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Indicates New Matter

COMMITTEE REPORT

February 3, 2016

**H. 3184**

Introduced by Reps. Pope, Cole, Anderson, Bales, G.A. Brown, R.L. Brown, Finlay, Funderburk, Hart, Knight, Lucas, Murphy, Newton, Norman, Norrell, Putnam, Rivers, Southard, Spires, Tallon, Taylor, Wells, Williams, Willis, Bernstein, Long, Douglas, Henderson, G.M. Smith, G.R. Smith, McCoy, McKnight, Clary, M.S. McLeod, Thayer, W.J. McLeod, Weeks, J.E. Smith and Stavrinakis

S. Printed 2/3/16--S.

Read the first time January 29, 2015.

**THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

To whom was referred a Bill (H. 3184) to amend Section 8‑13‑310, as amended, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, relating to the State Ethics Commission and its membership, so as to, etc., respectfully

**REPORT:**

That they have duly and carefully considered the same and recommend that the same do pass with amendment:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by striking all after the enacting words and inserting:

/ PART I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Section 2-17-15 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“~~(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~~ two years 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.~~”

SECTION 2. Section 8‑13‑100(5) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(5) ‘Candidate’ means a person who seeks appointment, nomination for election, or election to a state or local office, ~~or~~ authorizes or knowingly permits the collection or disbursement of money for the promotion of his candidacy or election, or maintains an open bank account containing contributions, or has outstanding debt from expenditures incurred due to the person’s campaign. It also means a person on whose behalf write‑in votes are solicited if the person has knowledge of such solicitation. ‘Candidate’ does not include a person within the meaning of Section 431(b) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1976.”

SECTION 3. Section 8‑13‑130 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑130. The State Ethics Commission, Senate Ethics Committee, and House of Representatives Ethics Committee, may levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is found in violation, or who admits to a violation, ~~of the “Ethics, Government Accountability and Campaign Reform Act of 1991”~~ pursuant to Title 2 or Title 8. The fee must be used to reimburse the commission, the appropriate legislative Ethics Committee, or combination thereof, for costs associated with the investigation and hearing of a violation. The costs associated include:

(1) the investigator’s time;

(2) mileage, meals, and lodging;

(3) the prosecutor’s time;

(4) the hearing panel’s travel, per diem, and meals;

(5) administrative time;

(6) subpoena costs to include witness fees and mileage; and

(7) miscellaneous costs such as postage and supplies.

This fee is in addition to any fines as otherwise provided by law.”

PART II

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION AND ETHICS COMMITTEES

SECTION 4. Section 8‑13‑310 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑310. ~~(A)~~ ~~The State Ethics Commission as constituted under law in effect before July 1, 1992, is reconstituted to continue in existence with the appointment and qualification of the at‑large members as prescribed in this section and with the changes in duties and powers as prescribed in this chapter. On July 1, 1993, when the duties and powers given to the Secretary of State in Chapter 17 of Title 2 are transferred to the State Ethics Commission, the Code Commissioner is directed to change all references to “this chapter” in Article 3 of Chapter 13 of Title 8 to “this chapter and Chapter 17 of Title 2”.~~

~~(B)~~(A)(1) There is created the State Ethics Commission composed of ~~nine~~ eight members of which:

(a) four members must be appointed by the Governor, ~~upon the advice and consent of the General Assembly.~~ no more than two of whom are members of the appointing Governor’s political party;

(b) one member must be appointed by the legislative caucus of the majority political party in the Senate;

(c) one member must be appointed by the legislative caucus of the largest minority political party in the Senate;

(d) one member must be appointed by the legislative caucus of the majority political party in the House of Representatives; and

(e) one member must be appointed by the legislative caucus of the largest minority political party in the House of Representatives.

Each appointee must be appointed with the advice and consent of the General Assembly. ~~One member shall represent each of the seven congressional districts, and two members must be appointed from the State at large.~~

(2) The terms of the members serving on the State Ethics Commission as of June 29, 2016 shall end on June 30, 2016. A member who is serving at that time and who has not completed a full five year term may be reappointed pursuant to this subsection. The initial appointments shall be made as follows:

(a) two members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed for a three year term;

(b) two members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed for a five year term;

(c) one member appointed by the legislative caucus of the majority political party of the Senate shall be appointed for a three year term;

(e) one member appointed by the legislative caucus of the largest minority political party of the Senate shall be appointed for a five year term;

(f) one member appointed by the legislative caucus of the majority political party of the House of Representatives shall be appointed for a five year term; and

(g) one member appointed by the legislative caucus of the largest minority political party of the House of Representatives shall be appointed for a three year term.

The initial members who have served terms that are less than five years are eligible to be reappointed for one full five‑year term.

(B)(1) The qualifications the appointing authorities shall consider for the appointees include, but are not limited to:

(a) constitutional qualifications;

(b) ethical fitness;

(c) character;

(d) mental stability;

(e) experience; and

(f) judicial temperament.

(2) In addition to other information that may be requested, candidates for appointment must provide the following information to the appointing authority, which must be shared with the General Assembly during the confirmation process:

(a) The candidate’s membership in any civic, charitable, or social groups within the previous four years;

(b) Any contribution made by the candidate to a candidate for Governor or any member of the General Assembly within the previous four years; and

(c) Any contribution made by the candidate to any committee, as defined by Section 8-13-1300(6), including a noncandidate committee, within the previous four years.

(3) The appointing authorities shall make their appointments based on merit. However, in making appointments to the commission, the appointing authorities shall ensure that race, color, gender, national origin, and other demographic factors are considered to ensure the geographic and political balance of the appointments, and shall strive to assure that the membership of the commission will represent, to the greatest extent possible, all segments of the population of the State.

(4) The following are not eligible to serve on the State Ethics Commission:

(a) a member of the General Assembly;

(b) a former member of the General Assembly within eight years following the termination of his service in the General Assembly;

(c) a family member, as defined by Section 8‑13‑100(15), of a member of the General Assembly or the Governor;

(d) a person who made a campaign contribution, as defined by Section 8‑13‑1300(7), within the previous four years to the individual who appointed the person to serve on the State Ethics Commission;

(e) a person who registered as a lobbyist within four years of being appointed to the State Ethics Commission;

(f) a person who is under the jurisdiction of the State Ethics Commission, House of Representatives Ethics Committee, or Senate Ethics Committee.

~~No member of the General Assembly or other public official must be eligible to serve on the State Ethics Commission.~~

~~The Governor shall make the appointments based on merit regardless of race, color, creed, or gender and shall strive to assure that the membership of the commission is representative of all citizens of the State of South Carolina.~~

(C) The terms of the members are for five years ~~and until their successors are appointed and qualify~~. ~~The members of the State Ethics Commission serving on this chapter’s effective date may continue to serve until the expiration of their terms. These members may then be appointed to serve one full five‑year term under the provisions of this chapter. Members representing the first, third, and sixth congressional districts on this chapter’s effective date are eligible to be appointed for a full five‑year term in or after 1991. Members currently representing the second, fourth, and fifth congressional districts on this chapter’s effective date are eligible to be appointed for a full five‑year term in or after 1993. The initial appointments for the at large members of the commission created by this chapter must be for a one‑, two‑, or three‑year term, but these at-large members are eligible subsequently for a full five‑year term. Under this section, the at-large members of the commission are to be appointed to begin service on or after July 1, 1992.~~ Vacancies must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the unexpired portion of the term only. Members of the commission who serve less than a full five-year term may be reappointed for one full five-year term. Members of the commission who have completed a full five‑year term are not eligible for reappointment. A member shall not serve on the commission in hold-over status after the member’s term expires. An appointee shall not serve on the commission, even in interim capacity, until he has been confirmed by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(D) The commission shall elect a chairman, a vice‑chairman, and such other officers as it considers necessary. Five members of the commission shall constitute a quorum. The commission must adopt a policy concerning the attendance of its members at commission meetings. The commission meets at the call of the chairman or a majority of its members. Members of the commission, while serving on business of the commission, receive per diem, mileage, and subsistence as is provided by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions.

(E)(1) A commission member appointed by the Governor may be removed from office by the Governor for malfeasance, misfeasance, incompetency, absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct, persistent neglect of duty in office, or incapacity, pursuant to Section 1‑3‑240.

(2) A commission member appointed by a member of the General Assembly may be removed for malfeasance, misfeasance, incompetency, absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct, persistent neglect of duty in office, or incapacity upon a finding by the Senate or House Ethics Committee, as appropriate, and the concurrence of two‑thirds of the membership of the Senate or the House of Representatives, as appropriate.”

SECTION 5. Section 8-13-320(9) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(9) to initiate or receive complaints and make investigations, as provided in item (10) or as provided in Section 8-13-540, as appropriate, of statements filed or allegedly failed to be filed under the provisions of this chapter and Chapter 17 of Title 2 and, upon complaint by an individual, of an alleged violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2 by a public official, public member, or public employee ~~except members or staff, including staff elected to serve as officers of or candidates for the General Assembly unless otherwise provided for under House or Senate rules~~. Any person charged with a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2 is entitled to the administrative hearing process contained in this section or in Article 5 of this chapter, as appropriate.

(a) The commission may commence an investigation on the filing of a complaint by an individual or by the commission, as provided in item (10)(d), upon a majority vote of the total membership of the commission.

(b)(1) No complaint may be accepted by the commission concerning a candidate for elective office during the fifty‑day period before an election in which he 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 attorneys 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.

(2) Action on a complaint filed against a candidate which was received more than fifty days before the election but which cannot be disposed of or dismissed by the commission at least thirty days before the election must be postponed until after the election.

(c) If an alleged violation is found to be groundless by the commission, the entire matter must be stricken from public record. If the 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 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 item, 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.

(d) Action may not be taken on a complaint filed more than four years after the violation is alleged to have occurred unless a person, by fraud or other device, prevents discovery of the violation. The Attorney General may initiate an action to recover a fee, compensation, gift, or profit received by a person as a result of a violation of the chapter no later than one year after a determination by the commission that a violation of this chapter has occurred;”

SECTION 6. Section 8-13-320(10)(g) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(g) All investigations, inquiries, hearings, and accompanying documents ~~must remain~~ are confidential and may only be released pursuant to this section, unless otherwise required by law. ~~until a finding of probable cause or dismissal unless the respondent waives the right to confidentiality.~~

(i) After a dismissal, except for dismissal pursuant to item (10)(b) or a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response by the respondent, and the notice of dismissal.

(ii) After a finding of probable cause, except for a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response by the respondent, and the notice of hearing. If a hearing is held on the matter, the final order and all exhibits introduced at the hearing shall become public record upon issuance of the final order by the commission. Exhibits introduced must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy.

The respondent may waive the right to confidentiality. The wilful release of confidential information is a misdemeanor, and any person releasing such confidential information, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year.”

SECTION 7. Section 8‑13‑320(10)(j) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(j) If a hearing is to be held, the respondent must be allowed to examine and make copies of all evidence in the commission’s possession relating to the charges. The same discovery techniques which are available to the commission must be equally available to the respondent, including the right to request the commission to subpoena witnesses or materials and the right to conduct depositions as prescribed by subitem (f). A panel of three commissioners must conduct a hearing in accordance with Chapter 23 of Title 1 (Administrative Procedures Act), except as otherwise expressly provided. Panel action requires the participation of the three panel members. During a commission panel hearing conducted to determine whether a violation of the chapter has occurred, the respondent 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 evidence, including records the commission considers, must be offered fully and made a part of the record in the proceedings. The hearings must be ~~held in executive session unless the respondent requests an open hearing~~ open to the public.

SECTION 8. Chapter 13 of Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8-13-322. It is unlawful for the Governor, a member of the General Assembly, or anyone who is the subject of a pending investigation or open complaint, to contact or attempt to contact, either directly or indirectly, a member of the Commission to influence or attempt to influence the outcome of a pending investigation or open complaint.”

SECTION 9. Section 8‑13‑530 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑530. Each ethics committee 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, the alleged breach of a rule governing a member of, legislative caucus committees for, or a candidate, or staff for the appropriate house, misconduct of a member or staff of, legislative caucus committees for, or a candidate for the appropriate house, or a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2.~~ alleging a violation by a member or staff of the appropriate house, or a member or staff of a legislative caucus committee, or a candidate for the appropriate house, for a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, other than a violation of a rule of the appropriate house, the ethics committee shall refer the complaint to the State Ethics Commission for an investigation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑540;

(4) receive, investigate, and hear a complaint which alleges a possible violation of a breach of a privilege or a rule governing a member or staff of the appropriate house or legislative caucus committee, or candidate for the appropriate house~~, the alleged breach of a rule governing a member or staff of or candidate for the appropriate house, misconduct of a member or staff of or candidate for the appropriate house, or a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2.~~;

(5) ~~no~~ a complaint may not be accepted by the ethics committee concerning a member of or candidate for the appropriate house 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)~~(6) obtain information, ~~and~~ investigate technical violation complaints, and hear 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 issued by a majority vote of the committee the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of pertinent books and papers;

~~(6)~~(7) administer or recommend sanctions appropriate to a particular member, or staff of, or candidate for, the appropriate house pursuant to Section 8‑13‑540, including the recovery of the value of anything transferred or received in breach of the ethical standards, or dismiss the charges; and

~~(7)~~(8) act as an advisory body to the General Assembly and to individual members of or candidates for the appropriate house on questions pertaining to the disclosure and filing requirements of members of or candidates for the appropriate house, and may issue, upon request from a member or staff of the appropriate house, or legislative caucus committee, or candidate for the appropriate house, and publish advisory opinions on the requirements of these chapters.”

SECTION 10. Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding Section 8‑13‑535 to read:

“Section 8‑13‑535. (A) The committee may issue a formal advisory opinion, based on real or hypothetical sets of circumstances. A formal advisory opinion issued by the committee is binding on the committee, until amended or revoked, in any subsequent charges concerning the person who requested the formal opinion and any other person who acted in reliance upon it in good faith, unless material facts were omitted or misstated by the person in the request for the opinion. A formal advisory opinion must be in writing and is considered rendered when approved by a majority of the committee members subscribing to the advisory opinion. Advisory opinions must be made available to the public unless the committee, by majority vote of the total membership of the committee, requires an opinion to remain confidential. However, the identities of the parties involved must be withheld upon request.

(B) Staff of the appropriate ethics committee may issue a written informal advisory opinion, based on a real or hypothetical set of circumstances, to a member upon that member’s request. If raised in response to a complaint, the appropriate committee shall consider whether the member relied, in good faith, upon a written informal opinion prior to making a probable cause determination or concurring in a determination, as applicable. A written informal advisory opinion issued by the committee staff is binding on the committee, until amended or revoked, in any subsequent charges concerning the person who requested the informal opinion unless material facts were omitted or misstated by the person in the request for the opinion.

(C) The appropriate ethics committee must consider whether a person relied in good faith upon a formal advisory opinion or written informal opinion issued by the committee prior to the effective date of this act, unless amended or revoked prior to the action considered as a possible violation, prior to making a probable cause decision.”

SECTION 11. Section 8‑13‑540 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8-13-540. ~~Unless otherwise provided for by House or Senate rule, as appropriate, each ethics committee 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. No complaint shall be accepted which is filed later than four years after the alleged violation occurred.~~

~~(2)~~ ~~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)~~ ~~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;~~

~~(b)~~ ~~determine that a technical violation as provided for in Section 8-13-1170 has occurred;~~

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

~~(6)~~ ~~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.~~

(A) Filing of Complaints

(1) A complaint alleging a member of the General Assembly, legislative caucus committees, candidates for the General Assembly, or staff of the General Assembly or legislative caucus committee has committed a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2 must be in writing and state the name of the person alleged to have committed the violation and the particulars of the violation.

(2) When a complaint is filed with or by the ethics committee alleging a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, a copy must be sent to the person alleged to have committed the violation and to the State Ethics Commission, hereinafter referred to as “the commission” within thirty days from the date the complaint was filed, for an investigation as provided in this section. However, if the complaint only alleges a violation of a rule of the House of Representatives or of the Senate, the appropriate ethics committee must forward a copy of the complaint to the person alleged to have committed the violation, and the appropriate ethics committee shall investigate and make a determination for a complaint.

(3)(a) The commission, upon receipt of information, may initiate and file a complaint upon an affirmative vote of the commission. The commission shall accept complaints referred by the ethics committees and notarized complaints from individuals, whether personally or on behalf of an organization or governmental body.

(b) The commission shall forward a copy of the complaint, a general statement of the applicable law with respect to the complaint, and a statement explaining the due process rights of the respondent including, but not limited to, the right to counsel to the respondent within ten days of the filing of the complaint. Unless the complaint was referred by an ethics committee, the commission shall send a copy of the complaint to the appropriate ethics committee.

(4) Action may not be taken on a complaint filed more than four years after the violation is alleged to have occurred unless the person alleged to have committed the violation, by fraud or other device, prevents discovery of the violation.

(B) Actions by the State Ethics Commission

(1) Upon receiving a complaint filed pursuant to subsection (A), the commission must determine whether the complaint alleges only a violation of a rule of the House of Representatives or Senate or a technical violation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1170 or Section 8‑13‑1372. If the commission determines the complaint alleges only a rule violation or technical violation, the complaint must be referred to the appropriate ethics committee for investigation and determination.

(2)(a) If the commission determines the complaint alleges more than a violation of a rule of the House of Representatives or Senate or a technical violation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1170 or Section 8‑13‑1372, the commission must determine whether the complaint alleges facts sufficient to constitute a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2.

(b) If the commission determines that the complaint either does not allege facts sufficient to constitute a violation or does not find probable cause that a violation occurred, a report must be provided to the appropriate ethics committee with the recommendation that the complaint be dismissed. The appropriate ethics committee may concur or nonconcur with the commission’s recommendation, or within fifteen days from the committee’s receipt of the finding, the committee may request the commission to continue the investigation and consider additional matters not considered by the commission. If the appropriate ethics committee concurs with the recommendation to dismiss the complaint, the committee must notify the complainant and respondent.

(c) If the 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 is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, the 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 item, 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.

(d) If the commission determines that the complaint alleges facts sufficient to constitute a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, an investigation may be conducted into the alleged violation.

(3) If the commission finds evidence that the person alleged to have committed the violation wilfully violated a section of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2 that imposes a criminal penalty, the commission must forward the complaint and accompanying materials to the Attorney General or circuit solicitor. This provision does not limit any authority of the Attorney General or circuit solicitor to initiate or conduct any criminal investigation within his jurisdiction.

(4) If the commission determines that it needs assistance in conducting an investigation, the commission shall request the assistance of appropriate agencies.

(5) In conducting its investigation, the commission may order testimony to be taken in any investigation or deposition before a person who is designated by the commission and has the power to administer oaths and, in these instances, to compel testimony. The commission may administer oaths and affirmation for the testimony of witnesses and issue subpoenas, by approval of the chairman and subject to judicial enforcement, for the procurement of witnesses and materials including books, papers, records, documents, or other tangible objects relevant to the agency’s investigation. A person to whom a subpoena has been issued may move before a commission panel or the commission for an order quashing a subpoena issued pursuant to this section.

(6) Upon completing its investigation, the commission must provide a report to the appropriate ethics committee with a recommendation as to whether there is probable cause to believe a violation of this chapter or of Chapter 17, Title 2 has occurred. The report must include a copy of all relevant reports, evidence, and testimony considered by the commission.

(C) Release of complaint and information related to investigations

(1) All investigations and accompanying documents are confidential and may be released only pursuant to this section.

(2) If the committee concurs with a recommendation by the commission that a complaint should be dismissed due to the complaint either failing to allege facts sufficient to constitute a violation or did not find probable cause that a violation occurred, a notice of dismissal will be sent by the committee to the complainant and respondent. This notice and all materials regarding the matter are confidential.

(3)(a) If the commission determines the complaint only alleges a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, and the committee subsequently either dismisses the matter or determines a technical violation occurred, documents involving the matter shall remain confidential.

(b) If the commission’s report to the committee recommends that there is probable cause to believe a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, other than a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, has occurred, and the committee does not request further investigation regarding the probable cause recommendation, the following documents become public thirty days after the commission issues its report to the committee: the complaint, the response by the respondent, the notice of hearing before the appropriate ethics committee, and the commission’s recommendations.

(c) If the appropriate committee requests further investigation after receipt of the commission’s report, documents may only be released if the commission’s second report to the committee recommends a finding of probable cause. If the commission’s second report recommends a finding of probable cause, the documents listed in (a) must be released either thirty days after the conclusion of the investigation or upon a finding of probable cause by the committee, whichever occurs earlier.

(d)(i) If the commission’s report recommends that there is probable cause for a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, other than a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, but the appropriate committee nonconcurs and dismisses the matter, the notice of dismissal must be made public.

(ii) If the commission’s report recommends that there is probable cause for a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, other than a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, but the appropriate committee nonconcurs and finds, prior to a public hearing, that only a technical violation occurred, the notice of the committee’s findings must be made public.

(4) If the committee determines there is probable cause for a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, other than a technical violation pursuant to Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372, and issues an advisory opinion to the respondent pursuant to this section, the advisory opinion becomes public.

(5) If the committee conducts a public hearing pursuant to this section, the final order and exhibits introduced at the hearing become public upon the issuance of the final order. Exhibits introduced must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy.

(6) Documents released or made public must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy. The respondent may waive the right to confidentiality. The wilful release of confidential information is a misdemeanor, and a person releasing confidential information, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year.

(D) Actions by ethics committees

(1) If the commission’s report recommends that there is not probable cause to believe a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2 has occurred, the appropriate ethics committee may concur or nonconcur with that recommendation, or within fifteen days from the committee’s receipt of the report, request the commission to continue the investigation and consider additional matters not considered by the commission.

(2) If, after reviewing the commission’s recommendation and relevant evidence, the ethics committee determines that probable cause does not exist to believe a violation of this chapter or of Chapter 17, Title 2 has occurred, the committee shall dismiss the complaint and send a written decision to the respondent and the complainant.

(3) If, after reviewing the commission’s recommendation and relevant evidence, the ethics committee determines that the respondent has committed only a technical violation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1170 or 8‑13‑1372, the provisions of the appropriate section apply, which may include subsection (C), if applicable.

(4) If, after reviewing the commission’s recommendation and relevant evidence, the ethics committee determines that probable cause exists to believe a violation of this chapter or of Chapter 17, Title 2 has occurred, except for a technical violation of Section 8‑13‑1170 or Section 8‑13‑1372, the committee 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 public hearing on the matter.

The ethics committee may obtain its own information, or request additional investigation by the State Ethics Commission, if it needs additional information to make a determination as to whether or not probable cause exists.

(5) If the ethics committee convenes a formal public hearing:

(a) the investigator or attorney handling the investigation for the State Ethics Commission shall present the evidence related to the complaint to the appropriate ethics committee;

(b) it is the duty of the investigator or attorney to further investigate the subject of the complaint and any related matters under the jurisdiction and at the direction of the ethics committee, to request assistance from appropriate state agencies as needed, to request authorization from the committee for funds for the hiring of auditors, investigators, or other assistance as necessary, to prepare subpoenas, and to present evidence to the committee at any public hearing. The appropriate committee shall maintain the authority to approve subpoenas, authorize expenditures, dismiss complaints, schedule hearings, grant continuances, and any other authority as provided for by their rules;

(c) 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 respondent 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.

(d) all hearings must be open to the public.

(6)(a) After the formal public hearing, the ethics committee shall determine its findings of fact and issue its final order.

(b) If the ethics committee, based on competent and substantial evidence, finds the respondent has not violated this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, the committee shall dismiss the complaint and send a written decision to the respondent and the complainant.

(c) If the ethics committee, based on competent and substantial evidence, finds the respondent has violated this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, the committee shall:

(i) administer a public reprimand;

(ii) determine that a technical violation as provided for in Section 8-13-1170 or 8-13-1372 has occurred;

(iii) require the respondent to pay a civil penalty not to exceed two thousand dollars for each nontechnical violation that is unrelated to the late filing of a required statement or report or failure to file a required statement or report;

(iv) require the forfeiture of gifts, receipts, or profits, or the value of each, obtained in violation of Chapter 13, Title 8 or Chapter 17, Title 2;

(v) recommend expulsion of the member;

(vi) provide a copy of the complaint and accompanying materials to the Attorney General if the committee finds that there is probable cause to believe the respondent wilfully violated a section of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2 that imposes a criminal penalty; or

(vii) require a combination of subitems (i) though (vi) as necessary and appropriate.

(d) The ethics committee shall report its findings in writing to the Speaker of the House of Representatives or President Pro Tempore of the Senate, as appropriate. The report must be accompanied by an order of punishment or dismissal and supported and signed by a majority of the ethics committee members.

(e) Upon the issuance of the final order, the following documents become public record: exhibits introduced at the hearing, the committee’s findings, and the final order. Exhibits introduced must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy.

(E) If, after conducting a formal public hearing, the ethics committee finds the respondent has violated this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, the respondent has ten days from the date of receiving the committee’s order of punishment to appeal the action to the full legislative body.

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

(G) The ethics committees 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.”

PART III

RULES OF CONDUCT

SECTION 12. Section 8‑13‑700 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑700. (A) ~~No~~ A public official, public member, or public employee may not knowingly use his official office, membership, or employment to:

(1) obtain an economic interest for himself, a family member, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated~~.~~;

(2) participate or engage in a private business for which the public official, public member, or public employee is compensated for services rendered during the hours of employment for the State or for a political subdivision of the State. However, this item does not apply to a member of the General Assembly, provided it does not result in additional public expense or interfere with the performance of his official duties or responsibilities;

(3) use equipment, materials, or supplies of the State or a political subdivision of the State for a private business or for private business activities for which the public official, public member, or public employee is compensated.

This prohibition does not extend to the incidental use of public materials, personnel, or equipment, subject to or available for a public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s use that does not result in additional public expense, or to the incidental conversations, communications, or activities of a part‑time public official or a part‑time public member related to his primary occupation or business.

(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. 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.

(C) Where a public official, public member, or public employee or a member of his immediate family holds an economic interest in a blind trust, he is not considered to have a conflict of interest with regard to matters pertaining to that economic interest, if the existence of the blind trust has been disclosed to the appropriate supervisory office.

(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.”

SECTION 13. Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑704. An agency head or employee of a department listed in Section 1‑30‑10(A) is prohibited from soliciting campaign contributions for a candidate for statewide elected office.”

SECTION 14. Section 8‑13‑710(B) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(B) A public official, public member, or public employee required to file a statement of economic interests under Section 8‑13‑1110 who receives, accepts, or takes, directly or indirectly, from a person, anything of value worth twenty‑five dollars or more in a day ~~and anything of value worth~~ or if the value totals, in the aggregate, two hundred dollars or more in ~~the aggregate in~~ a calendar year must report on his statement of economic interests pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1120 the thing of value from:

(1) a person, if there is reason to believe the donor would not give the thing of value but for the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s office or position;

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

(a) has or is seeking to obtain contractual or other business or financial relationships with the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s governmental entity;

(b) conducts operations or activities which are regulated by the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s governmental entity.”

SECTION 15. Section 8‑13‑720 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A) ~~No~~ A person may not offer or pay to a public official, public member, or public employee and ~~no~~ a public official, public member, or public employee may not solicit or receive ~~money~~ anything of value in addition to that received by the public official, public member, or public employee in his official capacity for advice or assistance given in the course of his employment as a public official, public member, or public employee, unless otherwise permitted by law.

(B) A person who violates this section is guilty of a:

(1) misdemeanor, if the amount offered, paid, solicited, or received is ten thousand dollars or less, and upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both;

(2) felony, if the amount offered, paid, solicited, or received is more than ten thousand dollars, and upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than ten thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.”

SECTION 16. Section 8‑13‑725(A) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑725. (A)(1) A public official, public member, or public employee may not use or disclose confidential information gained in the course of or by reason of his official responsibilities in a way that would affect an economic interest held by him, a member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated.

(2) A person who violates this section is guilty of a:

(a) misdemeanor, if the value of the economic interest is ten thousand dollars or less, and upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both;

(b) felony, if the value of the economic interest is more than ten thousand dollars, and upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than ten thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.”

SECTION 17. Section 8‑13‑755 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑755. A ~~former~~ public official, ~~former~~ public member, or ~~former~~ public employee ~~holding public office, membership, or employment on or after January 1, 1992,~~  may not for a period of ~~one year~~ two years after terminating his public service or employment:

(1) serve as a lobbyist or represent clients before the agency or department on which he formerly served in a matter which he directly and substantially participated during his public service or employment; or

(2) accept employment if the employment:

(a) is from a person who is regulated by the agency or department on which the former public official, former public member, or former public employee served or was employed; and

(b) involves a matter in which the former public official, former public member, or former public employee directly and substantially participated during his public service or public employment.”

SECTION 18. Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑756. The provisions of Sections 8‑13‑700, 8‑13‑710, 8‑13‑715, and 8‑13‑755 do not apply to a public employee of an institution of higher education who participates in the development of intellectual property that benefits the institution and the State of South Carolina, provided that the institution of higher education retains some royalty rights to the intellectual property.”

SECTION 19. Section 8‑13‑775 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑775. (A) A public official, public member, or public employee may not have an economic interest in a contract with the State or its political subdivisions if the public official, public member, or public employee is authorized to perform an official function relating to the contract. Official function means writing or preparing the contract specifications, acceptance of bids, award of the contract, or other action on the preparation or award of the contract.

(B) A public official, public member, or public employee may not award a contract to, nor participate in any discussion concerning the award of a contract with the State if he is a state public official, member, or employee, or its political subdivisions if he is a public official, member, or employee of that political subdivision for either a business or an individual with which he is associated, or to a business associated with a member of the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s immediate family.

(C) This section is not intended to infringe on or prohibit public employment contracts with this State or a political subdivision of this State nor does it prohibit the award of contracts awarded through a process of public notice and competitive bids if the public official, public member, or public employee has not performed an official function nor participated in any discussion regarding the contract.”

SECTION 20. Section 8‑13‑780(B) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(B) In addition to existing remedies for breach of the ethical standards of this chapter ~~or regulations promulgated hereunder~~, the ~~State Ethics Commission~~ appropriate supervisory office may impose ~~an oral or~~ a written warning or reprimand.”

SECTION 21. Section 8‑13‑790(A) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A) The value of anything transferred or received in breach of the ethical standards of Articles 1 through 11 of this chapter or regulations promulgated under it by a public employee, public official, or a nonpublic employee or official ~~may~~ must be recovered from the public employee, public official, or nonpublic employee or official.”

PART IV

DISCLOSURE OF ECONOMIC INTEREST

SECTION 22. Section 8‑13‑360 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑360. Upon request, the commission shall make statements and reports filed with the commission available for public inspection and copying during regular office hours. The commission shall provide copying facilities at a cost not to exceed the actual cost. A statement may be requested by mail, and the commission shall mail a copy of the requested information to the individual making the request upon payment of appropriate postage, copying costs, and employee labor costs. The commission must also make statements and reports filed with the commission electronically accessible to the public. The commission shall publish and make available to the public and to persons subject to this chapter explanatory information concerning this chapter, the duties imposed by this chapter, and the means for enforcing this chapter.”

SECTION 23. Section 8‑13‑1110 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1110. (A) No public official, regardless of compensation, and no public member or public employee as designated in subsection (B) may take the oath of office or enter upon his official responsibilities unless he has filed a statement of economic interests pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365 ~~in accordance with the appropriate supervisory office~~. ~~If a public official, public member, or public employee referred to in this section has no economic interests to disclose, he shall nevertheless file a statement of inactivity to that effect with the appropriate supervisory office. All disclosure statements are matters of public record open to inspection upon request.~~

(B) Each of the following public officials, public members, and public employees must file a statement of economic interests ~~with the appropriate supervisory office~~, unless otherwise provided:

(1) a person appointed to fill the unexpired term of an elective office;

(2) a salaried member of a ~~state~~ board, commission, or agency;

(3) the chief administrative official or employee and the deputy or assistant administrative official or employee ~~or director of a division, institution, or facility~~ of any agency or department of state government;

(4) the city administrator, city manager, or chief municipal administrative official or employee, by whatever title;

(5) the county manager, county administrator, county supervisor, or chief county administrative official or employee, by whatever title;

(6) the chief administrative official or employee of each political subdivision including, but not limited to, school districts, libraries, regional planning councils, airport commissions, hospitals, community action agencies, water and sewer districts, and development commissions;

(7) a school district and county superintendent of education;

(8) a school district board member and a county board of education member;

(9) the chief finance official or employee and the chief purchasing official or employee of each agency, institution, or facility of state government, and of each county, municipality, or other political subdivision including, but not limited to, those named in item (6);

(10) a public official;

(11) a public member who serves on a state board, commission, or council; and

(12) Department of Transportation District Engineering Administrators.”

SECTION 24. Section 8‑13‑1120 of the 1976 Code is 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 actually known to the filer; or

(ii) the interest has been or can reasonably be expected to be the subject of a conflict of interest with the filer’s official responsibilities and duties based upon information actually known to the filer; 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~~ the contract between the governmental entity and 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) the source of any other income received by the filer, not to include income received pursuant to:

(i) a court order;

(ii) a savings, checking or brokerage account with a bank, savings and loan, or other licensed financial institution which offers savings, checking, or brokerage 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;

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

(11) the source of income received by a public official, a member of the public official’s immediate family, or a business with which the public official or a member of his immediate family are associated if the public official or a member of the public official’s immediate family directly derives income from a:

(i) contractual or financial relationship, including a consultant or independent contractor’s relationship, with a lobbyist’s principal or an entity controlled by, affiliated with, or existing for the benefit of a lobbyist’s principal;

(ii) contractual or financial relationship, including a consultant or independent contractor relationship, with a state or local governmental entity;

(iii) source regulated by the governmental regulatory agency with which the public official serves.

For purposes of item (11), the definition of ‘contractual or financial relationship’ does not include a relationship from which income received by a public official, a member of the public official’s immediate family, or a business with which the public official or his immediate family is associated, is derived from commercial transactions in which the fair market value of goods transferred or services rendered is paid.

(12) the source of income received by a public member, a member of the public member’s immediate family, or a business with which the public member or a member of his immediate family are associated if the public member or his immediate family directly derives income from a source regulated by the governmental regulatory agency with which the public member serves.

(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 25. Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑1145. The appropriate supervisory office must send an electronic notice of obligation to report no less than thirty days before the filing date to the e‑mail address provided by the filer to any filer who has not yet filed a current statement of economic interests. The filer is not relieved of reporting responsibilities if the notice is not sent or if the filer does not receive a notice.”

SECTION 26. Section 8‑13‑1150 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1150. A consultant must file a statement for the previous calendar year ~~with the appropriate supervisory office~~ , pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365, no later than twenty‑one days after entering into a contractual relationship with the State or a political subdivision of the State and must file an update within ten days from the date the consultant knows or should have known that new economic interests in an entity have arisen in which the consultant or a member of the consultant’s immediate family has economic interests:

(1) where the entity’s bid was evaluated by the consultant and who was subsequently awarded the contract by the State, county, municipality, or a political subdivision of any of these entities that contracted with the consultant; or

(2) where the entity was awarded a contract by the consultant.”

SECTION 27. Section 8‑13‑1160 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 28. Section 8‑13‑1180 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

PART V

CAMPAIGN PRACTICES

SECTION 29. Section 8‑13‑365 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑365. The commission shall establish a system of electronic filing for all disclosures and reports required pursuant to Chapter 13, Title 8 and Chapter 17, Title 2 except for forms and reports required pursuant to Article 9, Chapter 13, Title 8. These disclosures and reports must be filed using an Internet‑based filing system which allows for a single upload by the filer, using a commonly used electronic financial spreadsheet or database which contains the required information, the format of which as specified and ~~as~~ prescribed by the commission. The information contained in the reports and disclosure forms, with the exception of social security numbers, campaign bank account numbers, and tax ID numbers, must be publicly accessible, searchable, and transferable.”

SECTION 30. Section 8‑13‑1300(3) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(3) ‘Business’ means a corporation, limited liability company, partnership, proprietorship, firm, an enterprise, a franchise, an association, organization, or a self‑employed individual.”

SECTION 31. Section 8‑13‑1300(4) of the 1976 Code, is amended to read:

“(4) ‘Candidate’ means: (a) a person who seeks appointment, nomination for election, or election to a statewide or local office, or authorizes or knowingly permits the collection or disbursement of money for the promotion of his candidacy or election; (b) a person who is exploring whether or not to seek election at the state or local level; ~~or~~ (c) a person on whose behalf write‑in votes are solicited if the person has knowledge of such solicitation; or (d) a person who maintains an open bank account containing contributions or has outstanding debt from expenditures incurred due to the person’s campaign. ‘Candidate’ does not include a candidate within the meaning of Section 431(b) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1976 or its successor.”

SECTION 32. Section 8‑13‑1300(17) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(17) ‘Independent expenditure’ means:

(a) an expenditure made or incurred directly or indirectly by a person to advocate the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate or ballot measure; and

(b) when taken as a whole and in context, the expenditure made by a person to influence the outcome of an elective office or ballot measure but which is not:

(i) made to;

(ii) controlled by;

(iii) coordinated with;

(iv) requested by; or

(v) made upon consultation with a candidate or an agent of a candidate; or a committee or agent of a committee; or a ballot measure committee or an agent of a ballot measure committee.”

SECTION 33. Section 8‑13‑1300(31) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(31) ‘Influence the outcome of an elective office’ means:

(a) expressly advocating the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate using words including or substantially similar to ‘vote for’, ‘elect’, ‘cast your ballot for’, ‘Smith for Governor’, ‘vote against’, ‘defeat’, or ‘reject’; or

(b) communicating campaign slogans or individual words that, taken in context, have no other reasonable meaning other than to urge the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate including or substantially similar to slogans or words such as ‘Smith’s the One’, ‘Jones 2000’, ‘Smith/Jones’ , ‘Jones!’, or ‘Smith‑A man for the People!’~~;~~ ~~or~~

~~(c)~~ ~~any communication made, not more than forty‑five days before an election, which promotes or supports a candidate or attacks or opposes a candidate, regardless of whether the communication expressly advocates a vote for or against a candidate. For purposes of this paragraph, “communication” means (i) any paid advertisement or purchased program time broadcast over television or radio; (ii) any paid message conveyed through telephone banks, direct mail, or electronic mail; or (iii) any paid advertisement that costs more than five thousand dollars that is conveyed through a communication medium other than those set forth in subsections (i) or (ii) of this paragraph. “Communication” does not include news, commentary, or editorial programming or article, or communication to an organization’s own members~~.”

SECTION 34. Section 8‑13‑1302 of the 1976 Code 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 and primary employer of each person making a contribution.

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

(C) Members of the General Assembly and constitutional officers shall file copies of their campaign bank account statements applicable to their previous quarterly campaign disclosure report with the appropriate supervisory office contemporaneous with the filing of their quarterly campaign disclosure report required by Section 8-13-1308. The campaign bank account statements are not subject to public disclosure and may only be retained by the appropriate supervisory office for the period of time necessary to conduct any audit or verification of the member or officer's applicable campaign disclosure report, after which time the statements must be destroyed."

SECTION 35. Section 8‑13‑1308 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1308. (A) Upon the receipt or expenditure of campaign contributions or the making of independent expenditures totaling an accumulated aggregate of five hundred dollars or more, a candidate or committee required to file a statement of organization pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1304(A) must file an initial certified campaign report within ten days of these initial receipts or expenditures. However, a candidate who does not receive or expend campaign contributions totaling an accumulated aggregate of five hundred dollars or more must file an initial certified campaign report fifteen days before an election.

(B) Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report, additional certified campaign reports must be filed within ten days following the end of each calendar quarter in which contributions are received or expenditures are made, whether before or after an election until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement pursuant to the provisions of Section 8‑13‑1370.

(C) Campaign reports filed by a candidate must be certified by the candidate. Campaign reports filed by a committee must be certified by a duly authorized officer of the committee.

(D)(1) At least fifteen days before an election, a certified campaign report must be filed showing contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures to or by the candidate or committee for the period ending twenty days before the election. The candidate or committee must maintain a current list during the period before the election commencing at the beginning of the calendar quarter of the election of all contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures. The list must be open to public inspection upon request.

(2) A committee immediately shall file a campaign report listing expenditures if it makes an independent expenditure or an incurred expenditure within the calendar quarter in which the election is conducted or twenty days before the election, whichever period of time is greater, in excess of:

(a) ten thousand dollars in the case of a candidate for statewide office; or

(b) two thousand dollars in the case of a candidate for any other office.

(3) In the event of a runoff election, candidates or committees are not required to file another campaign report in addition to the reports already required under this section. However, records must remain open to public inspection upon request between the election and the runoff.

(E) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (B) and (D), if a pre‑election campaign report provided for in subsection (D) is required to be filed within thirty days of the end of the prior quarter, a candidate or committee must combine the quarterly report provided for in subsection (B) and the pre‑election report and file the combined report subject to the provisions of subsection (D) no later than fifteen days before the election.

(F) Five days before an election, a candidate or committee must amend and file the previously filed pre‑election certified campaign report required under subsection (D) showing contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures to or by the candidate or committee to that date not previously reported and through the sixth day before the election.

~~(F)~~(G) Certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain:

(1) the total of contributions accepted by the candidate or committee;

(2) the name, ~~and~~ address, occupation, and primary employer of each person making a contribution of more than one hundred dollars and the amount and date of receipt of each contribution;

(3) the total expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate or committee; and

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

~~(G)~~(H) Notwithstanding any other reporting requirements in this chapter, a political party, legislative caucus committee, and a party committee must file a certified campaign report upon the receipt of anything of value which totals in the aggregate five hundred dollars or more. For purposes of this section, ‘anything of value’ includes contributions received which may be used for the payment of operation expenses of a political party, legislative caucus committee, or a party committee. A political party also must comply with the reporting requirements of subsections (B), (C), ~~and~~ (F), and (G) of Section 8‑13‑1308 in the same manner as a candidate or committee.

~~(H)~~(I) A committee that solicits contributions pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1331 must certify compliance with that section on a form prescribed by the State Ethics Commission.

(J) All reports required by this section must be filed pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365.”

SECTION 36. Section 8‑13‑1309 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1309. (A) Upon the receipt or expenditure of campaign contributions or the making of independent expenditures totaling, in an accumulated aggregate, two thousand five hundred dollars or more, a ballot measure committee required to file a statement of organization pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1304(B) must file an initial certified campaign report within ten days of these initial receipts or expenditures.

(B) Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report, additional certified campaign reports must be filed within ten days following the end of each calendar quarter in which contributions are received or expenditures are made, whether before or after a ballot measure election until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement pursuant to the provisions of Section 8‑13‑1370(C).

(C) At least fifteen days before a ballot measure election, a certified campaign report must be filed showing contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures to or by the ballot measure committee for the period ending twenty days before the ballot measure election. The ballot measure committee must maintain a current list during the period before the ballot measure election commencing at the beginning of the calendar quarter of the election of all contributions of more than one hundred dollars. The list must be open to public inspection upon request.

(D) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (B) and (C), if a pre‑election campaign report provided for in subsection (C) is required to be filed within thirty days of the end of the prior quarter, a ballot measure committee must combine the quarterly report provided for in subsection (B) and the pre‑election report and file the combined report subject to the provisions of subsection (C) no later than fifteen days before the ballot measure election.

(E) Five days before a ballot measure election, a ballot measure committee must amend and file the previously filed pre‑election certified campaign report required under subsection (C) showing contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures to the committee to that date not previously reported and through the sixth day before the election.

~~(E)~~(F) Certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain:

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

(2) the name, ~~and~~ address, occupation, and primary employer of each person making a contribution of more than one hundred dollars and the amount and date of receipt of each contribution;

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

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

(G) All reports required by this Section must be filed pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365.”

SECTION 37. Section 8‑13‑1312 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1312. Except as is required for the separation of funds and expenditures under the provisions of Section 8‑13‑1300(7), a candidate shall not establish more than one campaign checking account ~~and one campaign savings account~~ for each office sought, and a committee shall not establish more than one checking account ~~and one savings account~~ unless federal or state law requires additional accounts. A candidate or a committee may not establish more than one campaign savings account, unless the amount in the candidate’s or committee’s campaign savings account exceeds the amount of insurance coverage applicable to the campaign savings account. If the amount in a candidate’s or committee’s campaign savings account exceeds the insurable amount, the candidate or committee may open one additional campaign savings account. A candidate or committee must not establish more than two campaign savings accounts, unless federal or state law requires additional accounts. The appropriate supervisory office must be notified by the candidate or committee within five business days of a second campaign savings account’s establishment. A campaign savings account means a “savings deposit” as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 12, Regulation 204.2, or its successor. For purposes of this article, certificates of deposit or other interest bearing instruments are not considered separate accounts. A candidate’s accounts must be established in a financial institution that conducts business within the State and in an office located within the State that conducts business with the general public. The candidate or a duly authorized officer of a committee must maintain the accounts in the name of the candidate or committee. An acronym must not be used in the case of a candidate’s accounts. An acronym or abbreviation may be used in the case of a committee’s accounts if the acronym or abbreviation commonly is known or clearly recognized by the general public. Except as otherwise provided under Section 8‑13‑1348(C), expenses paid on behalf of a candidate or committee must be drawn from the campaign account and issued on a check signed by the candidate or a duly authorized officer of a committee. All contributions received by the candidate or committee, directly or indirectly, must be deposited in the campaign checking account by the candidate or committee within ten days after receipt. All contributions received by an agent of a candidate or committee must be forwarded to the candidate or committee not later than five days after receipt. A contribution must not be deposited until the candidate or committee receives information regarding the name and address of the contributor. If the name and address cannot be determined within seven days after receipt, the contribution must be remitted to the Children’s Trust Fund.”

SECTION 38. Section 8‑13‑1318 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1318. 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.

If a candidate accepts a contribution to retire a debt from a campaign for an elective office, the contribution must be utilized to retire the debt.”

SECTION 39. Section 8‑13‑1320(1) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(1) A contribution made on or before the seventh day after a primary ~~or primary runoff~~ is attributed to the primary ~~or primary runoff, respectively~~. However, in the event of a primary runoff, all contributions made after the day of the primary and continuing through the seventh day after the primary runoff are attributed to the primary runoff for the purposes of applying contribution limits.”

SECTION 40. Section 8‑13‑1328 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1328. (A) A candidate for statewide office ~~or the candidate’s family member~~ must not be repaid, for a loan made to the candidate, more than twenty‑five thousand dollars in the aggregate after the election.

(B) A candidate for an elective office other than those specified in subsection (A) ~~or a family member of a candidate for an elective office other than those specified in subsection (A)~~ must not be repaid, for a loan made to the candidate, more than ten thousand dollars in the aggregate after the election.”

SECTION 41. Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑1337. (A) An elective official or the elective official’s agent may not knowingly solicit a contribution from an employee over whom the elective official has supervisory authority within the elective official’s area of official responsibility. An elective official or the elective official’s agent may not knowingly solicit a contribution from an appointee over whom the elective official has appointment authority within the elective official’s area of official responsibility.

(B) A public official or public employee may not provide an advantage or disadvantage to a public employee, applicant for public employment, public member, or applicant for membership on a board, commission, or council concerning employment, appointment, conditions of employment, conditions of appointment, application for appointment, or application for employment based on the employee’s, member’s, or applicant’s contribution, promise to contribute, or failure to contribute to a candidate, a political party, as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(26), or a committee, as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(6).”

SECTION 42. Section 8‑13‑1340 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1340. (A) Except as provided in subsection~~s~~ (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. For purposes of this section only, candidate includes candidates within the meaning of 431(2) of the Federal Election Campaign Act.

(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 43. Section 8‑13‑1344(B) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(B)(1) A person may not solicit from a candidate, committee, political party, or other person, money or other property as a condition or consideration for an endorsement, article, or other communication in the news media promoting or opposing a candidate, committee, or political party.

(2) A candidate, committee, or political party may not offer or give money or other property in consideration of an endorsement for the candidate, or for an article or other communication in the news media promoting or opposing a candidate, committee, or political party. This does not prohibit a candidate, committee, or political party from purchasing advertisements from 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 regularly published periodicals.”

SECTION 44. Section 8‑13‑1348 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 248 of 1991, is amended to read:

“(A)(1) ~~No~~ A candidate, committee, public official, or political party may not 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 resulting from a criminal prosecution.

(B) The payment of reasonable and necessary travel expenses or for food or beverages consumed by the candidate or members of his immediate family while at, and in connection with, a political event are permitted.

(C)(1) An expenditure of more than twenty‑five dollars drawn upon a campaign account must be made by:

(a) a written instrument;

(b) debit card; or

(c) online transfers.

The campaign account must contain the name of the candidate or committee, and the expenditure must contain the name of the recipient. These expenditures must be reported pursuant to the provisions of Section 8‑13‑1308.

(2) Expenditures of twenty‑five dollars or less that are not made by a written instrument, debit card, or online transfer containing the name of the candidate or committee and the name of the recipient must be accounted for by a written receipt or written record.

(D) An expenditure may not be made that is clearly in excess of the fair market value of services, materials, facilities, or other things of value received in exchange.

(E) A candidate or a duly authorized officer of a committee may not withdraw more than one hundred dollars from the campaign account to establish or replenish a petty cash fund for the candidate or committee at any time, and at no time may the fund exceed one hundred dollars. Expenditures from the petty cash fund may be made only for office supplies, food, transportation expenses, and other necessities and may not exceed twenty‑five dollars for each expenditure.

(F) A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a:

(1) misdemeanor, if the amount used or converted to personal use in violation of this section is ten thousand dollars or less, and upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both:

(2) felony, if the amount converted to personal use is more than ten thousand dollars, and upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than ten thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.”

SECTION 45. Section 8‑13‑1352 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1352. ~~Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 8‑13‑1350, a~~ A candidate may use or permit the use of contributions solicited for or received by the candidate to further the candidacy of the individual for an elective office other than the elective office for which the contributions were received if:

~~(1)~~(A) the person originally making the contribution gives written authorization for its use to further the candidacy of the individual for a specific office which is not the office for which the contribution was originally intended; and

~~(2)~~(B) the contribution is otherwise permitted by law.”

SECTION 46. Section 8‑13‑1356 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1356. (A) A person who becomes a candidate by filing a statement of intention of candidacy seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365 prior to the close of filing for the particular office.

(B) A person who becomes a candidate by filing a petition for nomination must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365 within fifteen days of submitting the petition pursuant to Section 7‑11‑70 or 7‑11‑71.

(C) A person who becomes a candidate for a county wide, or less than county wide, office pursuant to Section 7‑11‑15(A)(3) must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365 prior to the close of filing for that particular office.

~~(C)~~(D) A person who becomes a write‑in candidate must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year within twenty‑four hours of filing an initial campaign finance report pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1308(A) or before taking the oath of office, whichever occurs earlier.

~~(D)~~(E) A candidate who is not a public official otherwise filing a statement has the same disclosure requirements as a public official with the exception of reporting gifts.

~~(E)~~(F) The appropriate supervisory office shall assess a civil penalty pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1510 against a candidate who fails to timely file a statement of economic interests as required by this section.”

SECTION 47. Section 8‑13‑1360 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1360. ~~(A)~~ The State Ethics Commission shall develop a contribution and expenditure reporting form pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365 which must include:

~~(1)~~(A) a designation as a pre‑election or quarterly report and, if a pre‑election report, the election date;

~~(2)~~(B) the candidate’s name and address or, in the case of a committee, the name and address of the committee;

~~(3)~~(C) the balance of campaign accounts on hand at the beginning and at the close of the reporting period and the location of those campaign accounts;

~~(4)~~(D) the total amount of all contributions received during the reporting period; the total amount of contributions of one hundred dollars or less in the aggregate from one source received during the reporting period; and the name and address of each person contributing more than one hundred dollars in the aggregate during the reporting period, the date and amount of the contribution, and the year‑to‑date total for each contributor~~. Written promises or pledges to make a contribution must be reported separately in the same manner as other monetary contributions~~;

~~(5)~~(E) the total amount of all loans received during the reporting period and the total amount of loans for the year to date. The report also must include the date and amount of each loan from one source during the reporting period, the name and address of each maker or guarantor of each loan, the year‑to‑date total of each maker or guarantor, and the terms of the loan, including the interest rate, repayment terms, loan payments, and existing balances on each loan;

~~(6)~~(F) the date and amount of any in‑kind contributions of more than one hundred dollars in the aggregate by one person during the reporting period, and the contributor’s name, address, and year‑to‑date total;

~~(7)~~(G) the total amount of all refunds, rebates, interest, and other receipts not previously identified during the reporting period, and their year‑to‑date total; the total amount of other receipts received of one hundred dollars or less in the aggregate from one source during the reporting period; the date and amount of each refund, rebate, interest, or other receipt not previously identified of more than one hundred dollars in the aggregate from one source, the name and address and the year‑to‑date total for each source;

~~(8)~~(H) the aggregate total of all contributions, loans, and other receipts during the reporting period and the year‑to‑date total; the amount, date, and a brief description of each expenditure made during the reporting period, the name and address of the entity to which the expenditure was made, and the year‑to‑date total of expenditures to that entity. Credit card expenses and candidate reimbursements must be itemized so that the purpose and recipient of the expenditure are identified;

~~(9)~~(I) the total amount of all loans made during the reporting period and the year‑to‑date total. The report also must include the date and amount of each loan to one entity during the reporting period, the name and address of each recipient of the loan, and the terms of the loan, including the interest rate, repayment terms, purpose of the loan, the year‑to‑date total, and existing balances.

~~(B)~~ ~~A candidate or committee must disclose all information required on the form developed under this section.~~”

SECTION 48. Section 8‑13‑1364 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1364. The appropriate supervisory office must send ~~a notice~~ an electronic notice of obligation to report ~~and reporting forms by first class mail~~ no less than thirty days before the filing date for each reporting period to the e‑mail address provided by the candidate or committee. A candidate or committee is not relieved of reporting responsibilities if the notice ~~or forms are~~ is not sent or if the candidate or committee does not receive a notice ~~or forms~~.”

SECTION 49. Section 8‑13‑1520 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1520. (A) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter and except for failure to file a required statement or report, 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 this chapter, ~~A~~ 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.”

SECTION 50. Chapter 13, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8-13-1530. A person who has been fined for a violation of a provision of this chapter and who has failed to pay the amount of the fine may not be a candidate for any elected or appointed position within a state or local governmental entity.”

SECTION 51. Section 8‑13‑1314(A)(1) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(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~~ four thousand five hundred dollars in the case of a candidate for statewide office; ~~or~~

(b) four thousand five hundred dollars in the aggregate for statewide candidates that must be elected jointly beginning with the General Election of 2018; or

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

SECTION 52. Section 8‑13‑1310 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 53. Section 8‑13‑1350 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 54. Section 8‑13‑1358 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 55. Section 8‑13‑1362 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 56. Section 8‑13‑1366 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

PART VI

MISCELLANEOUS

SECTION 57. A committee prohibited pursuant to SECTION 42 of this act in existence on the effective date of this act must distribute all unexpended funds in the manner provided for in Section 8‑13‑1370(C).

SECTION 58. The General Assembly finds that all the provisions contained in this act relate to one subject as required by Section 17, Article III of the South Carolina Constitution in that each provision relates directly to or in conjunction with other sections to the subject of election reform as stated in the title. The General Assembly further finds that a common purpose or relationship exists among the sections, representing a potential plurality but not disunity of topics, notwithstanding that reasonable minds might differ in identifying more than one topic contained in this act.

SECTION 59. The provisions of this act are severable. If any section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, item, subitem, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this act is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect the constitutionality or validity of the remaining portions of the act, the General Assembly hereby declaring that it would have passed each and every section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, item, subitem, sentence, clause, phrase, and word thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, items, subitems, sentences, clauses, phrases, or words hereof may be declared to be unconstitutional, invalid, or otherwise ineffective.

SECTION 60. The provisions of PART I (General Provisions), PART III (Rules of Conduct), and PART V (Campaign Practices) are effective upon the Governor’s signature.

SECTION 61. The provisions of PART II (Ethics Committees) are effective as of July 1, 2016 and shall apply to complaints filed on after July 1, 2016. However, the provisions in Section 8-13-310 regarding the selection of members of the State Ethics Commission and the termination of terms of the members serving on the commission as of June 29, 2016 take effect after the date of the Governor’s signature in order to have the initial members of the reconstituted State Ethics Commission begin service on July 1, 2016. The State Ethics Commission, House Ethics Committee and Senate Ethics Committee shall maintain jurisdiction over all open complaints and investigations pending in the appropriate entity on or before June 30, 2016. The reconstituted State Ethics Commission shall have jurisdiction over open complaints and investigations pending within the State Ethics Commission as of June 30, 2016.

SECTION 62. The provisions of PART IV (Disclosure of Economic Interests) take effect on January 1, 2017.

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Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Majority favorable. Minority unfavorable.

LARRY A. MARTIN BRAD HUTTO

For Majority. For Minority.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑310, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION AND ITS MEMBERSHIP, SO AS TO RECONSTITUTE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015, TO CONSIST OF FOUR MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR, FOUR MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE SUPREME COURT, TWO MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND TWO MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE SENATE, RESPECTIVELY, TO PROVIDE FOR THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THESE MEMBERS, TO PROVIDE FOR OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERS’ TERMS OF OFFICE AND MANNER OF THEIR REMOVAL UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS; TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑320, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE DUTIES, POWERS, AND PROCEDURES OF THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION, SO AS TO REVISE THESE DUTIES, POWERS, AND PROCEDURES INCLUDING PROVISIONS TO VEST WITH THE COMMISSION THE ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE OR RECEIVE COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ITS STAFF, AND CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, TO INITIATE OR RECEIVE COMPLAINTS AGAINST JUDGES AND OTHER JUDICIAL OFFICIALS OF THE UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THEIR STAFFS, TO PROVIDE FOR THE INVESTIGATION AND PROCESSING OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS, STAFF, AND CANDIDATES PURSUANT TO SPECIFIED PROCEDURES AND FOR THE REFERRAL OF SUBSTANTIVE COMPLAINTS TO THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE OR SENATE ETHICS COMMITTEES FOR DISPOSITION TOGETHER WITH THE ETHICS COMMISSION’S RECOMMENDATION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS PROBABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE A VIOLATION HAS OCCURRED, TO PROVIDE FOR THE INVESTIGATION AND PROCESSING OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST JUDGES AND OTHER JUDICIAL OFFICIALS OR THEIR STAFF PURSUANT TO SPECIFIED PROCEDURES AND, AFTER INVESTIGATION, FOR THE REFERRAL OF SUBSTANTIVE COMPLAINTS TO THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT AND THE SUPREME COURT FOR DISPOSITION TOGETHER WITH THE ETHICS COMMISSION’S RECOMMENDATION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS PROBABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE A VIOLATION HAS OCCURRED; TO AMEND SECTIONS 8‑13‑530 AND 8‑13‑540, BOTH AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE DUTIES, FUNCTIONS, AND PROCEDURES OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE ETHICS COMMITTEES, SO AS TO REVISE THESE DUTIES, FUNCTIONS, AND PROCEDURES IN ORDER TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE ABOVE PROVISIONS AND TO MAKE OTHER CHANGES; BY ADDING SECTION 8‑13‑545 SO AS TO AUTHORIZE THE HOUSE OR SENATE ETHICS COMMITTEES TO ISSUE FORMAL ADVISORY OPINIONS AND PROVIDE FOR THEIR EFFECT AND APPLICABILITY; AND BY ADDING ARTICLE 6 TO CHAPTER 13, TITLE 8 SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR JUDICIAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES IN REGARD TO THE ABOVE PROVISIONS.

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

SECTION 1. Section 8‑13‑310 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 279 of 2012, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑310. ~~(A)~~ ~~The State Ethics Commission as constituted under law in effect before July 1, 1992, is reconstituted to continue in existence with the appointment and qualification of the at‑large members as prescribed in this section and with the changes in duties and powers as prescribed in this chapter. On July 1, 1993, when the duties and powers given to the Secretary of State in Chapter 17 of Title 2 are transferred to the State Ethics Commission, the Code Commissioner is directed to change all references to “this chapter” in Article 3 of Chapter 13 of Title 8 to “this chapter and Chapter 17 of Title 2”.~~

~~(B)~~ ~~There is created the State Ethics Commission composed of nine members appointed by the Governor, upon the advice and consent of the General Assembly. One member shall represent each of the seven congressional districts, and two members must be appointed from the State at large. No member of the General Assembly or other public official must be eligible to serve on the State Ethics Commission. The Governor shall make the appointments based on merit regardless of race, color, creed, or gender and shall strive to assure that the membership of the commission is representative of all citizens of the State of South Carolina.~~

~~(C)~~ ~~The terms of the members are for five years and until their successors are appointed and qualify. The members of the State Ethics Commission serving on this chapter’s effective date may continue to serve until the expiration of their terms. These members may then be appointed to serve one full five‑year term under the provisions of this chapter.~~

~~Members representing the first, third, and sixth congressional districts on this chapter’s effective date are eligible to be appointed for a full five‑year term in or after 1991. Members currently representing the second, fourth, and fifth congressional districts on this chapter’s effective date are eligible to be appointed for a full five‑year term in or after 1993. The initial appointments for the at‑large members of the commission created by this chapter must be for a one‑, two‑, or three‑year term, but these at‑large members are eligible subsequently for a full five‑year term. Under this section, the at‑large members of the commission are to be appointed to begin service on or after July 1, 1992. Vacancies must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the unexpired portion of the term only. Members of the commission who have completed a full five‑year term are not eligible for reappointment.~~

~~(D)~~ ~~The commission shall elect a chairman, a vice‑chairman, and such other officers as it considers necessary. Five members of the commission shall constitute a quorum. The commission must adopt a policy concerning the attendance of its members at commission meetings. The commission meets at the call of the chairman or a majority of its members. Members of the commission, while serving on business of the commission, receive per diem, mileage, and subsistence as is provided by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions.~~

(A) There is created the State Ethics Commission which beginning July 1, 2015, shall be composed of the members provided for in this subsection:

(1) four members must be appointed by the Governor, no more than two of whom are associated with the appointing Governor’s political party;

(2) four members must be elected by the Supreme Court, each of whom must not be actively serving judges of any court of this State, including summary court judges or retired judges sitting or permitted to sit as judges in the courts of this State;

(3) two members must be elected by the Senate with one member being nominated by the majority political party in the General Assembly and the other being nominated by the largest minority party in the General Assembly; and

(4) two members must be elected by the House of Representatives with one member being nominated by the majority political party in the General Assembly and the other being nominated by the largest minority party in the General Assembly.

(B)(1) The qualifications the appointing or electing authorities shall consider for the appointees include, but are not limited to:

(a) ethical fitness;

(b) character;

(c) mental stability;

(d) experience;

(e) temperament; and

(f) if the appointee has contributed to the election campaign of the individual appointing him to the State Ethics Commission within the previous four years.

(2) Members shall be chosen based on merit. However, in making appointments to the commission, the appointing authorities shall ensure that race, color, gender, national origin, and other demographic factors are considered to ensure the geographic and political balance of the appointments, and shall strive to assure that the membership of the commission represents, to the greatest extent possible, all segments of the population of this State.

(3) The following are not eligible to serve on the State Ethics Commission:

(a) a member of the General Assembly;

(b) a family member, as defined by Section 8‑13‑100(15), of a member of the General Assembly, the Governor, or any member of the Supreme Court;

(c) a person who registered as a lobbyist within four years of being appointed to serve on the State Ethics Commission;

(d) a person who is under the jurisdiction of the State Ethics Commission, the House of Representatives Ethics Committee, or the Senate Ethics Committee; and

(e) an actively serving judge of any court of this State, including summary court judges, and any retired judge sitting or permitted to sit in any court of this State.

(C) Any member of the commission who has made a campaign contribution as defined in Section 8‑13‑1300(7) or has any direct financial relationship, including interest in a business, partnership or LLC, with the respondent before the commission must recuse themselves from all proceedings concerning that respondent.

(D) The terms of the members are for five years. The terms of the members currently serving expire on June 30, 2015; however, a member who is serving at that time may be appointed for a new five‑year term. For the initial appointments made by the Governor, two must be for a term of two years, the third must be for a term of four years, and the fourth must be for a full five‑year term. For the initial appointments made by the House of Representatives and the Senate, one must be for a three‑year term and the other must be for a full five‑year term. The initial members who have served terms that are less than five years are eligible to be reappointed for one full five‑year term. Vacancies must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the unexpired portion of the term only. Members of the commission who have completed a full five‑year term are not eligible for reappointment and shall not serve on the commission after their term expires.

(E) The commission shall elect a chairman, a vice chairman, and such other officers as it considers necessary. Seven members of the commission constitute a quorum. The commission shall adopt a policy concerning the attendance of its members at commission meetings. The commission meets at the call of the chairman or a majority of its members. Members of the commission, while serving on business of the commission, receive per diem, mileage, and subsistence as is provided by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions.

(F)(1) A commission member appointed by the Governor may be removed from office by the Governor for malfeasance, misfeasance, incompetency, absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct, persistent neglect of duty in office, or incapacity, pursuant to Section 1‑3‑240.

(2) A commission member elected by the Senate or the House of Representatives may be removed for malfeasance, misfeasance, incompetency, absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct, persistent neglect of duty in office, or incapacity upon a finding by two‑thirds of the membership of the appropriate body.”

SECTION 2. A. The first paragraph of Section 8‑13‑320(9) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 245 of 2008, is further amended to read:

“(9) to initiate or receive complaints and make investigations, as provided in item (10), of statements filed or allegedly failed to be filed under the provisions of this chapter and Chapter 17, ~~of~~ Title 2 and, upon complaint by an individual, of an alleged violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, ~~of~~ Title 2 by a public official, public member, or public employee ~~except members or staff, including staff elected to serve as officers of or candidates for the General Assembly unless otherwise provided for under House or Senate rules~~. Any person charged with a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, ~~of~~ Title 2 is entitled to the administrative hearing process contained in this section.”

B. Section 8‑13‑320(10)(g) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 1 of 2011, is further amended to read:

“(g) All investigations, inquiries, hearings, and accompanying documents ~~must remain~~ are confidential ~~until a finding of probable cause or dismissal unless the respondent waives the right to confidentiality~~ and only may be released pursuant to this subsection. After a finding of probable cause by a majority of the commission, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response by the respondent, the notice of hearing, exhibits introduced at a hearing, the commission’s findings, and the final order. Exhibits introduced must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy. The respondent may waive the right to confidentiality. The ~~willful~~ wilful release of confidential information is a misdemeanor, and any person releasing confidential information, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year.”

C. Section 8‑13‑320(10)(j) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(j) If a hearing is to be held, the respondent must be allowed to examine and make copies of all evidence in the commission’s possession relating to the charges. The same discovery techniques which are available to the commission must be equally available to the respondent, including the right to request the commission to subpoena witnesses or materials and the right to conduct depositions as prescribed by subitem (f). A panel of three commissioners must conduct a hearing in accordance with Chapter 23, ~~of~~ Title 1 (Administrative Procedures Act), except as otherwise expressly provided. Panel action requires the participation of the three panel members. During a commission panel hearing conducted to determine whether a violation of the chapter has occurred, the respondent 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 evidence, including records the commission considers, must be offered fully and made a part of the record in the proceedings. The hearings must be ~~held in executive session unless the respondent requests an open hearing~~ open to the public.”

D. Section 8‑13‑320(11) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(11)(a) to issue, upon request from persons covered by this chapter, and publish formal advisory opinions on the requirements of this chapter, based on real or hypothetical sets of circumstances; provided, that an opinion rendered by the commission or an opinion issued by the commission prior to the effective date of this act, until amended or revoked, is binding on the commission in any subsequent charges concerning the person who requested the opinion and who acted in reliance on it in good faith unless material facts were omitted or misstated by the person in the request for the opinion. Formal advisory opinions must be in writing and are considered rendered when approved by ~~five or more~~ a majority of the commission members subscribing to the advisory opinion. Advisory opinions must be made available to the public unless the commission, by majority vote of the total membership of the commission, requires an opinion to remain confidential. However, the identities of the parties involved must be withheld upon request;

(b) the State Ethics Commission may issue through its staff a written informal advisory opinion, based on real or hypothetical sets of circumstances, to a person or governmental entity within the commission’s jurisdiction upon that person’s or governmental entity’s request. If raised in response to a complaint, the commission shall consider whether the person who requested the opinion or who is a member of the governmental entity who requested the informal opinion and who is affected by the circumstances described within the request for the informal opinion, relied in good faith on a written informal advisory opinion prior to making a probable cause determination.”

E. Section 8‑13‑320 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 1 of 2011, is further amended by adding appropriately numbered items to read:

“( ) to initiate upon the vote of a majority of the membership, and to receive complaints against a member or staff of the appropriate house or legislative caucus committee, or a candidate for the appropriate house, alleging a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2 and to conduct an investigation into the complaint pursuant to Section 8‑13‑540;

( ) to provide a copy of the complaint and accompanying materials to the Attorney General if the commission finds that there is probable cause to support the existence of criminal intent on the part of the respondent when the violation occurred.”

SECTION 3. Section 8‑13‑350 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 248 of 1991, is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑350. When hired, filing for office, or appointed and upon assuming the duties of employment, office, or position in state government, a public official, public member, and public employee shall receive a brochure prepared by the State Ethics Commission describing the general application of this chapter. The brochure must be created and updated by the State Ethics Commission and the brochure must provide an outline of the enforcement structure in the Ethics Act, the filing deadlines provided in the Ethics Act, and a general overview of the duties and responsibilities of individuals under the Ethics Act. Upon receipt of the brochure, the receiving individual should sign a document memorializing his receipt of the brochure. This signed document should be transmitted to the appropriate supervisory agency for its retention.”

SECTION 4. Section 8‑13‑530 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 245 of 2008, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑530. Each ethics committee 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 a rule or breach of a privilege governing a member or staff of the appropriate house, the alleged breach of a rule governing a member of, legislative caucus committees for, or a candidate, or staff for the appropriate house~~, misconduct of a member or staff of, legislative caucus committees for, or a candidate for the appropriate house, or a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2~~. Upon the filing of a complaint alleging a violation by a member or staff of the appropriate house or legislative caucus committee, or a candidate for the appropriate house, for a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2, except a technical violation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1170 or 8‑13‑1372, the ethics committee shall refer the complaint to the State Ethics Commission for an investigation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑540. The appropriate ethics committee shall investigate and make determinations for technical violations of Section 8‑13‑1170 or 8‑13‑1372;

(4) receive and hear a complaint which alleges a breach of a privilege governing a member or staff of the appropriate house, the alleged breach of a rule governing a member or staff of or candidate for the appropriate house~~, misconduct of a member or staff of or candidate for the appropriate house, or a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17 of Title 2.~~;

(5) no complaint may be accepted by the ethics committee or the State Ethics Commission concerning a member of or candidate for the appropriate house 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)~~(6) obtain information and ~~investigate~~ hear 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 issued by a majority vote of the committee the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of pertinent books and papers;

~~(6)~~(7) administer or recommend sanctions appropriate to a particular member, or staff of, or candidate for, the appropriate house pursuant to Section 8‑13‑540, including the recovery of the value of anything transferred or received in breach of the ethical standards, or dismiss the charges; and

~~(7)~~(8) act as an advisory body to the General Assembly and to individual members of or candidates for the appropriate house on questions pertaining to the disclosure and filing requirements of members of or candidates for the appropriate house and to issue, upon request from persons covered by this chapter and Chapter 17, Title 2, and publish advisory opinions on the requirements of these chapters.”

SECTION 5. A. Section 8‑13‑540 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 184 of 1993, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑540. ~~Unless otherwise provided for by House or Senate rule, as appropriate, each ethics committee 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. No complaint shall be accepted which is filed later than four years after the alleged violation occurred.~~

~~(2)~~ ~~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)~~ ~~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;~~

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

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

~~(6)~~ ~~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.~~

(A)(1) When a complaint is filed with or by the ethics committee, a copy must be sent to the person alleged to have committed the violation and to the State Ethics Commission, within thirty days from the date the complaint was filed, for an investigation as provided in this subsection. The State Ethics Commission may commence an investigation of an alleged violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2 of a member of the General Assembly, its staff, or candidates for the General Assembly upon the filing of a complaint by the commission or an individual, or by the referral of a complaint by the appropriate ethics committee. A copy of the complaint must be sent to the appropriate ethics committee. However, the appropriate ethics committee shall investigate and make a determination for a complaint that alleges only a technical violation of Section 8‑13‑1170 or 8‑13‑1372.

(2) If an alleged violation is found to be groundless by the State Ethics Commission, a report must be provided to the appropriate ethics committee. The appropriate ethics committee may concur or nonconcur with the commission’s report or, within fifteen days from the receipt of the State Ethics Commission’s report, request the commission to continue the investigation and consider additional matters not considered by the commission. If the commission finds that the complaining party wilfully filed a groundless complaint, the finding must be reported to the Attorney General and to the appropriate ethics committee. The wilful filing of a groundless complaint is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year. In addition to the criminal penalty provided by this item, the appropriate ethics committee may assess a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars against the complainant upon proof by a preponderance of the evidence that the filing of the complaint was groundless, wilful and without just cause or with malice.

(3) Action may not be taken on a complaint filed more than four years after the violation is alleged to have occurred unless a person, by fraud or other device, prevents discovery of the violation.

(4)(a) To conduct its investigation:

(i) the State Ethics Commission, upon receipt of information, may initiate a complaint upon an affirmative vote of the commission or shall accept notarized complaints referred from the ethics committees or from an individual, whether personally or on behalf of an organization or governmental body, that states the name of a person alleged to have committed a violation of this chapter or Chapter 17, Title 2 and the particulars of the violation. The commission shall forward a copy of the complaint, a general statement of the applicable law with respect to the complaint, and a statement explaining the due process rights of the respondent including, but not limited to, the right to counsel to the respondent within ten days of the filing of the complaint;

(ii) if the commission or its executive director determines that the complaint does not allege facts sufficient to constitute a violation, a report must be provided to the appropriate ethics committee. The appropriate ethics committee may concur or nonconcur with the commission’s report, or within fifteen days from the committee’s receipt of the finding, the committee may request the commission to continue the investigation and consider additional matters not considered by the commission. If the appropriate ethics committee concurs with the recommendation to dismiss the complaint, the committee must notify the complainant and respondent. All documents related to a complaint that result in a dismissal or a finding of no probable cause remains confidential, unless the respondent waives the right to confidentiality;

(iii) if the commission or its executive director determines that the complaint alleges facts sufficient to constitute a violation, an investigation may be conducted into the alleged violation. However, if the commission receives or initiates a complaint regarding a member of the General Assembly, legislative staff, or a candidate for the General Assembly, that only alleges a technical violation pursuant to Section 8‑13‑1170 or 8‑13‑1372, the complaint must be forwarded to the appropriate ethics committee for an investigation and disposition of the matter;

(iv) if the commission finds that there is evidence of wilful conduct that would constitute a criminal violation of Chapter 28 of Title 16, Chapter 13 of Title 8, or Chapter 17 of Title 2, on the part of the respondent when the violation occurred, then the complaint and accompanying materials also must be provided to the Attorney General. This provision does not limit any authority of the Attorney General or circuit solicitor to initiate or conduct any criminal investigation within his jurisdiction;

(v) if the commission determines that assistance is needed in conducting an investigation, the commission shall request the assistance of appropriate agencies;

(vi) the commission may order testimony to be taken in any investigation or hearing by deposition before a person who is designated by the commission and has the power to administer oaths and, in these instances, to compel testimony. The commission may administer oaths and affirmation for the testimony of witnesses and issue subpoenas by approval of the chairman, subject to judicial enforcement, and issue subpoenas for the procurement of witnesses and materials including books, papers, records, documents, or other tangible objects relevant to the agency’s investigation by approval of the chairman, subject to judicial enforcement. A person to whom a subpoena has been issued may move before a commission panel or the commission for an order quashing a subpoena issued pursuant to this section.

(b) All investigations and accompanying documents are confidential and only may be released pursuant to this item. Thirty days after a recommendation of probable cause by the commission after it completes its investigation, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response by the respondent, the notice of hearing before the appropriate ethics committee, the investigative findings, exhibits introduced at any hearing, and the final order. However, if the appropriate committee requests a further investigation, the documents must not be released until thirty days after the conclusion of the investigation or upon a finding of probable cause by the committee, whichever occurs earlier.

(c) Exhibits introduced must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy. The respondent may waive the right to confidentiality. The wilful release of confidential information is a misdemeanor, and a person releasing confidential information, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year.

(5) Upon completion of the commission’s investigation, the commission shall make a recommendation as to whether there is probable cause to believe a violation of this chapter or of Chapter 17, Title 2 has occurred. The commission shall forward a copy of its recommendation, along with a copy of all relevant reports, evidence, and testimony, to the appropriate ethics committee.

(6) If after reviewing the commission’s recommendation and relevant evidence, the ethics committee determines that probable cause does not exist, it shall send a written decision to the respondent and the complainant. If the ethics committee determines 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 public hearing on the matter within thirty days of the respondent’s failure to comply with the advisory opinion. A complaint must not be accepted which is filed later than four years after the alleged violation occurred.

(B) If a formal public hearing is to be held:

(1) the investigator or attorney handling the investigation from the ethics commission shall present the evidence related to the complaint to the appropriate ethics committee;

(2) it is the duty of the investigator or attorney to further investigate the subject of the complaint and any related matters under the jurisdiction and at the direction of the ethics committee, to request assistance from appropriate state agencies as needed, to request authorization from the committee for funds for the hiring of auditors, investigators, or other assistance as necessary, to prepare subpoenas, and to present evidence to the committee at any public hearing. The appropriate committee shall maintain the authority to approve subpoenas, authorize expenditures, dismiss complaints, schedule hearings, grant continuances, and any other authority as provided for by their rules;

(3) 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 open to the public.

(C)(1) 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, Title 2, it shall:

(a) administer a public reprimand;

(b) determine that a technical violation as provided for in Section 8‑13‑1170 or 8‑13‑1372 has occurred;

(c) require the respondent to pay a civil penalty not to exceed two thousand dollars for each nontechnical violation that is unrelated to the late filing of a required statement or report or failure to file a required statement or report;

(d) require the forfeiture of gifts, receipts, or profits, or the value of each, obtained in violation of Chapter 13, Title 8 or Chapter 17, Title 2;

(e) recommend expulsion of the member;

(f) provide a copy of the complaint and accompanying materials to the Attorney General if the committee finds evidence of willful conduct on the part of the respondent when the violation occurred; however, this provision does not limit any authority of the Attorney General or circuit solicitor to initiate or conduct any criminal investigation within his jurisdiction;

(g) require a combination of subitems (a) through (f) as necessary and appropriate.

(2) The ethics committee shall report its findings in writing to the Speaker of the House of Representatives 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.

(D) 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.

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

(F) 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.”

B. Article 5, Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑545. (A) The ethics committee may issue a formal advisory opinion, based on real or hypothetical sets of circumstances. A formal advisory opinion issued by the committee is binding on the State Ethics Commission and the committee, until amended or revoked, in any subsequent charges concerning the person who requested the formal opinion and any other person who acted in reliance upon it in good faith unless material facts were omitted or misstated by the person in the request for the opinion. A formal advisory opinion must be in writing and is considered rendered when approved by a majority of the committee members subscribing to the advisory opinion. Advisory opinions must be made available to the public unless the committee, by majority vote of the total membership of the committee, requires an opinion to remain confidential. However, the identities of the parties involved must be withheld upon request.

(B) The State Ethics Commission and the appropriate ethics committee shall consider whether a person relied in good faith upon a formal advisory opinion or written informal opinion issued by the committee prior to the effective date of this act, unless amended or revoked prior to the action considered as a possible violation, prior to making a probable cause decision.”

SECTION 6. Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 6

Judicial Complaints and Procedures

Section 8‑13‑610. (A) There is created a Commission on Judicial Conduct. The commission has jurisdiction over judges regarding allegations that misconduct occurred before or during service as a judge and regarding allegations of incapacity during service as a judge. The commission has continuing jurisdiction over former judges regarding allegations that misconduct occurred during service as a judge. The commission shall also have jurisdiction over allegations that a former judge has made false statements or presented false evidence, or has committed conduct which would be a ground for discipline under Rule 7(a)(2), Rules for Judicial Disciplinary Enforcement (RJDE), Rule 502, South Carolina Appellate Court Rules (SCACR), during a disciplinary proceeding against the former judge even if the conduct did not occur during the time of service as a judge, and the commission may recommend the imposition of a sanction under Rule 7(b) or may recommend that a finding of criminal contempt be made by the Supreme Court for this conduct.

(B) The commission shall be composed of twenty‑four members determined by the Supreme Court, the General Assembly, and the Governor as follows:

(1) The Supreme Court shall elect eight members, six of whom shall be judges from the circuit court, family court, or masters‑in‑equity, and two shall be judges from the magistrate, municipal, or probate courts.

(2) The Senate shall elect four members, two of whom must be regular members of the South Carolina Bar appointed from the state at large, and two of whom must be public members appointed from the state at large. To be eligible for election, two members must first be nominated by the majority party of the Senate and two members must be nominated by the minority party of the Senate.

(3) The House of Representatives shall elect four members, two of whom must be regular members of the South Carolina Bar appointed from the state at large, and two of whom must be public members appointed from the state at large. To be eligible for election, two members must first be nominated by the majority party of the House and two members must be nominated by the minority party of the House.

(4) The Governor shall appoint eight members, four of whom must be regular members of the South Carolina Bar appointed from the state at large, and four of whom must be public members appointed from the state at large. Additionally, no more than four of the appointees may be associated with the appointing Governor’s political party. Executive branch employees and current members of the Governor’s staff may not be appointed to serve as commission members.

(C) For purposes of this section, ‘public member’ means a commission member who has never served as a judge or admitted to practice law. The term ‘public member’ excludes current members of the General Assembly, executive branch employees, or current members of the Governor’s staff.

(D) Commission members shall serve for a term of four years and until their successors are appointed and qualify. Commission members are eligible for reappointment. A member assigned to a hearing panel may continue to participate in the hearing and decision of a matter despite the expiration of the member’s term if the hearing began before the expiration of the term. A vacancy shall occur when a commission member ceases to be eligible to represent the category from which the member was appointed, is removed by the member’s appointing authority, or becomes unable to serve. Vacancies must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the unexpired portion of the term only. Members of the commission, while serving on business of the commission, shall receive per diem, mileage, and subsistence as is provided by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions. Current members of the General Assembly may not be appointed to serve as commission members.

(E) Except as otherwise provided in this article, the commission’s organization, authority, powers, duties, and responsibilities are delineated in Rule 4, RJDE, Rule 502, SCACR.

Section 8‑13‑620. If an alleged violation is found to be groundless by the State Ethics Commission, a report must be provided to the Commission on Judicial Conduct. The Commission on Judicial Conduct may concur or nonconcur with the commission’s report or, within fifteen days from the receipt of the State Ethics Commission’s report, request the commission to continue the investigation and consider additional matters not considered by the commission. If the commission finds that the complaining party wilfully filed a groundless complaint, the finding must be reported to the Attorney General and to the Commission on Judicial Conduct. The wilful filing of a groundless complaint is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year. In addition to the criminal penalty provided by this section, the Commission on Judicial Conduct may assess a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars against the complainant upon proof by a preponderance of the evidence that the filing of the complaint was groundless, wilful and without just cause or with malice.

Section 8‑13‑630. (A) All judicial misconduct investigations, inquiries, hearings, and accompanying documents are confidential and only may be released pursuant to this subsection. Upon the filing of formal charges, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response by the respondent, the notice of hearing, exhibits introduced at a hearing, the commission’s findings, and the final order. Exhibits introduced must be redacted prior to release to exclude personal information where the public disclosure would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy. The respondent may waive the right to confidentiality.

(B) The wilful release of confidential information is a misdemeanor, and any person releasing confidential information, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year. If allegations of incapacity, as defined in Rule 2(l), RJDE, Rule 502, SCACR, are raised during the misconduct proceedings, all records, information, and proceedings relating to these allegations must be held confidential.

Section 8‑13‑640. If the chair, vice‑chair or a panel of the Commission on Judicial Conduct is in possession of reliable information indicating that a judge has violated the criminal laws of this State, another state, the District of Columbia, or the United States, the existence of the misconduct proceedings and other materials related to a criminal violation must be provided as soon as practicable to the Attorney General, the United States Attorney, or another similarly suitable law enforcement official for appropriate action.”

SECTION 7. Title 16 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“CHAPTER 28

Ethics

Criminal Penalties

Section 16‑28‑100. As used in this chapter, all terms shall have the same definition as contained in Sections 8‑13‑100 and 8‑13‑1300 as applicable.

Section 16‑28‑110. (A) A person may not, directly or indirectly, give, offer, or promise anything of value to a public official, public member, or public employee with the intent to:

(1) influence the discharge of a public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s official responsibilities;

(2) influence a public official, public member, or public employee to commit, aid in committing, collude in, or allow fraud on a governmental entity; or

(3) induce a public official, public member, or public employee to perform or fail to perform an act in violation of the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s official responsibilities:

(B) A public official, public member, or public employee may not, directly or indirectly, knowingly ask, demand, exact, solicit, seek, accept, assign, receive, or agree to receive anything of value for himself or for another person in return for being:

(1) influenced in the discharge of his official responsibilities;

(2) influenced to commit, aid in committing, collude in, or allow fraud, or make an opportunity for the commission of fraud on a governmental entity; or

(3) induced to perform or fail to perform an act in violation of his official responsibilities.

(C) A person may not, directly or indirectly, give, offer, or promise to give anything of value to another person with intent to influence testimony under oath or affirmation in a trial or other proceeding before:

(1) a court;

(2) a committee of either house or both houses of the General Assembly; or

(3) an agency, commission, or officer authorized to hear evidence or take testimony or with intent to influence a witness to fail to appear.

(D) A person may not, directly or indirectly, ask, demand, exact, solicit, seek, accept, assign, receive, or agree to receive anything of value in return for influencing testimony under oath or affirmation in a trial or other proceeding before:

(1) a court;

(2) a committee of either house or both houses of the General Assembly; or

(3) an agency, commission, or officer authorized to hear evidence or take testimony or with intent to influence a witness to fail to appear.

(E) Subsections (C) and (D) do not prohibit the payment or receipt of witness fees provided by law or the payment by the party on whose behalf a witness is called and receipt by a witness of the reasonable costs of travel and subsistence at trial, hearing, or proceeding, or, in the case of an expert witness, of the reasonable fee for time spent in the preparation of the opinion and in appearing or testifying.

(F) A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be punished by imprisonment for not more than ten years and a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars and is permanently disqualified from being a public official or a public member. A public official, public member, or public employee who violates the provisions of this section forfeits his public office, membership, or employment.

(G) This section does not apply to political contributions unless the contributions are conditioned upon the performance of specific actions of the person accepting the contributions nor does it prohibit a parent, grandparent, or other close relative from making a gift to a child, grandchild, or other close relative for love and affection except as otherwise provided.

Section 16‑28‑115. (A) No person may knowingly 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.

(B) The payment of reasonable and necessary travel expenses or for food or beverages consumed by the candidate or members of his immediate family while at, and in connection with, a political event are permitted.

(C) A person who wilfully or recklessly violates the provisions of this section:

(1) if the amount is two thousand dollars or less in the aggregate during any reporting period for the certified campaign reports as set forth in Section 8‑13‑1308, or in final disbursement as set forth in Section 8‑13‑1370, is guilty of misdemeanor triable in magistrates court or municipal court, notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 22‑3‑540, 22‑3‑545, 22‑3‑550, and 14‑25‑65. Upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than thirty days and must refund the amount of personal use back to his campaign account;

(2) if the amount is more than two thousand dollars but less than ten thousand dollars in the aggregate during any reporting period for the certified campaign reports as set forth in Section 8‑13‑1308, or in final disbursement as set forth in Section 8‑13‑1370, the person is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined in the discretion of the court or imprisoned not more than five years and must refund the amount of personal use back to his campaign account;

(3) if the amount is ten thousand dollars or more in the aggregate during any reporting period for the certified campaign reports as set forth in Section 8‑13‑1308, or in final disbursement as set forth in Section 8‑13‑1370, the person is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined in the discretion of the court or imprisoned not more than ten years, and must refund the amount of personal use back to his campaign account.

Section 16‑28‑120. (A) No person may wilfully offer or pay to a public official, public member, or public employee and no public official, public member, or public employee may wilfully solicit or receive money in addition to that received by the public official, public member, or public employee in his official capacity for advice or assistance given in the course of his employment as a public official, public member, or public employee.

(B) A person who wilfully or recklessly violates the provisions of this section:

(1) if the amount is two thousand dollars or less, is guilty of a misdemeanor triable in magistrates court or municipal court, notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 22‑3‑540, 22‑3‑545, 22‑3‑550, and 14‑25‑65. Upon conviction, the person must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than thirty days and must refund the amount of money to the state’s general fund;

(2) if the amount is more than two thousand dollars but less than ten thousand dollars, is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined in the discretion of the court or imprisoned not more than five years and must refund the amount of money to the state’s general fund;

(3) if the amount is ten thousand dollars or more, is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined in the discretion of the court or imprisoned not more than ten years, and must refund the amount of money to the state’s general fund.

Section 16‑28‑125. (A) A public official, public member, or public employee may not wilfully use or disclose confidential information gained in the course of or by reason of his official responsibilities in a way that would affect an economic interest held by him, a family member, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated.

(B)(1) A public official, public member, or public employee may not wilfully examine, or aid and abet in the wilful examination of, a tax return of a taxpayer, a worker’s compensation record, a record in connection with health or medical treatment, social services records, or other records of an individual in the possession of or within the access of a public department or agency if the purpose of the examination is improper or unlawful.

(2) A person convicted of violating this subsection must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than five years, or both, and shall reimburse the costs of prosecution. Upon conviction, the person also must be discharged immediately from his public capacity as an official, member, or employee.

Section 16‑28‑130. (A) No public official, public member, or public employee may cause the employment, appointment, promotion, transfer, or advancement of a family member to a state or local office or position in which the public official, public member, or public employee supervises or manages.

(B) A public official, public member, or public employee may not participate in an action relating to the discipline of the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s family member.

Section 16‑28‑135. A former public official, former public member, or former public employee may not for a period of one year after terminating his public service or employment:

(1) serve as a lobbyist or represent clients before the agency or department on which he formerly served in a matter which he directly and substantially participated during his public service or employment; or

(2) accept employment if the employment:

(a) is from a person who is regulated by the agency or department on which the former public official, former public member, or former public employee served or was employed; and

(b) involves a matter in which the former public official, former public member, or former public employee directly and substantially participated during his public service or public employment.

Section 16‑28‑140. It is a breach of ethical standards for a public official, public member, or public employee who is participating directly in procurement, as defined in Section 11‑35‑310(22), to resign and accept employment for a period of one year from the date of termination of service or employment with a person contracting with the governmental body if the contract falls or would fall under the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s official responsibilities.

Section 16‑28‑145. (A) Unless otherwise provided for in this chapter, a person who wilfully violates a provision of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be punished by imprisonment of not more than three years or a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars, or both. A court also may order an appropriate amount of restitution taking under consideration any unjust enrichment, use of campaign funds to defray costs associated with a criminal action, or other factors deemed relevant to the particular case.

(B) As used in this chapter, the term ‘wilfully’ means that the act is intentional or knowing, as opposed to inadvertent.”

SECTION 8. Section 8‑13‑780 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 248 of 1991, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑780. (A) The provisions of this section are in addition to all other civil and administrative remedies against public officials, public members, or public employees which are provided by law.

(B) ~~In addition to existing remedies for breach of the ethical standards of this chapter or regulations promulgated hereunder, the State Ethics Commission may impose an oral or written warning or reprimand.~~ For violation of the ethical standards of this article, the appropriate supervisory agency may:

(1) administer a public reprimand;

(2) require the respondent to pay a civil penalty not to exceed two thousand dollars for each nontechnical violation that is unrelated to the late filing of a required statement or report or failure to file a required statement or report;

(3) require the forfeiture of gifts, receipts, or profits, or the value of each obtained in violation of Chapter 13, Title 8 or Chapter 17, Title 2;

(4) require a combination of items (1) through (3) as necessary and appropriate.

(C) The value of anything received by a public official, public member, or public employee in breach of the ethical standards of this chapter ~~or regulations promulgated hereunder~~ is recoverable by the State or other governmental entity in an action by the Attorney General against a person benefitting from the violations.

(D) Before a public employee’s employment or a public official’s or public member’s association with the governmental entity is terminated for a violation of the provisions of this chapter, notice and an opportunity for a hearing must be provided to the public official, public member, or public employee.”

SECTION 9. Section 8‑13‑790(A) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 248 of 1991, is further amended to read:

“(A) The value of anything transferred or received in breach of the ethical standards of Articles 1 through 11 of this chapter ~~or regulations promulgated under it~~ by a public employee, public official, or a nonpublic employee or official may be recovered from the public employee, public official, or nonpublic employee or official.”

SECTION 10. Section 8‑13‑1510 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 40 of 2011, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1510. ~~(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.

~~(B)~~ ~~After the maximum civil penalty has been levied and the required 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 triable in magistrates court and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.~~”

SECTION 11. Article 15, Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑1515. A person who wilfully fails to file a required statement or report which has the effect of concealing a violation of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined five thousand dollars or be imprisoned for not more than one year, or both, for each statement or report not filed.”

SECTION 12. 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 and for failure to file a required statement or report, a person who 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) 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.

(D) For purposes of this section, ‘wilfully’ means that the act is intentional or knowing, as opposed to inadvertent.”

SECTION 13. Article 15, Chapter 13, Title 8 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 8‑13‑1525. For a violation of the ethical standards of this article, the appropriate supervisory agency may:

(1) administer a public reprimand;

(2) require the respondent to pay a civil penalty not to exceed two thousand dollars for each nontechnical violation that is unrelated to the late filing of a required statement or report or failure to file a required statement or report;

(3) require the forfeiture of gifts, receipts, or profits, or the value of each, obtained in violation of Chapter 13, Title 8, or Chapter 17, Title 2;

(4) order the repayment of any campaign funds it determines were inappropriately used to defray costs associated with the defense of the matter;

(5) require a combination of items (1) through (4) as necessary and appropriate.”

SECTION 14. Sections 8‑13‑705, 8‑13‑720, 8‑13‑725, 8‑13‑750, 8‑13‑755, and 8‑13‑760 of the 1976 Code are repealed.

SECTION 15. 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 16. Section 8‑13‑320(9)(c) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 184 of 1993, is further amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑320(9)(c). If an alleged violation is found to be groundless by the commission, the entire matter must be stricken from public record. If the 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 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~~ addition to the criminal penalty provided by this item, the commission may assess 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 groundless, wilful and without just cause or with malice.”

SECTION 17. Section 2‑17‑140 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 2‑17‑140. 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~~ addition to the criminal penalty provided by this section, the commission may assess 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 groundless, wilful and without just cause or with malice.”

SECTION 18. Sections 1 through 6 of this act take effect on July 1, 2015, except that the election or appointment of members of the State Ethics Commission as provided for in Section 8‑13‑310 of the 1976 Code, as amended by this act, may take place upon the signature of this act by the Governor so that these members may take office and begin serving on July 1, 2015. Sections 7 through 14 of this act take effect upon approval by the Governor.

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