DISCLAIMER

The South Carolina Legislative Council is offering access to the unannotated South Carolina Code of Laws on the Internet as a service to the public. The unannotated South Carolina Code on the General Assembly's website is now current through the 2013 session. The unannotated South Carolina Code, consisting only of Code text, numbering, and history may be copied from this website at the reader's expense and effort without need for permission.

The Legislative Council is unable to assist users of this service with legal questions. Also, legislative staff cannot respond to requests for legal advice or the application of the law to specific facts. Therefore, to understand and protect your legal rights, you should consult your own private lawyer regarding all legal questions.

While every effort was made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the unannotated South Carolina Code available on the South Carolina General Assembly's website, the unannotated South Carolina Code is not official, and the state agencies preparing this website and the General Assembly are not responsible for any errors or omissions which may occur in these files. Only the current published volumes of the South Carolina Code of Laws Annotated and any pertinent acts and joint resolutions contain the official version.

Please note that the Legislative Council is not able to respond to individual inquiries regarding research or the features, format, or use of this website. However, you may notify the Legislative Services Agency at LSA@scstatehouse.gov regarding any apparent errors or omissions in content of Code sections on this website, in which case LSA will relay the information to appropriate staff members of the South Carolina Legislative Council for investigation.

CHAPTER 17.

 LOBBYISTS AND LOBBYING

**SECTION 2‑17‑5.** Transfer of duties and powers from Secretary of State to State Ethics Commission.

 On July 1, 1993, the duties and powers given to the Secretary of State in this chapter must be transferred to the State Ethics Commission. When this transfer takes place, the Code Commissioner is directed to change all references in this chapter from the Secretary of State to the State Ethics Commission.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.

**SECTION 2‑17‑10.** Definitions.

 As used in this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

 (1)(a) "Anything of value" or "thing of value" means:

 (i) a pecuniary item, including money, a bank bill, or a bank note;

 (ii) a promissory note, bill of exchange, an order, a draft, warrant, check, or bond given for the payment of money;

 (iii) a contract, agreement, promise, or other obligation for an advance, a conveyance, forgiveness of indebtedness, deposit, distribution, loan, payment, gift, pledge, or transfer of money;

 (iv) a stock, bond, note, or other investment interest in an entity;

 (v) a receipt given for the payment of money or other property;

 (vi) a chose‑in‑action;

 (vii) a gift, tangible good, chattel, or an interest in a gift, tangible good, or chattel;

 (viii) a loan or forgiveness of indebtedness;

 (ix) a work of art, an antique, or a collectible;

 (x) an automobile or other means of personal transportation;

 (xi) real property or an interest in real property, including title to realty, a fee simple or partial interest in realty including present, future, contingent, or vested interests in realty, a leasehold interest, or other beneficial interest in realty;

 (xii) an honorarium or compensation for services;

 (xiii) a promise or offer of employment;

 (xiv) any other item that is of pecuniary or compensatory worth to a person.

 (b) "Anything of value" or "thing of value" does not mean:

 (i) printed informational or promotional material, not to exceed ten dollars in monetary value;

 (ii) items of nominal value, not to exceed ten dollars, containing or displaying promotional material;

 (iii) a personalized plaque or trophy with a value that does not exceed one hundred fifty dollars;

 (iv) educational material of a nominal value directly related to the public official's, public member's, or public employee's official responsibilities;

 (v) an honorary degree bestowed upon a public official, public member, or public employee from a public or private university or college;

 (vi) promotional or marketing items offered to the general public on the same terms and conditions without regard to status as a public official or public employee; or

 (vii) a campaign contribution properly received and reported under the provisions of Chapter 13 of Title 8.

 (2) "Covered agency actions" means the proposal, drafting, development, consideration, amendment, withdrawal, or promulgation of a regulation under Article 1, Chapter 23 of Title 1 of the 1976 Code.

 (3) "Covered gubernatorial actions" means:

 (a) gubernatorial approval or veto of legislation;

 (b) gubernatorial consideration or issuance of any executive order;

 (c) gubernatorial consideration or making of any appointment; or

 (d) gubernatorial consideration of or the decision to award any grant derived from federal or other funds or from any source.

 (4)(a) "Economic interest" means an interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a public official or public employee may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.

 (b) This definition does not prohibit a public official or public employee from participating in, voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence an official decision if the only economic interest or reasonably foreseeable benefit that may accrue to the public official or public employee is incidental to the public official's or public employee's position or which accrues to the public official or public employee as a member of a profession, occupation, or large class to no greater extent than the economic interest or potential benefit could reasonably be foreseen to accrue to all other members of the profession, occupation, or large class.

 (5) "Expenditure" means a purchase, payment, loan, forgiveness of a loan, an advance, in‑kind contribution or expenditure, a deposit, transfer of funds, gift of money or anything of value for any purpose, and a payment to a lobbyist for compensation, for expenses, or lobbying, including the direct payment of expenses incurred at the request or suggestion of a lobbyist.

 (6) "Family member" means an individual who is:

 (a) the spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, mother‑in‑law, father‑in‑law, son‑in‑law, daughter‑in‑law, grandparent, or grandchild; or

 (b) a member of the individual's immediate family.

 (7) "Immediate family" means:

 (a) a child residing in a public official's or public employee's household;

 (b) a spouse of a public official or public employee; or

 (c) an individual claimed by the public official or public employee or the public official's or public employee's spouse as a dependent for income tax purposes.

 (8) "Individual" means one human being.

 (9) "Income" means the receipt or promise of any consideration, whether or not legally enforceable, including attorney's fees attributable to lobbying.

 (10) "Legislation" means:

 (a) bills, resolutions, amendments, reports, legislative acts, vetoes, nominations, rules, and regulations pending or proposed in either the House or Senate;

 (b) any other matter which may be the subject of action by either house; or

 (c) the appointment of committees of conference and free conference by the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the President of the Senate.

 (11) "Legislative caucus" means:

 (a) a committee of either house of the General Assembly controlled by the caucus of a political party or a caucus based upon racial or ethnic affinity, or gender;

 (b) a party or group of either house of the General Assembly based upon racial or ethnic affinity, or gender. However, each house may establish only one committee for racial, ethnic, or gender‑based affinity;

 (c) "legislative caucus" does not include a legislative special interest caucus as defined in Section 2‑17‑10(21).

 (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.

 "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. "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, 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 or in advising and rendering opinions to clients as to the construction and effect of proposed or pending legislation;

 (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, 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.

 (14) "Lobbyist's principal" means the person on whose behalf and for whose benefit the lobbyist engages in lobbying and who directly employs, appoints, or retains a lobbyist to engage in lobbying. However, a lobbyist's principal does not include a person who belongs to an association or organization that employs a lobbyist, nor an employee, officer, or shareholder of a person who employs a lobbyist. If a membership association or organization is a lobbyist's principal, the association or organization must register and report under the provisions of this chapter. A person is considered a lobbyist's principal only as to the public office or public body to which he has authorized, pursuant to this chapter, a lobbyist to engage in lobbying.

 (15) "Person" means an individual, a partnership, committee, an association, a corporation, labor organization, or any other organization or group of persons.

 (16) "Public body" means the General Assembly, the Executive Office of the Governor, any department of the State, or any state board, commission, agency, or authority, including committees of any such body, by whatever name known.

 (17) "Public employee" means any person employed by the State.

 (18) "Public official" means any elected or appointed official of the State, including candidates for any such state office. However, "public official" does not mean a member of the judiciary.

 (19) "Voluntary membership organization" means an organization composed of persons who are members thereof on a voluntary basis and who, as a condition of membership, are required to make regular payments to the organization.

 (20) "Official capacity" means activities which:

 (a) arise because of the position held by the public official or public employee;

 (b) involve matters which fall within the official responsibility of the agency, the public official, or the public employee; and

 (c) are services the agency would normally provide and for which the public official or public employee would be subject to expense reimbursement by the agency with which the public official or public employee is associated.

 (21) "Legislative special interest caucus" means two or more legislators who seek to be affiliated based upon a special interest. Under no circumstances may a legislative special interest caucus engage in any activity that would influence the outcome of an election or ballot measure. Each legislative special interest caucus must register with the Clerk's Office of the Senate or House of Representatives in a manner mandated by the Clerk's Office. However, each legislative special interest caucus must provide, and the Clerk's Office must maintain a record of:

 (a) the name and purpose of the caucus;

 (b) the names of all caucus members; and

 (c) the date of creation, and dissolution, if applicable.

 The Clerk's Office must maintain these records for at least four years following the dissolution of the caucus. A legislative special interest caucus may include, but is not limited to, a representation of sportsmen and women desiring to enhance and protect hunting, fishing, and shooting sports.

HISTORY: 1962 Code Section 30‑151; 1974 (58) 2622; 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Sections 1, 2; 2006 Act No. 344, Sections 1, 2, eff May 31, 2006.

**SECTION 2‑17‑15.** Persons prohibited from serving as lobbyist; application of section.

 (A) The Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, a member of the General Assembly, a director or deputy director of a state department appointed by the Governor and a member of the immediate family of any of these public officials may not serve as a lobbyist during the time the official holds office and for one year after such public service ends.

 (B) The provisions of this section apply to the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or any other statewide constitutional officer who is elected after December 31, 1993, or any member of the General Assembly who is elected after December 31, 1991, and any director or deputy director of a state department appointed after June 30, 1993.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1993 Act No. 181, Section 27.

**SECTION 2‑17‑17.** Outside lobbyists' disclosure statements; copies to board members, commissioners, etc.

 A department director, constitutional officer, agency director, state board or commission, or governing body of any other entity of state government whose department, office, agency, board, commission, or entity employs or contracts with a lobbyist, as defined in Section 2‑17‑10, who is not a full‑time employee of the state, from funds appropriated in the annual general appropriations act, must retain and use a portion of these funds to provide in a timely fashion copies of the disclosure statements and reports filed by the lobbyist with the Secretary of State or State Ethics Commission by mail to the home address of each member of the board, commission, or governing body, authority or official of such department, agency, or entity.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 164, Part II, Section 54.

**SECTION 2‑17‑20.** Registration of lobbyists; notice of termination of lobbying activities; supplemental registration statements; list of lobbyists; recording keeping requirements; reregistration requirements.

 (A) Any person who acts as a lobbyist must, within fifteen days of being employed, appointed, or retained as a lobbyist, register with the State Ethics Commission as provided in this section. Each person registering must pay a fee of one hundred dollars and present to the State Ethics Commission a communication reflecting the authority of the registrant to represent the person by whom he is employed, appointed, or retained. If a partnership, committee, association, corporation, labor organization, or any other organization or group of persons registers as a lobbyist, it must identify each person who will act as a lobbyist on its behalf during the covered period. There is no registration fee for a lobbyist who is a full‑ time employee of a state agency and limits his lobbying to efforts on behalf of that particular state agency.

 (B) The registration must be in a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission and be limited to and contain:

 (1) the lobbyist's full name and address, telephone number, occupation, name of employer, principal place of business, and position held in that business by the lobbyist;

 (2) an identification of the public office or public body which the lobbyist will engage in lobbying and the subject matter in which the lobbyist will engage in lobbying, including the name of legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions, if known; and

 (3) certification by the lobbyist that the information contained on the registration statement is true and correct.

 (4) If a lobbyist fails to identify the public office or public body for which he is authorized to engage in lobbying, as required by item (2) of this subsection, then the lobbyist's principal for whom the lobbyist is authorized to engage in lobbying is deemed a lobbyist's principal as to all public offices or public bodies of the State.

 (C) Each lobbyist who ceases to engage in lobbying requiring him to register pursuant to the provisions of this section shall file a written statement with the State Ethics Commission acknowledging the termination of lobbying. The written statement of termination is effective immediately, except that the provisions of Sections 2‑17‑80(A)(5), 2‑17‑80(B)(5), 2‑17‑110(C), and 2‑17‑110(F) continue in force and effect for the remainder of the calendar year in which the lobbyist was registered, regardless of the date of the termination statement filed with the State Ethics Commission. Each lobbyist who files a written statement of termination pursuant to the provisions of this section must file reports required by this chapter for any reporting period during which the lobbyist was registered pursuant to the provisions of this section.

 (D) A lobbyist must file a supplemental registration statement indicating any substantial change in the information contained in the prior registration statement within fifteen days after the date of the change.

 (E) The State Ethics Commission annually must furnish to each chairman of standing and special committees of the General Assembly, each member of the General Assembly, and each statewide constitutional officer a list of all lobbyists registered with that office. The State Ethics Commission must furnish monthly updates to the same persons. These lists must be available to state agency heads upon request.

 (F) Each lobbyist must maintain for not less than four years records which must be available to the State Ethics Commission for inspection and which must contain:

 (1) the identification of each person from whom income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying is paid or promised and the amount of such income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying paid or promised; and

 (2) the total expenditures of the lobbyist for lobbying.

 (G) A lobbyist must reregister annually with the State Ethics Commission by January fifth of each year.

 (H) The State Ethics Commission shall not allow a lobbyist to register, reregister, or continue to be registered pursuant to this section until the lobbyist complies with the reporting requirements pursuant to Section 2‑17‑30, and pays all late filing penalties in accordance with Section 2‑17‑50 and all complaint fines in accordance with Section 8‑13‑320(10)(1).

HISTORY: 1962 Code Section 30‑152; 1952 Code Section 30‑151; 1942 Code Section 2070‑1; 1935 (39) 3; 1953 (48) 361; 1974 (58) 2622; 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Sections 3, 4; 2003 Act No. 76, Sections 1, 2; 2011 Act No. 40, Section 1, eff June 7, 2011.

**SECTION 2‑17‑25.** Registration of lobbyist's principal; notice of termination of lobbying authority; supplemental registration statements; list of lobbyist's principal; recording keeping requirements; reregistration requirements.

 (A) Any lobbyist's principal must, within fifteen days of employing, appointing, or retaining a lobbyist, register with the State Ethics Commission as provided in this section. Each person registering must pay a fee of one hundred dollars. If a partnership, committee, an association, a corporation, labor organization, or any other organization or group of persons registers as a lobbyist's principal, it must identify each person who will act as a lobbyist on its behalf during the covered period. If the State is a lobbyist's principal, the State is exempt from paying a registration fee and filing a lobbyist's principal registration statement.

 (B) The registration must be in a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission and be limited to and include:

 (1) the full name, address, and telephone number of the lobbyist's principal. If the lobbyist's principal is an individual, the lobbyist's principal also shall include his occupation, name of employer, principal place of business, and position of authority held in that business by the lobbyist's principal;

 (2) an identification of each person the lobbyist's principal expects to employ, appoint, or retain as a lobbyist;

 (3) an identification of the public office or public body which the lobbyist's principal will authorize lobbying and the subject matter in which the lobbyist's principal will authorize lobbying, including the name of legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions, if known; and

 (4) certification by the lobbyist's principal that the information contained on the registration statement is true and correct.

 (5) If a lobbyist's principal fails to identify the public office or public body for which he has authorized lobbying as required by item (3) of this subsection, then the lobbyist's principal is deemed a lobbyist's principal as to all public offices or public bodies of the State.

 A lobbyist's principal may comply with the requirements of items (1), (2), and (3) above by attaching a copy of the information submitted by any lobbyist employed, retained, or appointed by the lobbyist's principal if the information requested from the lobbyist's principal is the same as the information supplied by the lobbyist pursuant to Section 2‑17‑20.

 (C) Each lobbyist's principal who ceases to authorize lobbying requiring him to register pursuant to this section must file a written statement with the State Ethics Commission acknowledging the termination of lobbying. The written statement of termination is effective immediately, except that the provisions of Sections 2‑17‑80(A)(5), 2‑17‑80(B)(5), 2‑17‑110(C), and 2‑17‑110(F) continue in force and effect for the remainder of the calendar year in which the lobbyist's principal was registered, regardless of the date of the termination statement filed with the State Ethics Commission. Each lobbyist's principal who files a written statement of termination pursuant to this section shall file reports required by this chapter for any reporting period during which the lobbyist's principal was registered pursuant to this section.

 (D) A lobbyist's principal must file a supplemental registration statement indicating any substantial change in the information contained in the prior registration statement within fifteen days after the date of the change.

 (E) The State Ethics Commission annually must furnish to each chairman of standing and special committees of the General Assembly, each member of the General Assembly, and each statewide constitutional officer a list of every lobbyist's principal registered with that office. The State Ethics Commission must furnish monthly updates to the same persons. These lists must be available to state agency heads upon request.

 (F) Each lobbyist's principal must maintain for not less than four years records which must be available to the State Ethics Commission for inspection and which must contain:

 (1) the identification of each person to whom income attributable to lobbying is paid or promised and the amount of such income attributable to lobbying paid or promised;

 (2) the total expenditures of the lobbyist's principal for lobbying; and

 (3) in the case of a voluntary membership organization, dues, fees, or other amounts payable to the organization during any calendar year from a member need be recorded only if the contribution to the organization is more than five hundred dollars and more than twenty percent of the total contributions of the organization during that calendar year.

 (G) A lobbyist's principal must reregister annually with the State Ethics Commission by January fifth of each year.

 (H) The State Ethics Commission shall not allow a lobbyist's principal to register, reregister, or continue to be registered pursuant to this section until the lobbyist's principal complies with the reporting requirements pursuant to Section 2‑17‑35, and pays all late filing penalties in accordance with Section 2‑17‑50 and all complaint fines in accordance with Section 8‑13‑320(10)(1).

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Sections 5, 6; 2003 Act No. 76, Sections 3, 4; 2011 Act No. 40, Section 2, eff June 7, 2011.

**SECTION 2‑17‑30.** Lobbyist's reporting of lobbying activities.

 (A) Each lobbyist, no later than June thirtieth and January thirty‑first of each year, must file a report with the State Ethics Commission covering that lobbyist's lobbying during that filing period. The filing periods are from January first to May thirty‑first for the June thirtieth report, and are from June first to December thirty‑first for the January thirty‑first report. Any lobbying activity not reflected on the June thirtieth report and not reported on a statement of termination pursuant to Section 2‑17‑20(C) must be reported no later than January thirty‑first of the succeeding year. Each report must be in a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission and be limited to and contain:

 (1) the full name, address, and telephone number of the reporting lobbyist;

 (2) an identification of each person on whose behalf the reporting lobbyist engaged in lobbying during the covered period;

 (3) the official name, number, or description, designated by the House or Senate or by an agency, of legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions for which the reporting lobbyist engaged in lobbying during the covered period;

 (4) the identification of each person from whom income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying is paid or promised and the amount of the income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying paid or promised;

 (5)(a) a complete and itemized account of the totals of all amounts expended by a lobbyist in the performance of his lobbying during the covered period. The totals must be segregated by the amounts expended for office expenses, rent, utilities, supplies, and compensation of support personnel attributable to lobbying covered under the provisions of this chapter;

 (b) any expenditure directly or indirectly related to lobbying if expended while engaged in the general course of lobbying and if reimbursed by the lobbyist's principal;

 (6) the name of each member of the judiciary on whose behalf a lobbyist initiated or made expenditures and a complete and itemized account of the amount expended by the lobbyist for each member of the judiciary;

 (7) a statement detailing any direct business association of a lobbyist with any current member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees. For the purposes of this item, direct business association does not include:

 (a) ownership interests held by a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal and a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees in the same corporation or partnership unless the interest of each exceeds five percent of the total shares outstanding or partnership interests in such entity;

 (b) an interest held by a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees in a partnership or corporation represented by a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal if the interest is less than five percent of the total shares outstanding or partnership interests in such entity; or

 (c) any commercial transaction between a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal and a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees in which the fair market value of the goods transferred or services rendered is paid.

 (B) Where total amounts are required to be reported, totals must be reported both for the period covered and for the entire calendar year to date.

HISTORY: 1962 Code Section 30‑153; 1952 Code Section 30‑153; 1942 Code Section 2070‑1; 1935 (39) 3; 1974 (58) 2622; 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Section 7; 2003 Act No. 76, Section 5.

**SECTION 2‑17‑35.** Lobbyist's principal's reporting of lobbying expenditures.

 (A) Except as otherwise provided by Section 2‑17‑90(E), each lobbyist's principal, no later than June thirtieth and January thirty‑first of each year, must file a report with the State Ethics Commission covering that lobbyist's principal's expenditures attributable to lobbying during that filing period. The filing periods are from January first to May thirty‑first for the June thirtieth report, and are from June first to December thirty‑first for the January thirty‑first report. Any lobbying activity not reflected on the June thirtieth report and not reported on a statement of termination pursuant to Section 2‑17‑25(C) must be reported no later than January thirty‑first of the succeeding year. Each report must be in a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission and be limited to and contain:

 (1) the full name, address, and telephone number of the reporting lobbyist's principal;

 (2) an identification of each person who acted as a lobbyist on behalf of the reporting lobbyist's principal during the covered period;

 (3) the official name, number, or description, designated by the House or Senate or by an agency, of legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions for which its lobbyist engaged in lobbying during the covered period;

 (4) the identification of each person to whom income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying is paid or promised and the amount of the income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying paid or promised;

 (5)(a) a complete and itemized account of all amounts expended by a lobbyist's principal for lobbying during the covered period. The totals must be segregated by the amounts expended for office expenses, rent, utilities, supplies, and compensation of support personnel attributable to lobbying covered under the provisions of this chapter;

 (b) any expenditure directly or indirectly related to lobbying if expended while a lobbyist's principal or his lobbyist is engaged in the general course of lobbying;

 (c) the name of each public official on whose behalf a lobbyist's principal initiated or made expenditures pursuant to Section 2‑17‑90 and a complete and itemized account of the amount expended by the lobbyist's principal for each public official;

 (d) any reimbursements of or expenditures for actual expenses as allowed in Section 2‑17‑100;

 (6) the name of each member of the judiciary on whose behalf a lobbyist's principal initiated or made expenditures and a complete and itemized account of the amount expended by the lobbyist's principal for each member of the judiciary;

 (7) a statement detailing any direct business association of a lobbyist's principal with any current member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees. For the purposes of this item, direct business association does not include:

 (a) ownership interests held by a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal and a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees in the same corporation or partnership unless the interest of each exceeds five percent of the total shares outstanding or partnership interests in the entity;

 (b) an interest held by a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees in a partnership or corporation represented by a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal if the interest is less than five percent of the total shares outstanding or partnership interests in such entity; or

 (c) any commercial transaction between a lobbyist or lobbyist's principal and a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees in which the fair market value of the goods transferred or services rendered is paid;

 (8) any contribution, as defined by Section 8‑13‑1300(7), made by the lobbyist's principal to any candidate or public official, including an itemization of:

 (a) the name and address of the public official or candidate to whom the contribution was made;

 (b) the amount of the contribution;

 (c) the date of the contribution;

 (9) in the case of a voluntary membership organization, dues, fees, or other amounts payable to the organization during any calendar year from a member need be recorded only if the contribution to the organization is more than five hundred dollars and more than twenty percent of the total contributions of the organization during that calendar year.

 (B) A lobbyist's principal may comply with the requirements of subsection (A) by attaching a copy of the information submitted by any lobbyists employed, retained, or appointed by the lobbyist's principal if the information requested from the lobbyist's principal is the same as the information supplied by the lobbyist pursuant to Section 2‑17‑30(A).

 (C) Where total amounts are required to be reported, totals must be reported both for the period covered and for the entire calendar year to date.

 (D) If the State is a lobbyist's principal, the State is exempt from filing a report except as provided in Section 2‑17‑40(A).

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Section 8; 2003 Act No. 76, Section 6.

**SECTION 2‑17‑40.** Report of lobbying activities of state agency or department.

 (A) Each state agency or department must, no later than June thirtieth and January thirty‑first of each year, file a report with the State Ethics Commission covering that agency's lobbying during that filing period. The filing periods are from January first to May thirty‑first for the June thirtieth report, and are from June first to December thirty‑first for the January thirty‑first report. Any lobbying activity not reflected on the June thirtieth report and not reported on a statement of termination pursuant to Section 2‑17‑25(C) must be reported no later than January thirty‑first of the succeeding year. Each report must be in a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission and be limited to and contain:

 (1) an identification of each public official, public employee, or other person who engaged in lobbying for that agency during the covered period;

 (2) legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions the persons identified in item (1) engaged in lobbying during the covered period;

 (3) the identification of each person to whom income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying is paid or promised and the amount of the income attributable to the lobbyist's lobbying paid or promised;

 (4)(a) a complete and itemized account of all expenditures made or incurred by those persons identified in item (1) in the performance of their lobbying during the covered period. The totals must be segregated by the amounts expended for office expenses, rent, utilities, supplies, and compensation of support personnel attributable to lobbying covered under the provisions of this chapter;

 (b) the name of each public official on whose behalf the state agency or department initiated or made expenditures pursuant to Section 2‑17‑90 and a complete and itemized account of the amount expended by the state agency or department for each public official;

 (c) any reimbursements of or expenditures for actual expenses as allowed in Section 2‑17‑100.

 (B) Where total amounts are required to be reported, totals must be reported for the entire calendar year to date. The reports required by this section are not required from any agency whose only lobbying is appearing before any committee of the General Assembly at the request of that committee or at the request of any member or members of that committee.

HISTORY: 1962 Code Section 30‑154; 1952 Code Section 30‑155; 1942 Code Section 2070‑1; 1935 (39) 3; 1972 (57) 2558; 1974 (58) 2622; 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 2003 Act No. 76, Section 7.

**SECTION 2‑17‑45.** Reports required of certain entities which rank or rate actions, votes or failures to act or vote of certain public officials.

 An entity which ranks or rates the actions, vote, or failure to act or vote of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or a member or committee of the General Assembly as to any action, vote, or failure to act or vote by these public officials and which disseminates its rankings or ratings to the general public must no later than April first of each year file a report with the State Ethics Commission. The provisions of this section do not apply to an entity whose primary business is the publication of a newspaper or other periodical or the production of electronic media programming or to a private membership organization which disseminates its rankings or ratings only to its own membership. The entity shall file the report on a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission which must contain the full name, address, and telephone number of:

 (1) the entity;

 (2) each officer and director of the entity;

 (3) each member of the entity who is a member of the General Assembly; and

 (4) each member of the entity who is a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.

**SECTION 2‑17‑50.** State Ethics Commission to enforce filing requirements of chapter and to assess civil or criminal penalties for failure to file; filing of required reports and payment of fine constitutes compliance; payment of fine without filing not to excuse or exempt person from filing requirements.

 (A) The State Ethics Commission shall:

 (1) require a person to submit information pursuant to the requirements of this chapter;

 (2) in addition to any other penalty in this chapter, require a person who files a late statement or fails to file a required statement to be assessed a civil penalty as follows:

 (a) a fine of one hundred dollars if not filed within ten days after the established deadline provided in this chapter; and

 (b) after notice has been given by certified or registered mail that a required statement 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.

 (B) After the maximum civil penalty has been levied and the requirement statement or report has not been filed, the person is:

 (1) for a first offense, guilty of a misdemeanor triable in magistrates court and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five hundred dollars or imprisoned not more than thirty days;

 (2) for a second offense, guilty of a misdemeanor triable in magistrates court and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than two thousand five hundred dollars nor more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned not less than a mandatory minimum of thirty days;

 (3) for a third or subsequent offense, guilty of a misdemeanor and must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

 (C) Filing of the required report and payment of the fine within twenty days of notice by the State Ethics Commission that a required statement has not been filed constitutes compliance with this chapter.

 (D) Payment of the fine without filing the required report does not in any way excuse or exempt a person required to file from the filing requirements of this chapter.

HISTORY: 1962 Code Section 30‑155; 1952 Code Section 30‑156; 1942 Code Section 2070‑1; 1935 (39) 3; 1974 (58) 2622; 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 2011 Act No. 40, Section 3, eff June 7, 2011.

**SECTION 2‑17‑60.** Duties of State Ethics Commission.

 The State Ethics Commission has the following duties:

 (1) to develop forms for the filing of notices of registration, representation, complaints, and reports required by this chapter and to furnish the forms to persons upon request;

 (2) to issue identification cards to each lobbyist before the lobbyist can engage in lobbying and prior to January tenth of each succeeding year;

 (3) to develop a filing, coding, and cross‑indexing system consonant with the purpose of this chapter;

 (4) to make the notices of registration and the reports filed with the State Ethics Commission available for public inspection and copying as soon as practicable after receipt of them and to permit copying of any report or statement by hand or by duplicating machine, as requested by any person, at the expense of the person;

 (5) to preserve the originals or copies of notices and reports for a period of four years from date of receipt;

 (6) to have information, compiled and summarized, made available for public inspection and copying within thirty days after the close of each filing period.

HISTORY: 1962 Code Section 30‑156; 1952 Code Section 30‑157; 1942 Code Section 2070‑1; 1935 (39) 3; 1974 (58) 2622; 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.

**SECTION 2‑17‑65.** Review of reports for compliance; audits of lobbyists and principals; procedure upon failure to file required information after notice.

 (A) The State Ethics Commission shall conduct periodic reviews of reports filed with the State Ethics Commission so as to ascertain whether any lobbyist or lobbyist's principal has failed to comply fully and accurately with the disclosure requirements of this chapter and promptly notify the person to file notices and reports as are necessary to satisfy the requirements of this chapter or regulations prescribed by the State Ethics Commission under this chapter.

 (B) The State Ethics Commission, upon a failure by any lobbyist or lobbyist's principal to comply fully and accurately with the disclosure requirements of this chapter, may conduct audits of the records of the lobbyist or the lobbyist's principal to verify the accuracy of the information provided by the lobbyist or the lobbyist's principal according to the requirements of this chapter. However, the State Ethics Commission shall limit his audit of those records of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal to matters within the scope of lobbying.

 (C) If, after notification by the State Ethics Commission that a required statement has not been filed, the person fails to file the necessary notices and reports, the State Ethics Commission shall, upon a finding of probable cause, file a complaint against the person in accordance with the provisions of Section 8‑13‑320(9) and (10).

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Section 9.

**SECTION 2‑17‑80.** Acts prohibited of lobbyists; acts prohibited of public officials and employees; exceptions.

 (A) A lobbyist or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist shall not offer, solicit, facilitate, or provide to or on behalf of any member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees any of the following:

 (1) lodging;

 (2) transportation;

 (3) entertainment;

 (4) food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value;

 (5) contributions, as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(7).

 (B) A member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees shall not solicit or receive from a lobbyist or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist any of the following:

 (1) lodging;

 (2) transportation;

 (3) entertainment;

 (4) food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value;

 (5) contributions, as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(7).

 (C) Subsections (A)(1) through (A)(4) and subsections (B)(1) through (B)(4) of this section do not apply to the furnishing of lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, or any other thing of value which also is furnished on the same terms or at the same expense to a member of the general public without regard to status as a public official or public employee.

 (D) Subsections (A)(1), (A)(2), (B)(1), and (B)(2) of this section do 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's principal to any member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees.

 (E) Subsections (A) and (B) do not apply to anything of value given to a family member for love and affection.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.

**SECTION 2‑17‑90.** Acts prohibited of lobbyists' principals; acts prohibited of public officials and employees; exceptions; disclosure requirements.

 (A) Except as otherwise provided under Section 2‑17‑100, no lobbyist's principal may offer, solicit, facilitate, or provide to a public official or public employee, and no public official or public employee may accept lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, or an invitation to a function paid for by a lobbyist's principal, except for:

 (1) as to members of the General Assembly, a function to which a member of the General Assembly is invited if the entire membership of the House, the Senate, or the General Assembly is invited, or one of the committees, subcommittees, joint committees, legislative caucuses or their committees or subcommittees, or county legislative delegations of the General Assembly of which the legislator is a member is invited. However, the Speaker of the House and Speaker Pro Tempore of the House may be included in an invitation to one of the above groups. In addition, invitations may be extended and accepted when the invitation is extended to all members in attendance at (a) national and regional conventions and conferences of organizations for which the General Assembly pays annual dues as a membership requirement and (b) American Legislative Exchange Council conventions and conferences;

 (2) as to a public official of a state agency, board, or commission, a function to which an official of a state agency, board, or commission is invited if the entire board or commission of which the public official is a member is invited;

 (3) as to public employees, except for public employees of any statewide constitutional officer, a function to which a public employee is invited if a public official of the agency or department by which the public employee is employed also is invited under another provision of this section;

 (4) as to public employees of any statewide constitutional officer, a function to which all statewide constitutional officers are invited;

 (5) as to statewide constitutional officers, a function to which a statewide constitutional officer is invited;

 (6) as to public officials or public employees, activities reasonably and directly related to state or local economic development efforts. However, the public official or public employee first must obtain prior written approval from:

 (a) the Governor, in the case of any of his employees or of any public officials of any state agencies or any of their employees which are not listed in a subitem below;

 (b) any statewide constitutional officer, in the case of himself or any of his employees;

 (c) the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, in the case of any member of the Senate or its employees; or

 (d) the Speaker of the House, in the case of a member of the House of Representatives or its employees.

 (7) as to cabinet officers, a function to which all cabinet officers are invited.

 (B)(1) No lobbyist's principal or person acting on behalf of a lobbyist's principal may provide to a public official or a public employee pursuant to subsection (A)(1), (A)(2), (A)(3), (A)(4), (A)(5), or (A)(7) the value of lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, or beverages exceeding fifty dollars in a day and four hundred dollars in a calendar year per public official, public employee, or cabinet officer.

 (2) The daily dollar limitation in item (1) must be adjusted on January first of each even‑numbered year by multiplying the base amount by the cumulative Consumer Price Index and rounding it to the nearest five dollar amount. For purposes of this section, "base amount" is the daily limitation of fifty dollars, and "Consumer Price Index" means the Southeastern Consumer Price Index All Urban Consumers as published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

 (3) The State Ethics Commission must determine the cumulative increase in the Consumer Price Index through June thirtieth in odd‑numbered years, and determine the adjustment, if any, to be made in the daily limitation. The State Ethics Commission shall approve the adjustment of the annual amount to a figure eight times the adjusted daily limitation.

 (4) The State Ethics Commission must notify all lobbyists' principals of the adjusted limitations at the time of registration.

 (C) Except as otherwise provided by subsection (E), any public official or any public employee who is required to file a statement of economic interests under Section 8‑13‑1110 and who accepts lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, or beverages under subsection (A) or (G) must report on his statement of economic interests pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1120 the value of anything received.

 (D) Except as otherwise provided by subsection (E), a lobbyist's principal extending an invitation under subsection (A) must report all expenses as required by Section 2‑17‑35.

 (E) If the disclosure required by subsection (C) or (D) would compromise the confidentiality of a state or local economic development project and the approving official under subsection (A)(6) has indicated in the prior written approval that disclosure of that information would jeopardize the negotiations in an economic development project, then the approving official must forward a confidential copy of the prior written approval to the lobbyist's principal involved and the State Ethics Commission. The public official must disclose only the value of the thing of value received with a notation "for economic development‑confidential" on the forms required by Sections 8‑13‑1110 and 8‑13‑1120. The lobbyist's principal must not disclose any information identifying the recipient or details of the expenditure on the form required by Section 2‑17‑35. The public official and the lobbyist's principal must report all required information on forms developed by the State Ethics Commission for the reporting of information under this subsection. These forms must be marked "confidential" and must not be a part of the public record until such time as the approving official determines that public disclosure is appropriate.

 (F) The provisions of this section do not apply to a public official or a public employee who pays for his lodging, transportation, entertainment, meals, food, or beverages at a function to which he has been invited by a lobbyist's principal or to a public official or a public employee who pays the face value of a ticket to attend a ticketed event sponsored by a lobbyist's principal when the ticketed event is open to the general public.

 (G) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, a public official or public employee may accept lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, or an invitation to a function paid for by a lobbyist's principal if it is provided to the public official or public employee solely on the basis that the spouse of the public official or public employee is an official or employee of the providing lobbyist's principal and the spouse's receipt of the lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, or invitation is purely incidental to the spouse's office or employment with the lobbyist's principal and the public official or public employee is receiving it only as the spouse of an official or employee of the providing lobbyist's principal.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Sections 10‑12; 2003 Act No. 76, Sections 8, 9, 10.

**SECTION 2‑17‑100.** Public officials and employees not to receive compensation for speaking before audiences; exception and rules for payment of expenses.

 A public official or a public employee acting in an official capacity may not receive anything of value from a lobbyist's principal for speaking before a public or private group. A public official or public employee is not prohibited by this section from accepting a meal provided in conjunction with a speaking engagement where all participants are entitled to the same meal and the meal is incidental to the speaking engagement. Notwithstanding the limitations of Section 2‑17‑90, a public official or public employee may receive payment or reimbursement for actual expenses incurred for a speaking engagement. The expenses must be reasonable and must be incurred in a reasonable time and manner in which to accomplish the purpose of the engagement. The payment or reimbursement must be disclosed by the lobbyist's principal as required by Section 2‑17‑35 and by any public official or public employee who is required to file a statement of economic interests under Section 8‑13‑1110. A public official or public employee required to file a statement of economic interests under Section 8‑13‑1110 must report on his statement of economic interests the organization which paid for or reimbursed actual expenses, the amount of such payment or reimbursement, and the purpose, date, and location of the speaking engagement. A public official or public employee who is not required to file a statement of economic interests but who is paid or reimbursed actual expenses for a speaking engagement must report this same information in writing to the chief administrative official or employee of the agency with which the public official or public employee is associated.

 If the expenses are incurred out of state, the public official or public employee incurring the expenses must receive prior written approval for the payment or reimbursement from:

 (1) the Governor, in the case of a public official of a state agency who is not listed in an item below;

 (2) any statewide constitutional officer, in the case of himself;

 (3) the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, in the case of a member of the Senate;

 (4) the Speaker of the House, in the case of a member of the House of Representatives; or

 (5) the chief executive of a department of the State or any state board, commission, agency, or authority, including committees of any such body, by whatever name known, in all other cases.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1995 Act No. 6, Section 13.

**SECTION 2‑17‑110.** Additional acts prohibited of lobbyists and lobbyists' principals, public officials, and public employees.

 (A) A lobbyist may not solicit or accept compensation dependent in any manner upon the passage or defeat of any pending or proposed legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions. A lobbyist's principal may not employ, appoint, or retain a lobbyist for compensation dependent in any manner upon the passage or defeat of any pending or proposed legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions.

 (B) A lobbyist may not cause the introduction of legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions for the purpose of obtaining employment to engage in lobbying in support of or in opposition to the action.

 (C) A lobbyist may not serve as a treasurer for a candidate, as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(4).

 (D) A lobbyist may not serve as a member of a state board or state commission, except that any lobbyist serving as a member of a state board or a state commission before January 1, 1991, may continue to serve as a member of the same state board or state commission until the end of his current term.

 (E) A lobbyist, including a lobbyist who is a former member of the General Assembly, may not enter the floor of the House of Representatives or the Senate unless invited by the membership of the respective chamber during a session of the General Assembly.

 (F) A lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal may not host events to raise funds for public officials. No public official may solicit a lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal to host a fundraising event for the public official.

 (G) A lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal may not employ on retainer a public official, a public employee, a member of the immediate family of a public official or public employee, or a firm or organization in which the public official or public employee has an economic interest. A retainer, for purposes of this section, is a payment for availability to perform services rather than for actual services rendered.

 (H) A lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal shall not pay an honorarium to a public official or a public employee. This subsection does not prohibit the reimbursement of or expenditure for actual expenses by a lobbyist's principal as allowed in Section 2‑17‑100.

 (I) A lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal may not offer, facilitate, or provide a loan to or on behalf of a statewide constitutional officer or a member of the General Assembly unless the lobbyist's principal is a financial institution authorized to transact business in the State and makes the loan in the ordinary course of business.

 (J) A lobbyist, a lobbyist's principal, or a person acting on behalf of a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal shall not offer or provide contributions or any other type of funds or financial assistance to a legislative special interest caucus as defined in Section 2‑17‑10(21).

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 2006 Act No. 344, Section 6, eff May 31, 2006.

**SECTION 2‑17‑120.** Suspension of lobbyist upon indictment for violation of provision of this chapter.

 A lobbyist who is indicted in a state or federal court for a violation of this chapter must be suspended immediately from acting as a lobbyist by the State Ethics Commission. The suspension shall remain in effect until the lobbyist is acquitted, the charge is dismissed, or the lobbyist becomes subject to Section 2‑17‑130.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.

**SECTION 2‑17‑130.** Penalties For violations of provisions of this chapter.

 (A) A lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal who wilfully violates the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than two thousand five hundred dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both. In addition, any lobbyist or lobbyist's principal convicted of or pleading guilty or nolo contendere to a misdemeanor under the provisions of this section is barred from acting as a lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal for a period of three years from the date of the conviction.

 (B) A member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, any other statewide constitutional officer, any public official of any state agency who engaged in covered agency actions, or any of their employees who wilfully violate the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than two thousand five hundred dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

 (C) The payment of any fines does not in any way excuse or exempt any person required to file from the filing requirements of this chapter.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.

**SECTION 2‑17‑140.** Groundless allegations of violations to be stricken from public record; penalties for wilful filing of groundless complaint.

 If an alleged violation is found to be groundless by the State Ethics Commission, the entire matter must be stricken from public record. If the State Ethics Commission finds that the complaining party wilfully filed a groundless complaint, the finding must be reported to the Attorney General. The wilful filing of a groundless complaint by a person with the State Ethics Commission is a misdemeanor, and the person filing a complaint, upon conviction, 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 section, 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.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2; 1993 Act No. 184, Section 127.

**SECTION 2‑17‑150.** Statute of limitations for prosecuting violation of provision of this chapter.

 A prosecution for a violation of the provisions of this chapter must be commenced no later than four years after the date the violation is alleged to have occurred unless a person, who by fraud or other device, prevents discovery of the violation.

HISTORY: 1991 Act No. 248, Section 2.