction or enactment of ordinances or other local initiatives by county or municipal governing bodies, including those actions taken by mayors or municipal or county administrators and school districts. ‘Lobbyist’ also means any person who is employed, appointed, or retained, with or without compensation, by a state agency, college, university, or other institution of higher learning to influence by direct communication with public officials or public employees: (i) the action or vote of any member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or any other statewide constitutional officer concerning any legislation; (ii) the vote of any public official of any state agency, board, or commission concerning any covered agency actions; or (iii) the action of the Governor or any member of his executive staff concerning any covered gubernatorial actions. ‘Lobbyist’ does not include:

(a) an individual who receives no compensation to engage in lobbying and who expresses a personal opinion on legislation, covered gubernatorial actions, ordinances or local initiatives, or covered agency actions to any public official or public employee;

(b) a person who appears only before public sessions of committees or subcommittees of the General Assembly, public hearings of state agencies, public hearings before any public body of a quasi‑judicial nature, or proceedings of any court of this State;

(c) any duly elected or appointed official or employee of the State, the United States, a county, municipality, school district, or a political subdivision thereof, or a member of the judiciary when appearing solely on matters pertaining to his office and public duties unless lobbying constitutes a regular and substantial portion of such official’s or employee’s duties;

(d) a person performing professional services in drafting legislation, ordinances or local initiatives, or in advising and rendering opinions to clients as to the construction and effect of proposed or pending legislation or ordinances or local initiatives;

(e) a person who owns, publishes, or is employed by a radio station, television station, wire service, or other bona fide news medium which in the ordinary course of business disseminates news, editorials, columns, other comments, or other regularly published periodicals if such person represents no other person in lobbying for legislation, covered agency actions, ordinances or local initiatives, or covered gubernatorial actions. This exception applies to the publication of any periodical which is published and distributed by a membership organization to its subscribers at least twelve times annually and for which an annual subscription charge of at least one dollar fifty cents a subscriber is made;

(f) a person who represents any established church solely for the purpose of protecting the rights of the membership of the church or for the purpose of protecting the doctrines of the church or on matters considered to have an adverse effect upon the moral welfare of the membership of the church;

(g) a person who is running for office elected by the General Assembly or a person soliciting votes on the behalf of a person who is running for office elected by the General Assembly unless such person is otherwise defined as a lobbyist by this section; or

(h) an individual who receives no compensation to engage in lobbying and who does not make expenditures or incur obligations for lobbying in an aggregate amount in excess of five hundred dollars in a calendar year.”

SECTION 3. Section 8‑13‑700(B) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 40 of 2011, is further amended to read:

“(B) ~~No~~ A public official, public member, or public employee may not make, participate in making, or in any way attempt to use his office, membership, or employment to influence a governmental decision in which he, a family member, ~~an individual with whom he is associated,~~ or a business with which he is associated has an economic interest. If a member of the General Assembly determines that he has a conflict pursuant to this section, he shall comply with items (1) and (2) before abstaining from all votes on the matter. A public official, public member, or public employee who, in the discharge of his official responsibilities, is required to take an action or make a decision which affects an economic interest of himself, a family member, ~~an individual with whom he is associated,~~ or a business with which he is associated shall:

(1) prepare a written statement describing the matter requiring action or decisions and the specific nature of his potential conflict of interest with respect to the action or decision;

(2) if the public official is a member of the General Assembly, he shall deliver a copy of the statement to the presiding officer of the appropriate house. The presiding officer shall have the statement printed in the appropriate journal and require that the member of the General Assembly be excused from votes, deliberations, and other action on the matter on which a potential conflict exists;

(3) if he is a public employee, he shall furnish a copy of the statement to his superior, if any, who shall assign the matter to another employee who does not have a potential conflict of interest. If he has no immediate superior, he shall take the action prescribed by the ~~State Ethics~~ commission;

(4) if he is a public official, other than a member of the General Assembly, he shall furnish a copy of the statement to the presiding officer of the governing body of an agency, commission, board, or of a county, municipality, or a political subdivision thereof, on which he serves, who shall cause the statement to be printed in the minutes and require that the member be excused from any votes, deliberations, and other actions on the matter on which the potential conflict of interest exists and shall cause the disqualification and the reasons for it to be noted in the minutes;

(5) if he is a public member, he shall furnish a copy to the presiding officer of an agency, commission, board, or of a county, municipality, or a political subdivision thereof, on which he serves, who shall cause the statement to be printed in the minutes and shall require that the member be excused from any votes, deliberations, and other actions on the matter on which the potential conflict of interest exists and shall cause such disqualification and the reasons for it to be noted in the minutes.”

SECTION 4. Section 8‑13‑700 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 40 of 2011, is further amended by adding a new subsection at the end to read:

“(F) Any public official who must recuse himself pursuant to this section shall do so at all times the matter is before the body or agency of which the public official is a member. The requirement of recusal under this section applies to, but is not limited to, matters considered by committees, subcommittees, study committees, or other components of the body or agency of which the public official is a member.”

SECTION 5. Section 8‑13‑720 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding a new paragraph at the end to read:

“A person who wilfully violates this section is guilty of a:

(1) misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both; or

(2) felony if the amount received is more than ten thousand dollars and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than ten thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both, and is permanently disqualified from being a public official, a public member, or a public employee.”

SECTION 6. Section 8‑13‑740(A)(2)(c) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 181 of 1993, is further amended to read:

“(c) in a contested case or a matter that may become a contested case, as defined in Section 1‑23‑310, excluding a contested case for a rate or price fixing matter before the South Carolina Public Service Commission or South Carolina Department of Insurance, or in an agency’s consideration of the drafting and promulgation of regulations under Chapter 23, ~~of~~ Title 1 in a public hearing.”

SECTION 7. Section 8‑13‑745 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 248 of 1991, is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑745. (A) No member of the General Assembly ~~or an individual with whom he is associated~~ or business with which he is associated may represent a client for a fee in a contested case, as defined in Section 1‑23‑310, before an agency, a commission, board, department, or other entity if the member of the General Assembly has voted in the election, appointment, recommendation, or confirmation of a member of the governing body of the agency, board, department, or other entity within the twelve preceding months.

(B) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, after the effective date of this section, no member of the General Assembly ~~or any individual with whom he is associated~~ or business with which he is associated may represent a client for a fee in a contested case, as defined in Section 1‑23‑310, before an agency, a commission, board, department, or other entity elected, appointed, recommended, or confirmed by the House, the Senate, or the General Assembly if that member has voted on the section of that year’s general appropriation bill or supplemental appropriation bill relating to that agency, commission, board, department, or other entity within one year from the date of the vote. This subsection does not prohibit a member from voting on other sections of the general appropriation bill or from voting on the general appropriation bill as a whole.

(C) ~~Notwithstanding any other provision of law, after the effective date of this section, no member of the General Assembly or an individual with whom he is associated in partnership or a business, company, corporation, or partnership where his interest is greater than five percent may enter into any contract for goods or services with an agency, a commission, board, department, or other entity funded with general funds or other funds if the member has voted on the section of that year’s appropriation bill relating to that agency, commission, board, department, or other entity within one year from the date of the vote...This subsection does not prohibit a member from voting on other sections of the appropriation bill or from voting on the general appropriation bill as a whole.~~ Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a public official, including members of the General Assembly, or a public employee, may not take a vote on or take an action on a matter in which he, an immediate family member, or a business with which he is associated has a known financial interest.

(D) The provisions of this section do not apply to any court in the unified judicial system.

(E) When a member of the General Assembly is required by law to appear because of his business interest as an owner or officer of the business or in his official capacity as a member of the General Assembly, this section does not apply.

(F) The provisions of subsections (A), (B), and (C) do not apply in the case of any vote or action taken by a member of the General Assembly ~~prior to~~ before January 1, 1992.”

SECTION 8. Section 8‑13‑1120 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 6 of 1995, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1120. (A) A statement of economic interests filed pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1110 ~~must be on forms prescribed by the State Ethics Commission and~~ must contain full and complete information concerning:

(1) the name, business or government address, and workplace telephone number of the filer;

(2) the source~~, type,~~ and amount or value of income, not to include tax refunds, ~~of substantial monetary value~~ received from a governmental entity by the filer or a member of the filer’s immediate family during the reporting period;

(3)(a) the description, value, and location of all real property owned and options to purchase real property during the reporting period by a filer or a member of the filer’s immediate family if:

(i) there have been any public improvements of more than two hundred dollars on or adjacent to the real property within the reporting period and the public improvements are known to the filer; or

(ii) the interest can reasonably be expected to be the subject of a conflict of interest; or

(b) if a sale, lease, or rental of personal or real property is to a state, county, or municipal instrumentality of government, a copy of the contract, lease, or rental agreement must be attached to the statement of economic interests;

(4) the name of each organization which paid for or reimbursed actual expenses of the filer for speaking before a public or private group, the amount of such payment or reimbursement, and the purpose, date, and location of the speaking engagement;

(5) the identity of every business or entity in which the filer or a member of the filer’s immediate family held or controlled, in the aggregate, securities or interests constituting five percent or more of the total issued and outstanding securities and interests which constitute a value of one hundred thousand dollars or more;

(6)(a) a listing by name and address of each creditor to whom the filer or member of the filer’s immediate family owed a debt in excess of five hundred dollars at any time during the reporting period, if the creditor is subject to regulation by the filer or is seeking or has sought a business or financial arrangement with the filer’s agency or department other than for a credit card or retail installment contract, and the original amount of the debt and amount outstanding unless:

(i) the debt is promised or loaned by a bank, savings and loan, or other licensed financial institution which loans money in the ordinary course of its business and on terms and interest rates generally available to a member of the general public without regard to status as a public official, public member, or public employee; or

(ii) the debt is promised or loaned by an individual’s family member if the person who promises or makes the loan is not acting as the agent or intermediary for someone other than a person named in this subitem; and

(b) the rate of interest charged the filer or a member of the filer’s immediate family for a debt required to be reported in (a);

If a discharge of a debt required to be reported in (a) has been made, the date of the transaction must be shown.

(7) the name of any lobbyist, as defined in Section 2‑17‑10(13) who is:

(a) an immediate family member of the filer;

(b) an individual with whom or business with which the filer or a member of the filer’s immediate family is associated;

(8) if a ~~public official,~~ public member~~,~~ or public employee receives compensation from an individual or business which contracts with the governmental entity with which the ~~public official,~~ public member~~,~~ or public employee serves or is employed, the ~~public official,~~ public member~~,~~ or public employee must report the name and address of that individual or business and the amount of compensation paid ~~to~~ ~~the public official, public member, or public employee~~ by that individual or business;

(9) the source and a brief description of any gifts, including transportation, lodging, food, or entertainment received during the preceding calendar year from:

(a) a person, if there is reason to believe the donor would not give the gift, gratuity, or favor but for the official’s or employee’s office or position; or

(b) a person, or from an officer or director of a person, if the public official or public employee has reason to believe the person:

(i) has or is seeking to obtain contractual or other business or financial relationship with the official’s or employee’s agency; or

(ii) conducts operations or activities which are regulated by the official’s or employee’s agency if the value of the gift is twenty‑five dollars or more in a day or if the value totals, in the aggregate, two hundred dollars or more in a calendar year~~.~~;

(10) except as provided in items (11) and (12), the source of any other income in excess of two thousand five hundred dollars received from a single nonpublic source by the filer that is contained on a W‑2, K‑1, 1099, or any other reporting form used by the Internal Revenue Service for the disclosure of income, not to include income received pursuant to:

(a) a court order;

(b) interest from a savings or checking account with a bank, savings and loan, or other licensed financial institution which offers savings or checking accounts in the ordinary course of its business and on terms and interest rates generally available to a member of the general public without regard to status as a public official, public member, or public employee;

(c) a mutual fund or similar fund in which an investment company invests its shareholders’ money in a diversified selection of securities;

(11) the specific source and amount of income received by a public official, a member of the public official’s immediate family, or a business with which the public official is associated if the public official directly derives income from a contractual or financial relationship, including a consultant or independent contractor relationship, with a lobbyist’s principal;

(12) the name of any governmental entity at the state level if the filer is a state public official or at the local level if the filer is a local public official from which the filer directly derives income from a contractual or financial relationship, including a consultant or independent contractor relationship, between that governmental entity and that public official, a member of the public official’s immediate family, or a business with which the public official is associated.

(B) This article does not require the disclosure of economic interests information concerning:

(1) a spouse separated pursuant to a court order from the public official, public member, or public employee;

(2) a former spouse;

(3) a campaign contribution that is permitted and reported under Article 13 of this chapter; or

(4) matters determined to require confidentiality pursuant to Section 2‑17‑90(E).”

SECTION 9. Section 8‑13‑1300(6), (7), (23), and (32) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 76 of 2003, is further amended to read:

“(6) ‘Committee’ means an association, a club, an organization, or a group of persons, including a party committee, a legislative caucus committee, or a noncandidate committee, which~~, to influence the outcome of an elective office,~~ has as its major purpose the nomination, election, or defeat of one or more candidates and receives contributions or makes expenditures in excess of five hundred dollars in the aggregate during an election cycle. It also means a person who~~, to influence the outcome of an elective office,~~ has the major purpose to support or oppose the nomination, election, or defeat of one or more candidates and makes:

(a) contributions aggregating at least twenty‑five thousand dollars during an election cycle to or at the request of a candidate or a committee, or a combination of them; or

(b) independent expenditures aggregating five hundred dollars or more during an election cycle for the election or defeat of a candidate.

~~‘Committee’ includes a party committee, a legislative caucus committee, a noncandidate committee, or a committee that is not a campaign committee for a candidate but that is organized for the purpose of influencing an election.~~

(7) ‘Contribution’ means:

(a) a gift, subscription, loan, guarantee upon which collection is made, forgiveness of a loan, an advance, in‑kind contribution or expenditure, a deposit of money, or anything of value made to a candidate or committee to influence an election; or payment or compensation for the personal service of another person which is rendered for any purpose to a candidate or committee without charge, whether any of the above are made or offered directly or indirectly; or

(b) a gift, subscription, loan, guarantee upon which collection is made, forgiveness of a loan, an advance, in‑kind contribution or expenditure, a deposit of money, or anything of value made to a committee, other than a candidate committee, and is used to pay for communications made within the forty‑five calendar days immediately before the election. Funds, used pursuant to this subsection, must be deposited in an account separate from a campaign account as required in Section 8‑13‑1312.

‘Contribution’ does not include ~~(a)~~ volunteer personal services on behalf of a candidate or committee for which the volunteer or any person acting on behalf of or instead of the volunteer receives no compensation either in cash or in‑kind, directly or indirectly, from any source~~; or (b) a gift, subscription, loan, guarantee upon which collection is made, forgiveness of a loan, an advance, in‑kind contribution or expenditure, a deposit of money, or anything of value made to a committee, other than a candidate committee, and is used to pay for communications made not more than forty‑five days before the election to influence the outcome of an elective office as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(31)(c). These funds must be deposited in an account separate from a campaign account as required in Section 8‑13‑1312~~.

(23) ‘Noncandidate committee’ means a committee that is not a campaign committee for a candidate but ~~is organized to influence an election or to support or oppose a candidate or public official~~ has as its major purpose the nomination, election, or defeat of one or more candidates, which receives contributions or makes expenditures in excess of five hundred dollars in the aggregate during an election cycle. ‘Noncandidate committee’ does not include political action committees that contribute solely to federal campaigns.

(32) ‘Ballot measure committee’ means:

(a) an association, club, an organization, or a group of persons ~~which, to influence the outcome of a ballot measure,~~ whose major purpose is to promote or defeat a ballot measure and receives contributions or makes expenditures in excess of two thousand five hundred dollars in the aggregate during an election cycle;

(b) a person, other than an individual, who, to influence the outcome of a ballot measure, makes contributions aggregating at least fifty thousand dollars during an election cycle to or at the request of a ballot measure committee; or

(c) a person, other than an individual, who, to influence the outcome of a ballot measure, makes independent expenditures aggregating two thousand five hundred dollars or more during an election cycle.”

SECTION 10. Section 8‑13‑1302 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 248 of 1991, is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1302. (A) A candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee must maintain and preserve an account of:

(1) the total amount of contributions accepted by the candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee;

(2) the name and address of each person making a contribution and the amount and date of receipt of each contribution;

(3) the total amount of expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee;

(4) the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made including the date, amount, purpose, and beneficiary of the expenditure;

(5) all receipted bills, canceled checks, or other proof of payment for each expenditure; and

(6) the occupation of each person making a contribution; provided however, that a written request for this information shall satisfy this subsection.

(B) The candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee must maintain and preserve all receipted bills and accounts required by this article for four years.”

SECTION 11. Section 8‑13‑1308 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding an appropriately lettered subsection to read:

“( ) During the twenty day period prior to an election, a candidate or committee must electronically report the name and address and amount accepted from each person who makes:

(1) a contribution of more than two hundred fifty dollars; or

(2) a contribution of less than two hundred fifty dollars that when combined with all other contributions accepted from the person during the period that have not been reported, exceed two hundred fifty dollars.

The electronic report required by this section must be made within forty‑eight hours after the applicable contribution is accepted, must include in the total the amount of any contribution from the person accepted during the period not previously reported, and must be filed and publicly accessible in the manner provided by Section 8‑13‑365.”

SECTION 12. Section 8‑13‑1309 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding an appropriately lettered subsection to read:

“( ) During the twenty day period prior to an election, a ballot measure committee must electronically report the name and address and amount accepted from each person who makes:

(1) a contribution of more than two hundred fifty dollars; or

(2) a contribution of less than two hundred fifty dollars that when combined with all other contributions accepted from the person during the period that have not been reported, exceed two hundred fifty dollars.

The electronic report required by this section must be made within forty‑eight hours after the applicable contribution is accepted, must include in the total the amount of any contribution accepted from the person during the period not previously reported, and must be filed and publicly accessible in the manner provided by Section 8‑13‑365.”

SECTION 13. Section 8‑13‑1314 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 76 of 2003, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1314. (A) Within an election cycle, no candidate or anyone acting on his behalf shall solicit or accept, and no person shall give or offer to give to a candidate or person acting on the candidate’s behalf:

(1) a contribution which exceeds:

(a) three thousand five hundred dollars in the case of a candidate for statewide office; or

(b) one thousand dollars in the case of a candidate for any other office;

(2) a cash contribution from an individual unless the cash contribution does not exceed twenty‑five dollars and is accompanied by a record of the amount of the contribution and the name and address of the contributor;

(3) a contribution from, whether directly or indirectly, a registered lobbyist if that lobbyist engages in lobbying the public office or public body for which the candidate is seeking election;

(4) contributions for two elective offices simultaneously, except as provided in Section 8‑13‑1318;

(5) contributions from a noncandidate committee directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by a candidate or public official or any other entity maintained by or affiliated with a candidate or public official. This item does not apply to legislative caucus committees or political parties. This item also does not prohibit a candidate or public official from making a contribution of their personal funds to a candidate for another office.

(B) The restrictions on contributions in subsections (A)(1) and (A)(2) do not apply to a candidate making a contribution to his own campaign.”

SECTION 14. Section 8‑13‑1318 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 248 of 1991, is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1318. (A) If a candidate has a debt from a campaign for an elective office, the candidate may accept contributions to retire the debt, even if the candidate accepts contributions for another elective office or the same elective office during a subsequent election cycle, as long as those contributions accepted to retire the debt are:

(1) within the contribution limits applicable to the last election in which the candidate sought the elective office for which the debt was incurred; and

(2) reported as provided in this article.

(B) Any contributions received pursuant to this section must be used for the purpose of retiring campaign debt only.”

SECTION 15. Section 8‑13‑1338(A) of the 1976 Code, as added by Section 248 of 1991, is amended to read by adding a new item at the end to read:

“(5) the head of any state agency or department who is selected by the Governor, General Assembly, or an appointed or elected board.”

SECTION 16. Section 8‑13‑1340 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 76 of 2003, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1340. (A) Except as provided in ~~subsections~~ subsection (B) ~~and (E)~~, a candidate or public official shall not make a contribution to another candidate or make an independent expenditure on behalf of another candidate or public official from the candidate’s or public official’s campaign account or through a committee, except legislative caucus committees, directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by the candidate or public official.

(B) This section does not prohibit a candidate from:

(1) making a contribution from the candidate’s own personal funds on behalf of the candidate’s candidacy or to another candidate for a different office; or

(2) providing the candidate’s surplus funds or material assets upon final disbursement to a legislative caucus committee or party committee in accordance with the procedures for the final disbursement of a candidate under Section 8‑13‑1370 of this article.

(C) Assets or funds which are the proceeds of a campaign contribution and which are held by or under the control of a public official or a candidate for public office on January 1, 1992, are considered to be funds held by a candidate and subject to subsection (A).

(D) A committee is considered to be directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by a candidate or public official if any of the following are applicable:

(1) the candidate or public official, or an agent of either, has signature authority on the committee’s checks;

(2) funds contributed or disbursed by the committee are authorized or approved by the candidate or public official;

(3) the candidate or public official is clearly identified on either the stationery or letterhead of the committee;

(4) the candidate or public official signs solicitation letters or other correspondence on behalf of the entity;

(5) the candidate, public official, or his campaign staff, office staff, or immediate family members, or any other agent of either, has the authority to approve, alter, or veto the committee’s solicitations, contributions, donations, disbursements, or contracts to make disbursements; or

(6) the committee pays for travel by the candidate or public official, his campaign staff or office staff, or any other agent of the candidate or public official, in excess of one hundred dollars per calendar year.

~~(E)~~ ~~The provisions of subsection (A) do not apply to a committee directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by a candidate or public official if the candidate or public official directly or indirectly establishes, finances, maintains, or controls only one committee in addition to any committee formed by the candidate or public official to solely promote his own candidacy and one legislative caucus committee.~~

~~(F)~~ ~~No committee operating under the provisions of Section 8‑13‑1340(E) may :~~

~~(1)~~ ~~solicit or accept a contribution from a registered lobbyist if that lobbyist engages in lobbying the public office or public body for which the candidate is seeking election; or~~

~~(2)~~ ~~transfer anything of value to any other committee except as a contribution under the limitations of Section 8‑13‑1314(A) or the dissolution provisions of Section 8‑13‑1370.~~”

SECTION 17. Section 8‑13‑1348(A) of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 248 of 1991, is amended to read:

“(A)(1) No candidate, committee, public official, or political party may use campaign funds to defray personal expenses which are unrelated to the campaign or the office if the candidate is an officeholder nor may these funds be converted to personal use. The prohibition of this subsection does not extend to the incidental personal use of campaign materials or equipment nor to an expenditure used to defray any ordinary expenses incurred in connection with an individual’s duties as a holder of elective office.

(2) Campaign funds may not be used to pay penalties and fines issued by the State Ethics Commission or the Joint Committee on Ethics pursuant to a finding of misconduct, or levied by a court of competent jurisdiction as a result of any criminal convictions.”

SECTION 18. Section 8‑13‑1510(A) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 40 of 2011, is further amended to read:

“(A) ~~Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter, a person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report or fails to file a required statement or report must be assessed a civil penalty as follows:~~

~~(1)~~ ~~a fine of one hundred dollars if the statement or report is not filed within five days after the established deadline provided by law in this chapter; and~~

~~(2)~~ ~~after notice has been given by certified or registered mail that a required statement or report has not been filed, a fine of ten dollars per calendar day for the first ten days after notice has been given, and one hundred dollars for each additional calendar day in which the required statement or report is not filed, not exceeding five thousand dollars.~~ Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter, a person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report or fails to file a required statement or report must be assessed a civil penalty as follows:

(1) a fine of one hundred dollars if the statement or report is not filed within five days after the established deadline provided by law in this chapter; and

(2) after notice has been given by certified or registered mail that a required statement or report has not been filed, a fine of ten dollars per calendar day for the first ten days after notice has been given, and one hundred dollars for each additional calendar day in which the required statement or report is not filed, not exceeding five thousand dollars.”

SECTION 19. Section 8‑13‑1520 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 76 of 2003, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1520. (A) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter or Section 8‑13‑1510, a person who wilfully violates any provision of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

(B) Except as otherwise specifically provided in Article 13, a person who wilfully violates any provision of ~~this~~ Article 13 is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five hundred percent of the amount of contributions or anything of value that should have been reported pursuant to the provisions of ~~this~~ Article 13 but not less than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

(C) ~~A violation of the provisions of this chapter does not necessarily subject a public official to the provisions of Section 8‑13‑560~~ For all violations not punishable pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1510, the commission, in its discretion, through a written public reprimand detailing the nature of the violations, may:

(1) impose a civil fine of between two hundred dollars and twenty‑five hundred dollars for each violation of Chapter 13, Title 8 or Chapter 17, Title 2;

(2) order sufficient remedial action of the violator to rectify the violation including, but not limited to, the repayment of funds;

(3) recommend to either the Senate or House of Representatives for members of the General Assembly or the Governor for all other public officials that the official be removed from office by the appropriate process; or

(4) a combination of any of the above.”

SECTION 20. A. Title 23 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“CHAPTER 2

Public Integrity Unit

Section 23‑2‑10. (A) In order to insure ethical conduct in public service of this State and to promote integrity in government institutions, a partnership of agencies and other persons employed in investigating, auditing, and inspecting serious misconduct by government officials in this State is hereby established to be known as the ‘South Carolina Public Integrity Unit’ and this chapter must be interpreted to achieve the purposes of the Public Integrity Unit.

(B) Nothing in this chapter may be construed to preclude agencies or other entities within this State from performing existing functions, investigation authority, or adjudication as otherwise prescribed by law.

(C) It is the intent of the General Assembly in creating this partnership to maximize existing resources, expertise, and available information to coordinate investigations of alleged government corruption, unethical conduct, and violations of the public trust, all of which are imperative to preserving the faith of the public in its institutions. Each partner agency or entity may release information for investigative purposes to the other named partners as provided in this chapter, but the agency that originates that document remains responsible for release authority.

(D) As contained in this chapter:

(1) ‘Appropriate supervisory office’ means the South Carolina Ethics Commission for all persons required to file reports under Chapter 13, Title 8, or the Joint Committee on Ethics as appropriate.

(2) ‘Partner’ means each of the six named members of the Public Integrity Unit, and their respective agencies, namely the Attorney General, Chief of the State Law Enforcement Division, Director of the Department of Revenue, the Executive Director of the South Carolina Ethics Commission, the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Ethics, and the Inspector General.

(3) ‘Unit’ means the Public Integrity Unit as described in this chapter.

Section 23‑2‑20. (A) There is hereby created a ‘South Carolina Public Integrity Unit’ consisting of the following six partner members:

(1) the Attorney General;

(2) the Chief of the State Law Enforcement Division;

(3) the Director of the Department of Revenue;

(4) the Executive Director of the South Carolina Ethics Commission

(5) the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Ethics; and

(6) the Inspector General.

(B) The members provided for in subsection (A) are ex officio members. The members may provide employees or staff from their respective agencies for the unit as necessary. Employees of other government agencies may be included in particular investigations.

(C) Members of the unit shall serve without compensation. A unit member who terminates his office or employment which qualified him as a member of the unit immediately shall cease to be a member of the unit.

Section 23‑2‑30. The Attorney General shall provide administrative support for the unit. The unit shall not have employees, but the partnering entities shall assign members, investigators, auditors, or support staff from within their respective agencies or staff.

Section 23‑2‑40. Nothing in this chapter establishes the unit as a separate entity to receive complaints from the general public. The unit shall receive allegations of criminal conduct from partner entities, an appropriate supervisory office, or any other state agency authorized to receive complaints against public employees, officers, or officials.

Section 23‑2‑50. Upon receipt of an allegation from a partner, the members shall determine whether it is appropriate for investigation by the unit or if the matter should be returned to the forwarding authority for action. The unit is an investigative partnership and not an adjudicating entity. Completed investigations that substantiate serious criminal conduct may be provided directly to the Attorney General or a solicitor. Substantiated investigations of a civil nature or deemed to be procedural error must be sent to the appropriate supervisory office. Unsubstantiated investigations must be returned to the entity that forwarded the investigation to the unit.

Section 23‑2‑60. The unit may accept investigations of criminal conduct by referral only. The referring entity shall identify the scope of the investigation. Completed investigations that substantiate serious criminal conduct may be provided directly to the Attorney General or a solicitor. Substantiated investigations not undertaken by the Attorney General or a solicitor, substantiated investigations deemed procedural errors, or unsubstantiated investigations must be returned to the appropriate referring entity. Referral to the unit may be made by:

(1) the South Carolina Ethics Commission;

(2) the Joint Committee on Ethics;

(3) the Supreme Court as allowed within its rules or by law; or

(4) any of the other partners identified in Section 23‑2‑20.

Section 23‑2‑70. The unit is a collaborative investigating entity that may include privileged communications, protected information, and protected identities under law. Freedom of Information Act requests must be made directly to the partner agency that generates such documents. Partnering entities that use information from another partner within the unit shall follow the release protocol of the originating partner. The unit shall not release any information related to its investigation or its results until such time as the matter is substantiated by the originating partner or undertaken as a criminal prosecution by the Attorney General or a solicitor.

Section 23‑2‑80. The unit may make recommendations to the General Assembly or to the Governor regarding the carrying out of the purposes, objectives, and intentions of this chapter or other acts relating to enforcement of ethics or public integrity issues. The partners shall report to the General Assembly each year of trends of cases, recommendations of reforms, and fiscal issues of the unit each year through the administrative support of the Attorney General.

Section 23‑2‑90. Partner members of the Public Integrity Unit, to the extent that they are authorized in their respective agencies, are authorized to:

(1) accept contributions, funds, or grants from foundations, state agencies, or the federal government, for the purpose of carrying out the programs and objectives of this chapter, provided such funds are not related to any particular case and are part of an established program for the improvement of investigation capability, and not from a public official or an entity within the control or influence of that public official;

(2) consult and cooperate with counties, municipalities, agencies, or official bodies of this State or of other states, other governmental agencies, and with colleges and universities, including technical colleges, and other institutions, concerning investigations of violations of the laws of this State;

(3) publish or cause to be published manuals, information bulletins, newsletters, and other materials to achieve the objectives of this chapter; and

(4) promulgate regulations as necessary for the administration of this chapter, including the issuance of administrative procedures for coordination among the partner entities.

Section 23‑2‑100. An oral or written report, document, statement, or other communication that is written, made, or delivered concerning the requirements or administration of this chapter or regulations promulgated under it must not be the subject of or basis for an action at law or in equity for slander or libel in any court of the State if the communication is between:

(1) a law enforcement agency, its agents, employees, or representatives; and

(2) the unit, its agents, employees, or representatives.

Section 23‑2‑110. If the unit determines that assistance is needed in conducting an investigation, the unit shall request the assistance of appropriate agencies.

B. Section 12‑54‑240 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 116 of 2007, is further amended by adding a new subsection at the end to be appropriately lettered to read:

( ) The Department of Revenue also is authorized to disclose information for purposes of a Public Integrity Unit investigation pursuant to Chapter 2, Title 23.”

SECTION 21. The repeal or amendment by this act of any law, whether temporary or permanent or civil or criminal, does not affect pending actions, rights, duties, or liabilities founded thereon, or alter, discharge, release or extinguish any penalty, forfeiture, or liability incurred under the repealed or amended law, unless the repealed or amended provision shall so expressly provide. After the effective date of this act, all laws repealed or amended by this act must be taken and treated as remaining in full force and effect for the purpose of sustaining any pending or vested right, civil action, special proceeding, criminal prosecution, or appeal existing as of the effective date of this act, and for the enforcement of rights, duties, penalties, forfeitures, and liabilities as they stood under the repealed or amended laws.

SECTION 22. This act takes effect July 1, 2014; provided, that the programs, functions, and requirements of the provisions in Chapter 2, Title 23 of the 1976 Code as contained in SECTION 20 must be terminated ten years after the effective date of the act unless otherwise authorized by the General Assembly. Upon termination, the Public Integrity Unit shall be dissolved and must wind up any investigations accepted pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 2, Title 23 of the 1976 Code as contained in SECTION 20 within six months of termination.

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