

## Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

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# Public and Local Officials Handbook

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## Welcome

This handbook was written for you by the staff of the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board. The Board was created by the Legislature back in the 1970's. Part of its job is to oversee and publish information about how personal financial interests could influence state legislative and administrative actions and metropolitan governmental actions. You can learn more about the mission and members of the Board on our website at [www.cfboard.state.mn.us](http://www.cfboard.state.mn.us)

This handbook is for people who are public and local officials. Public and local officials must report about their individual financial interests and potential conflicts of interest.

Although many people work for the government, not all of those people are public or local officials. Public and local officials are only those individuals who hold one of the government jobs described in Chapter 10A. This handbook will tell you whether you are a public or local official and, if you are, what reports and notices you need to file.

If you print this handbook, please check the Board website periodically for updates. Look at the "Last revised" date on the first page of the online handbook to see if you have the latest version.

We have not tried to answer every possible question in this handbook. When you can't find the answer to a question here, please call us. You can find out which staff member can best help you by looking at the Getting Help section at the end of this handbook. You also can look at our website for additional information. All the forms you need also are available on our website.

In general, if you are elected or appointed to one of the positions listed in Chapter 10A, you must file a Statement of Economic Interest. On this form, you must report some general information about your financial interests, such as your employer's name and the location of any non-homestead property that you own. You must update your statement once a year if something on it changes. The Board posts some of this information about public officials on its website so that the public can know when a public official might have a private financial interest in a pending public matter. Metropolitan governmental units may post some of the information about their local officials on their websites.

If one of your financial interests could be affected by a matter pending before you, you must disclose the potential conflict of interest and try to abstain from the matter. If you cannot abstain, you must explain why this is not possible. You also must disclose when you represent a client for a fee in an agency hearing.

Finally, lobbyists and their employers cannot give gifts to public and local officials except in certain limited situations. When lobbyists or their employers give public or local officials gifts that are permitted under the law, these gifts must be disclosed by the lobbyist.

## **Filing a Statement of Economic Interest**

### **Overview**

This chapter tells you whether you qualify as a public or local official and, if you do, how to file a Statement of Economic Interest.

### **Topics covered**

- Are you a public official?
- What are the requirements for candidates for constitutional and legislative offices?
- What are the requirements for local officials?
- What is a Statement of Economic Interest?
- When does your first Statement of Economic Interest need to be filed?
- How do you complete the section for address, occupation, and employer?
- What is an associated business?
- How do you complete the section on sources of compensation?
- How do you complete the section on securities?
- How do you complete the section on real property?
- How do you file your first Statement of Economic Interest?
- When do you update your Statement of Economic Interest?
- How do you fix mistakes on a Statement of Economic Interest?
- What happens when you stop being a public or local official?
- What penalties apply if you don't follow the laws for Statements of Economic Interest?

### **Are you a public official?**

People who are public officials must file a Statement of Economic Interest with the Board. Although many people work for the government, not all of those people are public officials. Public officials are only those people who hold one of the government jobs listed in Chapter 10A.

Generally, public officials fall into the following categories:

- Members of the legislature and high-level legislative employees;
- Constitutional officers and high-level employees of constitutional offices;
- Commissioners and high-level employees of state agencies;
- Members, directors, and high-level employees of state boards or commissions that have rule-making authority or the authority to decide contested cases;
- Administrative law judges;
- Supervisors of soil and water conservation districts;
- Managers of watershed districts and members of water management organizations; and
- Members, directors, and some employees of the boards and commissions specifically listed in Chapter 10A.

District court judges, appellate court judges, supreme court justices, and county commissioners who are elected or appointed to office on or after January 1, 2014, also will be public officials.

A complete list of all positions that qualify as public officials is available on the Board's [website](#). If your position is on this list, you are a public official and you must file a Statement of Economic Interest with the Board.

If you fill one of the listed positions on a part-time or acting basis, you are a public official.

### **What are the requirements for candidates for constitutional and legislative offices?**

Although they are not yet public officials, candidates for constitutional and legislative offices also are required to file Statements of Economic Interest with the Board. The constitutional offices are governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and state auditor. The legislative offices are state senator and state representative.

### **What are the requirements for local officials?**

Local officials in metropolitan governmental units also are required to file Statements of Economic Interest. Local officials, however, file their statements with the governing body of their metropolitan governmental unit.

A metropolitan governmental unit means any of the following entities:

- the counties of Anoka; Carver; Dakota; Hennepin; Ramsey; Scott; and Washington;
- a regional rail authority established by one of the above counties;
- a city with a population over 50,000 located in one of the above counties;
- the Metropolitan Council; or
- the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and Metropolitan Airports Commission.

A local official is someone who

- holds elective office in one of the counties or cities listed above; or
- is appointed to or employed by one of the entities listed above and has the authority to make, recommend, or vote on major decisions regarding the use of public money.

The positions listed for the following entities, however, are public officials instead of local officials because these positions are on the list of public officials in Chapter 10A:

- Metropolitan Council – members, regional administrator, division director, general counsel, and operations manager;
- Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission – members and chief administrator;
- Metropolitan Airports Commission – members and chief administrator;

County commissioners elected or appointed to office on or after January 1, 2014, also will be public officials instead of local officials.

If you fill one of the listed positions on a part-time or acting basis, you are a local official.

A complete list of the positions that qualify as local officials is available on the Board's [website](#).

### **What is a Statement of Economic Interest?**

A Statement of Economic Interest is a form that public and local officials use to disclose information about their personal financial interests. The form has sections for information about your occupation, employer, and sources of compensation. It also has sections to disclose information about your interests in securities, real property, and the horse racing industry.

All information reported on a Statement of Economic Interest is public. The Board posts some of the information on a public official's Statement of Economic Interest on its website. Metropolitan governmental units may post some of the information on a local official's Statement of Economic Interest on their websites.

### **When does your Statement of Economic Interest need to be filed?**

The deadline for filing a Statement of Economic Interest varies depending on the position.

Although they are not yet public or local officials, candidates for elective constitutional or legislative office or for elective office in a metropolitan governmental unit must file a Statement of Economic Interest within 14 days after filing for office.

A public official whose appointment requires confirmation by the senate must file a Statement of Economic Interest within 14 days of undertaking the duties of the office.

All other public and local officials must file a Statement of Economic Interest within 60 days of accepting employment or assuming the duties of a position.

### **How do you complete the section for address, occupation, and employer?**

There are two places for addresses on the first page of the Statement of Economic Interest form. The address box on the left of the form is for the public or local official's address. You can list your home address in this box but you are not required to do so. You also can list your business address or the address of the agency for which you serve as a public or local official. The address you list in the address box on the left side of the form is where the Board will send you information.

The address box on the right side of the first page of the form is for your business address. Although all information on the Statement of Economic Interest is public, the Board will post only your business address on its website. If you do not list a business address on the form, the Board will post the address from the left side of the form on its website.

Your occupation is your usual job. For some people, their usual job is the same as their public or local official position. For example, the commissioner of a state agency typically will write the word “commissioner” in the occupation box. But many public and local officials have other jobs that are their main employment. You should list your main employment as your occupation. If you are retired, a student, a homemaker, or unemployed, you can list that category as your occupation and leave the box for the employer’s name empty.

If you are self-employed, you should write “self-employed” in the employer box and give the main address where you conduct your business.

**What is an associated business?**

On the Statement of Economic Interest, both the section for sources of compensation and the section for securities ask for information about your interests in an associated business. An associated business is one of the types of entities listed in column A

- from which you received more than \$50 in a month for your services in one of the positions listed in column B, or
- in which you own any of the securities listed in Column C that have a fair market value of \$2,500 or more.

<b>Column A – Entities</b>	<b>Column B – Positions</b>	<b>Column C – Securities</b>
Association (this is two or more people, not all from the same immediate family, acting together)	Director	Stocks
Corporation	Officer	Shares
Partnership	Owner	Bonds
Limited liability company	Member	Warrants
Limited liability partnership	Partner	Options
Other organized legal entity (including a trust or mutual fund)	Employer	Pledges
	Employee	Notes
		Debentures
		Leases
		Commercial paper

In other words, you need a type of entity that’s listed in Column A **plus** one of the positions in Column B **or** ownership of one of the things in Column C before the interest qualifies as an interest in an associated business.

On your first Statement of Economic Interest, you look at only the calendar month before the date on which you became a public or local official to determine if you reached the \$50 income threshold or the \$2,500 securities threshold. On later statements, you have an interest in an associated business if you reached the income or securities threshold in any month since the date of your last statement.

The date on which you became a public or local official is the effective date of your appointment to the position.

### **How do you complete the section on sources of compensation?**

The sources of compensation section is where you report information about the associated businesses that paid you money for your services. You report information about the associated business in which you own securities in the next section on the statement.

In the sources of compensation section, you list the name of any type of entity listed in Column A above that paid you more than \$50 in a month for your services in one of the positions in Column B. For each associated business, you must check the box or boxes on the form showing your relationship with that associated business.

If your employer is one of the types of entities listed in Column A, you would list your employer in the sources of compensation section and check the employee box for this line. On your first Statement of Economic Interest, you look at only the month before you became a public or local official to determine if you met the \$50 income threshold. On later Statements of Economic Interest, you report the income if you reached the \$50 threshold in any month since the date of your last statement.

On later Statements of Economic Interest, you also must report any honorarium and per diem that you receive from any source that is more than \$50 in a month. You use the sources of compensation section to report these payments even when the source of the honorarium or per diem is not an associated business.

You are not required to report payments made to you for services you performed as an independent contractor. You also do not need to report social security payments, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, pension benefits, insurance benefits, or income from rental property.

**Example 1:** You are self-employed and your business is organized as an S corporation. You are an officer of the corporation and an employee of the business. You receive more than \$50 in a month from your business. The S corporation is an associated business because it is organized as one of the types of entities in Column A and you hold at least one of the positions in Column B. You should list your business as an associated business in the sources of compensation section and check the boxes for employee and officer.

If you own shares in the S Corporation that are worth \$2,500 or more, you also will list your business in the securities section of the Statement of Economic Interest. The next section in the handbook gives you more information about filling out the securities section on the statement.

**Example 2:** You are self-employed but your business is not organized as any of the types of entities listed in Column A. You receive more than \$50 in a month from your business. Because your business is not one of the types of entities listed in Column A, your business would not be an associated business. You would not report it in the sources of compensation section.

### **How do you complete the section on securities?**

The securities section is where you report the names of associated businesses in which you own securities. A complete definition of associated business is contained in a [previous section](#) of this handbook. Briefly, for purposes of the securities section, an associated business is one of the following types of entities in which you own securities that have a fair market value of \$2,500 or more:

- An association;
- A corporation;
- A partnership;
- A limited liability company;
- A limited liability partnership; or
- Any other organized legal entity, including trusts and mutual funds.

For your first Statement of Economic Interest, you look at the month before you became a public or local official to determine if the value of your securities in an associated business reached the \$2,500 threshold. On later Statements of Economic Interest, you should report securities that have a fair market value of \$2,500 or more in any month since the date that you completed your last statement.

Securities include the following things:

- Stocks;
- Shares, including shares of a mutual fund;
- Bonds issued by a non-governmental entity;
- Warrants;
- Options
- Pledges;
- Notes;
- Debentures;
- Leases; or
- Commercial paper

Stocks or shares held in an IRA, deferred compensation plan, 401(k) account, or other similar account are securities.

The following things are not securities:

- Deposits in a savings account;
- Certificates of deposit;
- Money market certificates;
- Treasury bills;
- Federal, state, municipal, or other political subdivision bonds or notes;
- Dividends from securities;
- Holdings in a pension or retirement plan.

In the securities section, you report only the name of the entity whose securities you own. You do not report the value of the securities that you own. If you bought or sold the securities during the reporting period, you can include the date of that transaction but you are not required to list any dates.

You must report the actual name of the entity, not the symbol that the entity uses for its stock on an exchange. For example, if you own securities in Target Corporation, you must list the name "Target Corporation" on your statement, not the symbol "TGT" that the company uses on the stock exchange.

If you are reporting shares in a mutual fund, you should list the name of the fund and the fund provider but you do not have to list the stocks or other assets held by the mutual fund.

**Example:** Through your IRA, you own stock in five corporations and shares in one mutual fund. The fair market value of the mutual fund shares and the stock in each of two of the corporations is \$2,500 or more.

The corporations and the mutual fund are all types of entities that can be associated businesses. But because your securities are worth \$2,500 or more in only two of the corporations and in the mutual fund, you would only list the names of those two corporations and the mutual fund on your Statement of Economic Interest. You would not list the names of the corporations in which your shares are worth less than \$2,500 or the names of the companies in which the mutual fund holds shares.

### **How do you complete the section on real property?**

The real property section is where you report information about land in Minnesota in which you own, either personally or in partnership, one of the following interests:

- A fee simple interest (own);
- A mortgage held as a seller;

- A contract for deed held as a buyer or a seller;
- An option to buy, either direct or indirect, if your interest in the option agreement is valued at more than \$2,500; or
- An option to buy if the property has a fair market value of \$50,000 or more.

You do not have to list property which you claim as a homestead.

For your first Statement of Economic Interest, you list property that you owned on the date on which you became a public or local official. On later Statements of Economic Interest, you must list property that you owned in any month since you completed your last statement.

If you bought or sold the property during the reporting period, you can list the date of that transaction but you are not required to include any dates.

You must report the county in which the property is located. If the property has a street address, you must report that address on the statement. If the property does not have a street address, you must list the section, township and range of the property or its lot, block, and addition. You must list the acreage for any property that does not have a street address.

If you own a second home and you have a good reason for not disclosing the location of this property, the Board can give you permission to omit the address of this property from your Statement of Economic Interest. You must ask the Board for this waiver in writing. A waiver form is available on the Board's website.

You must check the box that describes the type of interest that you have in the property. You do not have to describe the type of property (for example; cabin or condominium).

### **How do you complete the section on pari-mutuel horse racing?**

The pari-mutuel section is where you report any interest that you or an immediate family member has in property connected with horse racing in the United States and Canada. You must report both direct and indirect interests and partial interests. If the interest was bought or sold during the reporting period, you can list the date of this transaction but you are not required to list any dates.

### **How do you file your first Statement of Economic Interest?**

If you are a public official, the first time that you file a Statement of Economic Interest with the Board, you must use a paper form. You also must use a paper form if you are a candidate for a public official office that you do not currently hold and you are not already a public official due to another position. The [paper form](#) is available on the Board's website. You can file the form in person or by mail, fax, or email.

After you have submitted your first Statement of Economic Interest, you will be able to update your statement using the Board's [online reporting system](#).

If you are a local official, you must check with your metropolitan governmental unit to find out how to file your Statements of Economic Interest.

### **When do you update your Statement of Economic Interest?**

If something that you reported on your Statement of Economic Interest changes, you must update your statement by April 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

If you are a public official, you can use the [online reporting system](#) located on the Board's website to update your statement. The Board will mail you a username and password for the online reporting system shortly before the annual update, or recertification, is due. This mailing usually is done in late March. You will be able to use the online system to review your information, to make any necessary changes, and to certify that your information is correct.

If you are a local official, you must check with your metropolitan governmental unit to find out how to update your Statement of Economic Interest.

### **How do you fix mistakes on a Statement of Economic Interest?**

If you are a public official, you can fix mistakes on your Statement of Economic Interest using the Board's [online reporting system](#). If you don't already have a username and password for the system, contact the Board to get this information. You then will be able to use the online system to make the corrections to your report.

You also can submit corrections to the Board using the [paper Statement of Economic Interest](#). You should indicate on the form what is being changed from the previous statement.

If you are a local official, you must check with your metropolitan governmental unit to find out how to fix mistakes on your Statement of Economic Interest.

### **What happens when you stop being a public or local official?**

When your term as a public or local official ends, the entity on which you serve will send a notice to the Board that you no longer are a public or local official. If something on your Statement of Economic Interest has changed since the date that you last completed the form, you must update your information. The deadline for updating your information is the April 15<sup>th</sup> after the date that you stopped being a public or local official. You do not have to wait until April, however, to update your statement. Instead, it is recommended that you update your statement as soon as possible after leaving your position.

Sometimes, government entities do not promptly notify the Board that you no longer are a public or local official. You can always contact the Board yourself to let staff know that you no longer are a public or local official.

**What penalties apply if you don't follow the laws for Statements of Economic Interest?**

If you do not file a Statement of Economic Interest by the applicable due date, the Board can charge a late fee of \$5 per day up to a maximum of \$100. The Board can charge an additional penalty of up to \$1,000 for not filing a statement after the Board has sent notice that your statement is overdue.

If you certify that the information on a Statement of Economic Interest is true when you know that the statement contains false information or omits required information, the Board can impose a civil penalty of up to \$3,000.

Signing a Statement of Economic Interest knowing that it contains false information or omits required information also can be criminally prosecuted. For these violations, the Board could refer the matter to the Minnesota Attorney General or to a county attorney. The attorney general or the county attorney would decide whether the matter should be charged as a crime. The Board itself does not charge or prosecute criminal matters.

## Filing other notices related to your official activities

### Overview

This chapter tells you about the other notices that public and local officials must file and when those notices are due. District court judges, appeals court judges, and Supreme Court justices are not required to file these notices.

### Topics covered

[What is a potential conflict of interest notice and when is it due?](#)

[What is a notice of inability to abstain from potential conflict of interest and when is it due?](#)

[What is a representation disclosure notice and when is it due?](#)

[What penalties apply if you don't follow the laws governing these notices?](#)

### What is a potential conflict of interest notice and when is it due?

Public and local officials can face situations where carrying out their public duties could affect their private financial interests. In some of these situations, the law requires public and local officials, except for district court judges, appeals court judges, and Supreme Court justices, to disclose this potential conflict of interest. The form used for this disclosure is called a [potential conflict of interest notice](#). It is available on the Board's website.

Specifically, you must complete the potential conflict of interest notice when, in the discharge of your official duties, you would be required to take an action or make a decision that would substantially affect your financial interests or those of an [associated business](#).

You do not have to complete the notice if the effect on you is no greater than the effect on other members of your business classification, profession, or occupation.

Also, a local official does not have to complete the notice if the pending matter involves an interest in contract governed by Minnesota Statutes sections 471.87 and 471.88.

You must file the notice before the action or decision involving the potential conflict of interest takes place.

You must provide the following information on the potential conflict of interest notice:

- Your name;
- Your address;
- The position that you hold;
- The name of the public entity where you serve as an official;

- The name of your immediate supervisor (if you are a legislator or a member of the governing body of a metropolitan governmental unit, you list the name of the presiding officer of your body of service in this box);
- The date when the action or decision occurred or will occur;
- A description of the matter requiring action or decision; and
- The nature of the potential conflict.

You also must sign the notice. Your signature certifies that the information provided on the notice is accurate.

All information on the notice is public.

You must deliver the completed notice to your immediate supervisor. If you are a legislator, you must deliver the notice to the presiding officer of your legislative body. If you are a member of the governing body of a metropolitan governmental unit, you must deliver the notice to the presiding officer of your governing body.

If there is not time to prepare the notice, you must orally tell your immediate supervisor about the potential conflict. Legislators and members of metropolitan unit governing bodies must orally tell the presiding officer of their bodies of service about the potential conflict.

What happens after you give notice of the potential conflict depends on your position. If you are not a legislator or a member of the governing body of a metropolitan governmental unit, one of the following things must happen:

- Your supervisor must assign the matter, if possible, to another employee who does not have a potential conflict of interest; or
- If you have no immediate superior, you must abstain, if possible, from having influence over the action or decision in question.

If you are a legislator or a member of the governing body of a metropolitan governmental unit, your legislative or governing body, at your request, may excuse you from taking part in the action or decision in question.

If you are not permitted or are not able to abstain from action or decision in connection with the matter, you must file a notice of inability to abstain from potential conflict of interest.

**What is a notice of inability to abstain from potential conflict of interest and when is it due?**

When public and local officials have a potential conflict of interest between their public duties and their private financial interests, the law requires them to try to abstain from the action or decision that is creating the potential conflict. In some cases, however, such as when a legislator is not excused from voting on an issue, the official cannot abstain from the matter. In

these situations, the official must file [a notice of inability to abstain from potential conflict of interest](#).

This requirement does not apply to district court judges, appeals court judges, or Supreme Court justices.

If you are required to file a notice of inability to abstain from potential conflict of interest, you must provide the following information on the notice:

- Your name;
- Your address;
- The position that you hold;
- The name of the public entity where you serve as an official;
- The name of your immediate supervisor (if you are a legislator or a member of the governing body of a metropolitan governmental unit, you list the name of the presiding officer of your body of service in this box);
- The date when the action or decision occurred or will occur;
- A description of the matter requiring action or decision;
- The nature of the potential conflict; and
- A description of the action that you took on the matter.

You also must sign the notice. Your signature certifies that the information provided on the notice is accurate.

All information on the notice is public.

The notice must be filed within one week of the date that the action was taken.

Local officials file the notice with the governing body of their metropolitan governmental unit. Public officials file the notice with the Board. You can file the notice with the Board in person or by mail, fax, or email.

### **What is a representation disclosure notice and when is it due?**

If you are a public official, you must file [a representation disclosure notice](#) with the Board when you represent a client for a fee in a rulemaking or contested case hearing that is held in front of an individual, board, commission, or agency that has rulemaking authority.

You must provide the following information on the representation disclosure notice:

- Your name;
- Your address;
- The position that you hold;
- The name of the public entity where you serve as an official;

- The name and address of the client represented;
- The name of the agency that held the hearing;
- The date and location of your first appearance; and
- A general description of the subjects on which you represented the client.

You also must sign the notice. Your signature certifies that the information provided on the notice is accurate.

You must file the notice with the Board within 14 days after the date of the appearance. You can file the notice in person or by mail, fax, or email.

**What penalties apply if you don't follow the laws governing these notices?**

If you do not file a representation disclosure notice within ten business days after the notice was due, the Board can charge a late fee of \$5 per day up to a maximum of \$100. If you do not file a representation disclosure notice within seven days after the Board notifies you that one is due, the Board can impose a civil penalty of up to \$1,000

If you certify that the information on any of the notices in this section is true when you know that the document contains false information or omits required information, the Board can impose a civil penalty of up to \$3,000. Signing one of the notices in this section when you know that it contains false information or omits required information also can be criminally prosecuted.

## Gifts and contributions

### Overview

This section tells you about the ban on gifts from lobbyists and principals to public and local officials.

### Topics covered

[What is the ban on gifts from lobbyists and principals to public and local officials?](#)

[What is a political contribution?](#)

[What penalties apply to gifts that don't follow the rules?](#)

### What is the ban on gifts from lobbyists and principals to public and local officials?

A lobbyist or a principal may not give a gift to a public or local official or ask someone else to give a gift to one of these officials.

The gift ban applies to all judges and to county commissioners in the metropolitan area. In 2014, the gift ban will be extended to apply to all county commissioners in Minnesota elected or appointed to office on or after January 1, 2014.

A gift is anything given to an official when the lobbyist or principal does not receive consideration of equal or greater value in return. The following things can be gifts:

- money;
- real or personal property;
- a service;
- loans, paying a loan, or forgiving or not collecting a loan;
- a promise of future employment;
- meals or entertainment;
- loans of personal property for less than payment of fair market value;
- giving preferential treatment for purchases; and
- honoraria.

There are some exceptions to the ban on gifts. The gift ban does not apply to the following things unless they are prohibited by some other law:

- Political contributions;
- Services to help an official in the performance of official duties, including providing advice, consultation, information, and communication in connection with legislation, and services to constituents;
- Services of insignificant monetary value;
- A plaque with a resale value of \$5 or less;

- A trinket or memento costing \$5 or less;
- Informational material with a resale value of \$5 or less;
- Food or beverage given at a reception, meal, or meeting away from the recipient's workplace by an organization before whom the recipient appears to make a speech or answer questions as part of a program; or
- Food or beverage given at a reception, meal, or meeting if the recipient is a member or employee of the legislature and all legislators were invited to the event at least five days before the event.

The gift ban also does not apply if the gift is given

- because of the official's membership in a group, a majority of whose members are not officials, provided that an equivalent gift is given to the other members of the group; or
- by a lobbyist or principal who is a member of the official's family, unless the gift is given on behalf of someone who is not a member of the official's family.

Lobbyists and principals must keep records of all gifts given to public and local officials. Lobbyists report these gifts on their lobbying disbursement reports.

The Board has an extensive [gift ban guide](#) available on its website.

### **What is a political contribution?**

A political contribution is anything given to a candidate's campaign committee. The contribution can be money or a loan. A contribution also can be a thing or a service. Political contributions are reported on the candidate's campaign finance reports.

### **What penalties apply to gifts and contributions that don't follow the rules?**

There are no statutory penalties for gifts that do not follow the rules. In the case of a prohibited gift, however, the Board may order the recipient to return the gift or to pay for it. There are various penalties for contributions that do not follow the rules. The contribution penalties are described in detail in the candidate handbooks.

## Getting help

### Overview

This chapter tells you how to get help from the Board.

### Topics covered

[What is the role of Advisory Opinions?](#)

[Complaints](#)

[Who do you contact for help?](#)

### What is the role of Advisory Opinions?

The Board on occasion issues advisory opinions that provide the Board's interpretation of a statutory provision. Over the years, the Board has issued over 400 opinions which can be viewed and searched on the Board website at <http://www.cfboard.state.mn.us/Advisory.htm>. If you have a question about an advisory opinion, or wish to discuss the process for requesting an opinion from the Board, contact Board staff.

### Complaints

The Board enforces the economic interest disclosure laws by reviewing reports that people file with it. Of course, not all problems with conflicts of interest show up on filed reports. If you have reason to believe that a public or local official is not reporting accurately to the Board, or in some other way has broken the conflict of interest laws, you can file a complaint with the Board. If the complaint is about an activity under the Board's jurisdiction, and evidence is provided to show that the complaint has a reasonable basis, the Board will investigate. The information concerning the complaint is private until the Board publishes its decision.

### Who do you contact for help?

At the beginning of this handbook, we told you that we wouldn't try to answer every possible question you might have. We encourage you to call or e-mail the Board for help. We want your experience with the Board to be successful, and Board staff will try their best to provide you with the information you need for that to happen.

For economic interest statement and reporting questions, please contact Elizabeth Schroeder, (651) 539-1184; [elizabeth.schroeder@state.mn.us](mailto:elizabeth.schroeder@state.mn.us)

For gift prohibition questions, please contact Jeff Sigurdson, Assistant Executive Director; (651) 539-1189, [jeff.sigurdson@state.mn.us](mailto:jeff.sigurdson@state.mn.us)

For advisory opinions or Board information, please contact Gary Goldsmith, Executive Director; (651) 539-1190, [gary.goldsmith@state.mn.us](mailto:gary.goldsmith@state.mn.us)

**You may also contact the Board as follows:**

By email at [cf.board@state.mn.us](mailto:cf.board@state.mn.us)

By telephone at (651) 539-1180 or toll free (800) 657-3889.

By TTY by calling (800) 627-3529 and asking for (651) 539-1180.

By fax to (651) 539-1196 or fax toll free (800) 357-4114.

By United States mail to:      Campaign Finance & Public Disclosure Board  
   190 Centennial Office Building  
   658 Cedar Street  
   St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-1603