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Ethics Cases Considered by the House and Senate Ethics Committees

CAVEATS:

- Not all cases resulted in discipline or admonition. Some were dismissed; several Senate cases resulted in advisory opinions only.
- Some cases were initiated by the members themselves to resolve a potential conflict of interest, other cases were initiated by complaints from other members of the respective legislative body.
- *This is NOT a summary of all ethics issues concerning members of the Legislature during this period. Some members resigned, did not seek reelection, or were defeated before complaints were filed. In some instances, members were involved in separate legal proceedings (such as DWI) but an ethics complaint was not filed.
- Dates listed are the year of the ethics committees' reports.
- Additional materials about the cases noted in this list may be available in the Legislative Reference Library, including news clippings. The Library's holdings do not constitute a complete record of any situation. The Library also has information on other situations relating to legislative ethics that were not formally referred to the ethics committees.
- While efforts have been made to verify all information, errors are possible. Please report any errors to the library staff. (refdesk@lrl.leg.mn)

Cases Considered by the Ethics Committee of the Minnesota House of Representatives, 1986-2016

Background on the House Ethics Committee can be found in a 2003 House Research Department memo by Deborah McKnight, [House Ethic Committee Structural and Procedural Issues](#).

Note: During this time frame, complaints regarding two members were submitted to the Committee, but later withdrawn (Rep. Greg Davids, 5/14/2004, and Rep. Tom Workman, 3/4/1996).

2015 - Rep. Denny McNamara *(To be updated soon)*

2009 - Rep. Paul Gardner

A complaint was filed on May 15, 2009, against Rep. Gardner for inappropriate Twitter posts he made on May 8th.

Outcome: The House Ethics committee met on June 2, 2009, and found no probable cause for an ethics violation, but asked Rep. Gardner to apologize to the House. He did so on February 4, 2010 (the first day of session).

- [Materials relating to the Minnesota House of Representative's investigation of the conduct of Representative Paul Gardner](#)
- [Ethics Committee Hearing in the Matter of the Complaint Against Representative Paul Gardner](#) (Link to the audio of the June 2, 2009, hearing.)
- [House of Representatives Floor Session, February 4, 2010](#) (In this link to the House proceedings, Rep. Gardner's apology is at minute 8:24.)

2003 - Rep. Arlon Linder

A complaint was filed on March 11, 2003, against Rep. Arlon Lindner, claiming he made derogatory remarks against homosexuals and inaccurate portrayals of the Holocaust and AIDS in Africa. The case was heard by the House Ethics Committee on April 7 and April 24, 2003.

Outcome: The House Ethics Committee vote on April 24, 2003, split 2-2 along party lines; the resolution to censor him failed. Democrats brought the issue to the House floor on April 25. A procedural motion

to consider a resolution censuring Rep. Lindner and removing him as chairman of the House Economic Development and Tourism Division failed.

- [*Materials relating to the investigation into the conduct of Representative Arlon Lindner by the Minnesota House Committee on Ethics during the 2003 legislative session.*](#)

2001 - Rep. Jim Abeler

A conflict of interest complaint was filed against Rep. Abeler on April 24, 2001, for voting on bills that involved charter school funding when he owned a charter school building. The case was heard by the House Ethics Committee on May 10, 2001.

Outcome: The House Ethics Committee dismissed the complaint in a closed meeting on May 18, 2001.

- [*Materials Relating to the Minnesota House of Representative's Investigation of the Conduct of Representative James Abeler.*](#)

2000 - Rep. Arlon Lindner

A complaint was filed on February 28th, 2000, under House Rule 6.10. The complaint alleged conduct by a member that violates accepted norms of House behavior. Speaking to Rep. Paymar, a Jewish member, Rep. Lindner said, "Don't impose your irreligious left views on me." The House Ethics Committee met in public session on March 20 and March 21, 2000. The Committee met in executive session March 23, 2000.

Outcome: The Committee found that "Representative Arlon Lindner's comments on the house floor were very regrettable," that discipline was inappropriate and no further action would be taken, and that the Committee would send the Speaker of the House a recommendation that the House Rules relating to speech in debate are contradictory and need to be revised.

- [*Materials Relating to the Investigation into the Conduct of Representative Arlon Lindner by the Minnesota House Committee on Ethics During the 2000 Legislative Session*](#)

2000 - Rep. Jim Rostberg

A complaint was filed on March 6, 2000, under House Rule 6.10. Rep. Rostberg had been charged with one count of felony criminal sexual conduct in the first degree and two counts of felony criminal sexual conduct in the second degree, accused of sexual contact with a person under 16 over an extended period of time.

Outcome: At the March 24th, 2000, meeting, the committee voted to defer proceedings on the complaint until the completion of ongoing criminal proceedings. Rep. Rostberg chose not to run for re-election, so the Ethics Committee did not act further.

- [Materials relating to the Minnesota House of Representative's investigation of the conduct of Representative James Rostberg.](#)

1996 - Rep. Jeff Bertram

In an ethics complaint filed February 22, 1996, Rep. Bertram was accused of pressuring a businessman into giving a campaign contribution by threatening to do business with a competitor; pressuring the store-owner to drop shoplifting charges filed against his brother, Sen. Joe Bertram; making false statements about several individuals; and engaging in other acts of intimidation, threats, and harassment.

In a vote on March 22, 1996, the House Ethics Committee recommended that Rep. Bertram be censured by the Minnesota House in open session; that he publicly admit to-- on the House floor in open session-- acts of misconduct specified in the committee report; that he apologize on the House Floor to the Minnesota House, to his constituents, and to each of the victims named in the report; that he agree to undergo a psychological evaluation for anger and report to the Speaker of the House and the chairman and vice chairman of the Ethics Committee the results of the evaluation; and that he resign from all House committee chair or vice-chair positions and membership on legislative commissions.

Outcome: The full House adopted the recommendations. Rep. Bertram consented to dispositional action. He apologized publicly on the House floor on March 22, 1996. A minority report recommending expulsion was presented to the full House, but was voted down.

- *Minnesota House of Representatives Debate on the Censure Resolution on the Conduct of Rep. Jeff Bertram* [Videorecording in the Library collection: KFM5821.5.L4 M56 1996]

1996 - Rep. Robert Johnson

The complaint made on December 19, 1995, alleged that Rep. Johnson threatened the Commissioner of Public Safety when the State Patrol turned down his request to drive him to St. Paul for the funeral of former governor Rudy Perpich. Also, he had multiple guilty pleas for driving while intoxicated.

On January 12, 1996, the Ethics Committee recommended to the Rules Committee that the member be censured and that he resign.

Outcome: On January 16, 1995, the full House voted to censure him. A minority report recommending expulsion was presented to the full House, but was voted down.

- [Materials relating to the investigation of the conduct of Representative Robert Johnson by the Minnesota House Committee on Ethics.](#)

1990 - Rep. Jeff Conway

A complaint was filed with the House Ethics Committee in 1989 regarding a conflict of interest allegation. The Ethics Committee discussed the complaint on September 28, 1989. In March, 1990, Rep. Conway was indicted for felony level criminal securities law violations for mishandling business clients' money.

Outcome: He resigned on March 13, 1990, the day before he was scheduled to appear before the Ethics Committee in a public hearing. The representative was subsequently convicted and incarcerated for defrauding investment clients.

- [Minutes](#) of the House Ethics Committee, September 28, 1989.

1988 - Rep. Ken Kludt

The Select Committee on Ethics decided through its own discussions and through correspondence with the Speaker to investigate and make recommendations regarding the December 14, 1987, conviction of Rep. Kludt for soliciting an act of prostitution.

Outcome: The committee report to the Rules Committee recommended that Rep. Kludt be required to submit a written apology to the House. He did, and it was included in the House Journal.

[Report of the Select Committee on Ethics to the Committee on Rules and Legislative Administration.](#)
Journal of the House, March 29, 1988.

1986 - Rep. Randy Staten

A Select Committee on the Staten case was appointed by the Speaker of the House on Jan. 24, 1986. Rep. Randolph Staten pled guilty to felony theft for writing bad checks on January 17, 1986. He had also submitted incomplete and untimely campaign finance reports during the years 1981-1986. Hearings were held on February 11, 14, and 18.

Outcome: The expulsion vote failed in the House on March 13, which then voted to censure him and ordered him to donate 18% of his legislative pay (for the remainder of the year) to a nonprofit chemical dependency program of his choice, perform 100 hours of volunteer service, and continue in chemical dependency treatment. If campaign finance reporting problems continued, he must return all public financing money he obtained.

- [Report of the Select Committee on the Staten Case](#)
- *Transcripts of the Select Committee on the Staten Case* [6 volumes in the Legislative Reference Library], JK6174.8 .M562 1986

Cases Submitted to the Ethics Subcommittee of the Minnesota Senate, 1994-2016

References to “the Subcommittee” are to the Senate Rules and Administration Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct. Until 2007, the Subcommittee was known as the Special Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct.

2014-2015 - Sen. Jeff Hayden *(To be updated soon)*

2014 - Sen. Bobby Joe Champion

A complaint was filed against Sen. Bobby Joe Champion on October 7, 2014. The complaint indicated that "Sen. Bobby Joe Champion used his position as a state senator to unduly influence the Minneapolis School Board to approve a \$375,000 contract to an organization that financially benefited his friends and associates." A substantially similar complaint was filed against Sen. Jeff Hayden.

The Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct met on November 5, 2014 to address the complaints filed against Senators Champion and Hayden.

After the presentation of the complaint and Sen. Champion’s response to the complaint, a motion was made to find no probable cause. That motion failed on a 2 to 2 vote. Another motion was made to proceed with further investigation "to instruct the Minneapolis School Board to answer questions provided by Sen. Hann." That motion also failed on a 2 to 2 vote. Senator Pappas laid the complaint on the table.

Outcome: The Subcommittee adjourned without taking action on the complaint. The Subcommittee took no further action during the remainder of the 89th Legislature.

- [Materials Relating to the Investigation of the Conduct of Senator Bobby Jo Champion: Compiled from the Committee Records of the Minnesota Senate Rules Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct](#)
- [Rules and Administration Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct hearing, November 5, 2014](#)
(audio of committee hearing)

2012 - Sen. Geoff Michel

A complaint was filed against Sen. Geoff Michel on March 19, 2012 regarding improper oversight of staff. The complaint stated that Sen. Michel failed "to take appropriate action to fully and swiftly address the alleged inappropriate relationship between the Senate majority leader and a subordinate Senate employee until its public disclosure was imminent."

The Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct met on March 23, 2012. The Subcommittee recessed but failed to reconvene by midnight and so were considered adjourned according to Senate Rule 12.4. The Subcommittee met again on April 17, 2012 and eventually adjourned to the call of the chair.

Outcome: After meeting on two different dates, the Subcommittee did not take action on the complaint. Sen. Michel did not seek reelection to the Senate following the expiration of the 2011-2012 term.

- [*Materials Relating to the Investigation of the Conduct of Senator Geoff Michel: Compiled from the 2012 Committee Records of the Minnesota Senate Rules Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct*](#)
- [*Rules and Administration Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct hearing, March 23, 2012*](#) (audio of committee hearing)
- [*Rules and Administration Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct hearing, April 17, 2012, part 1*](#) (audio of committee hearing)
- [*Rules and Administration Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct hearing, March 23, 2012, part 2*](#) (audio of committee hearing)

2011 - Sen. Gretchen Hoffman

A complaint was filed against Sen. Gretchen Hoffman on May 20, 2011. During a floor debate over the state's health and human services budget on May 18, 2011, Senator Hoffman tweeted that Senator Barb Goodwin had called people with mental disabilities "idiots and imbeciles." Senator Goodwin was using those words to describe language used in a bygone era to underscore how much things have advanced in recent decades.

Outcome: On Monday, June 13, 2011 (Senate video), the Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct ruled that Senator Hoffman must issue a written apology to Senator Goodwin, retract the original tweet, and post a link to the Subcommittee report on her Twitter account.

The Ethics Subcommittee issued a letter on June 21, 2011, stating that Senator Hoffman fulfilled the requirements set by the committee and the complaint was dropped.

- [*Materials relating to the Senate Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct investigation of the Conduct of Senator Gretchen Hoffman*](#)
- [*Senate Rules and Administration Committee Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct, Complaint by Senator Rest about Senator Hoffman*](#) (Link to the June, 2011, audio of Senate Committee hearings. See June 13.)

2011 - Sen. Scott Newman

On January 27, 2011, a complaint was filed against Senator Scott Newman regarding an email sent out by a legislative aide in his office. While the message stated that Senator Newman would not meet with the Minnesota Nurses Association after the union supported his competitor in the November, the senator said the message did not reflect his policy.

Outcome: The Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct met in public session and executive session on February 9, 2011. The Subcommittee dismissed the complaint.

- [*Materials relating to the Senate Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct investigation of the Conduct of Senator Scott Newman*](#)
- [*Senate Rules and Administration Committee Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct, Complaint by Senators Pappas, Kelash and Dibble regarding Senator Newman*](#) (Link to the February, 2011, audio of Senate Committee hearings. See February 9.)

2010 - Sen. Satveer Chaudhary

On May 27, 2010, Sen. Chaudhary requested an advisory opinion from the Subcommittee to determine whether he had a conflict of interest in proposing special fishing regulations on Fish Lake Reservoir, where he owned a cabin at the time the legislation was proposed. The Subcommittee met on June 2.

Outcome: The Subcommittee's June 2 advisory opinion stated that Sen. Chaudhary had no conflict of interest in this matter. The Subcommittee noted that while his conduct did not violate any rule or policy of the Senate, it did violate accepted norms of Senate behavior and threatened public confidence in the legislative institution and its processes.

- [*Advisory Opinion on Conflict of Interest \[and other documents\]*](#)

2008 - Sen. Julianne Ortman

On February 21, 2008, Sen. Ortman requested that the Subcommittee determine whether she had a conflict of interest as chief author of two bills, SF294 and SF2984, due to her employment as the Finance Director in the Office of the Hennepin County Sheriff. The Subcommittee considered the issue on March 6.

Outcome: The advisory opinion issued by the Subcommittee on March 6 determined that Sen. Ortman did not have a conflict of interest as the chief author of either of the two bills.

[*Advisory Opinion on Conflict of Interest \[and Sen. Ortman's letter of request\]*](#)

2008 - Sen. Satveer Chaudhary

On May 21, 2008, Sen. Chaudhary asked the Subcommittee to determine if he had a conflict of interest due to business transactions he conducted as the producer of the outdoor-sports cable television show, "Born to be Wild." The Subcommittee met on September 15.

Outcome: The Subcommittee issued its advisory opinion on September 17 that Sen. Chaudhary did not have a conflict of interest as the author of a 2007 law regarding independent contractors, nor did he have a conflict of interest in drafting a 2008 amendment requiring Minnesota state and local government agencies to give preference in the bid process to Minnesota manufacturers when purchasing snowmobiles. Additionally, his purchase of a discounted Arctic Cat snowmobile, used on the television show, was not a prohibited gift from a lobbyist principal.

- [Advisory Opinion on Conflict of Interest \[and other documents\]](#)

2006 - Sen. Dean Johnson

A complaint was filed on March 22, 2006, over recorded comments that Sen. Johnson made at a gathering of clergy in Spicer, Minnesota, on January 19. Sen. Johnson spoke about alleged conversations he had with members of the Minnesota Supreme Court concerning whether the Court was likely to find that the Minnesota statutes that prohibit and refuse to recognize a marriage between two persons of the same sex were unconstitutional. The Subcommittee met on March 24.

Outcome: The Subcommittee's March 24 resolution recommended to the Committee on Rules and Administration that Sen. Johnson make a public apology on the Senate Floor and apologize to the individuals who organized the meeting in Spicer. On March 27, Sen. Johnson delivered an apology to the Minnesota Senate and his District 13 constituents on the Senate floor. He also delivered a letter to the person who convened the meeting of clergy in January. After delivery of the apologies, the complaint was formally dismissed on March 31.

- [Conduct of Senator Dean E. Johnson : Final Report](#)

2004 - Sen. Michael Jungbauer

A complaint was submitted on May 5, 2004, alleging that Sen. Jungbauer used Senate equipment for political purposes. The Subcommittee met on May 11, June 28, and November 17 to consider whether Sen. Jungbauer's conduct in sending out an email notification of a certain press conference violated Senate administrative policy and constituted improper conduct.

Outcome: In a November 17 resolution, the Subcommittee found that Sen. Jungbauer failed to exercise due care when he instructed his legislative assistant to distribute an email promoting a press conference that included campaign fundraising pleas. They determined that neither Sen. Jungbauer nor his assistant understood that the press conference would include political campaign activity. The Subcommittee recommended that Sen. Jungbauer make a written apology to the Senate and his District 48 constituents. Upon delivery of the apology, also on November 17, the complaint was dismissed.

- [Conduct of Senator Michael J. Jungbauer : Final Report](#)

2004 - Sen. Brian LeClair

On February 9, 2004, Sen. LeClair asked the Subcommittee to determine whether he had a conflict of interest as the chief author of two insurance-related bills, SF15 and SF1602. He was an insurance agent with, and vice president of, LeClair Insurance. The Subcommittee met on March 10 to consider Sen. LeClair's request.

Outcome: In an advisory opinion issued on March 12, the Subcommittee determined that Sen. LeClair had no conflict of interest as the chief author of either of the two bills.

- [Advisory Opinion on Conflict of Interest \[and Sen. LeClair's letter of request\]](#)

1999 - Sen. Dallas Sams

On December 1, 1998, Sen. Sams requested that the Subcommittee determine if he had a conflict of interest regarding his work as a consultant to the University of Minnesota. He was paid by the University to help establish the Minnesota Agriculture Education Leadership Council. He had been involved in the legislation creating the Council. He was also paid by the University, via a state contract with a third party, to revamp the University's program in agricultural education. The matter was heard by the Subcommittee on December 16, 1998, and January 12, 1999.

Outcome: In its January 29 advisory opinion, the Subcommittee found that Sen. Sams' work for the University did not constitute a conflict of interest. However, the Subcommittee considered Sen. Sams' conduct in attempting to conceal the payment via a third party – to avoid negative political perceptions – unethical and improper. The Subcommittee recommended that the Senate reprimand Sen. Sams; order Sen. Sams to issue a public apology to the Senate, his District 11 constituents, and the public; and remove Sen. Sams as a member and vice chair of the Human Resources Finance Committee. Sen. Sams apologized on the floor of the Senate on February 1.

- [Advisory Opinion Issued to, and at the Request of Senator Dallas Sams \[and other documents\]](#)

1999 - Sen. Dan Stevens

On December 16, 1998, Sen. Stevens requested an advisory opinion to determine whether his acceptance of a project manager position with the C.E. Rogers Company, and work to secure a grant for the company and the city of Mora, would present a conflict of interest with his duties as a senator. The Subcommittee met on January 12, 1999.

Outcome: In its January 13 advisory opinion, the Subcommittee determined there was no conflict of interest presented by Sen. Stevens' work with the C.E. Rogers Company or the city of Mora.

- [*Advisory Opinion on Conflict of Interest \[and other documents\]*](#)

1998 - John F. Berglund, Lobbyist

On March 13, 1998, a complaint was filed with the Subcommittee against John Berglund, registered lobbyist for the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association, for furnishing false statements to senators during a debate on lowering the state's drunk driving limit. The statements were included in a flyer distributed to members on the Senate floor. The statements were false and falsely attributed to Katherine Burke Moore with the Department of Public Safety. The Subcommittee met on March 25.

Outcome: In an April 7 resolution, the Subcommittee recommended that Mr. Berglund acknowledge to Ms. Burke Moore and the Senate that he was careless and negligent in failing to verify the statements. Mr. Berglund did so on April 9, and the complaint was dismissed.

- [*Conduct of John F. Berglund, Final Report*](#)

1996 - Sen. Joe Bertram

On September 29, 1995, Sen. Joe Bertram Sr. pleaded guilty to a petty misdemeanor for stealing a leather vest from a clothing store. The owner of the store alleged that Sen. Bertram offered him \$1000 if the owner made no mention of the incident to the police. Sen. Bertram resigned his two committee chair positions on October 3. On December 11, the Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe requested the Subcommittee examine what disciplinary actions the Senate should take against Sen. Bertram. On December 20, a formal complaint was filed, and the Subcommittee met on January 3, 1996.

Outcome: Sen. Bertram resigned on January 9 shortly before the Subcommittee was scheduled to meet to determine sanctions.

- [*Materials Related to the Ethical Conduct of Sen. Joe Bertram*](#)

1996 - Sen. Kevin Chandler

On August 11, 1995, Sen. Chandler pleaded guilty to assault in the fifth degree for slapping his wife with an open hand on July 26. On October 3, he resigned his Senate leadership positions. On December 12, the Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe asked the Subcommittee to consider whether disciplinary actions were appropriate, and on December 20, a formal complaint was filed. On December 27, Sen. Chandler announced he would not seek reelection, and on January 3, 1996, he submitted a written apology to the Senate. The Subcommittee met on January 3 and January 9. Sen. Chandler declined to appear at either hearing.

Outcome: In a January 9 resolution, the Subcommittee stated that Sen. Chandler's resignation from his leadership positions was appropriate disciplinary action and recommended that he apologize to the Senate in open session. Sen. Chandler apologized on the Senate floor on January 16.

- [Conduct of Senator Kevin M. Chandler, Report to the Committee on Rules and Administration](#)

1996 - Sen. Sam Solon

Sen. Solon was investigated in 1993-94, and again in 1995, for providing the Senate's long-distance access code to others.

In March 1993, multiple investigations of the Legislature's long-distance telephone system were begun to determine whether unauthorized calls had been made using public funds. Sen. Solon allowed his roommate and others to use his Senate access code for non-Senate business. He made restitution for the unauthorized calls. On May 12, Sen. Solon apologized to the Senate for the embarrassment and notoriety that giving out the Senate's long-distance telephone access code had caused the body. On May 13, Sen. Solon stated that he would appear before the Subcommittee, but would like any Subcommittee action to be taken only after the completion of the Attorney General's investigation of the matter. With that investigation closed, on March 18, 1994, Sen. Solon requested that the Subcommittee determine whether his action to provide the Senate's access code to others was improper.

Outcome: On March 24, 1994, a Senate resolution formally reprimanded Sen. Solon for his conduct in providing the Senate's long-distance telephone access code to others and for allowing others to use his Senate office and telephone for personal business. Sen. Solon was required to make restitution and apologize to the Senate.

In 1995, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, continuing the investigation the Office began in 1993, discovered that Sen. Solon's ex-wife had used the Senate's access code in 1992 and 1993. On December 5, 1995, Sen. Solon pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge arising from his role in her misuse of the

Senate telephone system. Also on December 5, Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe asked the Subcommittee to determine the disciplinary action the Senate should take against Sen. Solon. Sen. Solon resigned his committee chair position on December 12. On December 20, a formal complaint was filed, and the Subcommittee met on January 3 and January 9, 1996.

Outcome: The Subcommittee's January 9 resolution noted that Sen. Solon's resignation as chair of the Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection was an appropriate disciplinary action. The Subcommittee recommended that he be removed from the Committee on Rules and Administration and that he apologize to the Senate in open session. Sen. Solon apologized to the full Senate on January 16.

- [*Senate Special Committee on Ethical Conduct Re: Senator Sam G. Solon \(1994\) Appendix. \(1994\)*](#)
- [*Conduct of Senator Sam G. Solon: Report to the Committee on Rules and Administration \(1996\)*](#)

1996 - Sen. LeRoy Stumpf

Sen. Stumpf requested an advisory opinion from the Subcommittee on March 18, 1996, to determine if he had a conflict of interest as a consultant to the Red Lake Watershed District. Sen. Stumpf had been criticized in a *Star Tribune* article for sponsoring bills to get state funds for a beaver-control program in northwestern Minnesota while receiving \$14,000 in consulting fees from the agency. The Subcommittee met on March 20 and March 22.

Outcome: The Subcommittee's March 22 advisory opinion found that Sen. Stumpf's work as a consultant did not constitute a conflict of interest.

- [*Materials Relating to the Senate Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct Investigation of Sen. LeRoy Stumpf \(1996\)*](#)

1995 - Sen. Florian Chmielewski

On December 5, 1995, Sen. Chmielewski pleaded guilty to a gross misdemeanor for misusing the Senate telephone system by providing his access code to his son and other family members. On December 11 he resigned his positions as Chair of the Transportation and Public Transit Committee and President Pro Tem of the Minnesota Senate. On December 12 Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe requested the Subcommittee determine what disciplinary action against Sen. Chmielewski would be appropriate, and on December 20, a formal complaint was filed. Sen. Chmielewski requested that the Subcommittee hearing scheduled for January 9, 1996, be continued; the request was granted. Hearings were subsequently held on June 19 and June 27, 1996. Sen. Chmielewski declined to appear at either hearing.

Outcome: The Subcommittee's resolution, passed on June 27, recommended that Sen. Chmielewski be removed from two committees, denied use of the Senate telephone access code when away from the Capitol, not be reimbursed for lodging expenses, and treated as a first-term Senator for the purposes of interim appointments. However, the Subcommittee's resolution had to be approved by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, which had no scheduled meetings until the following year. Sen. Chmielewski was defeated in the primary election of 1996.

- [Materials Relating to the Senate Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct Investigation of Sen. Florian Chmielewski \(1995\)](#)

1995 - Sen. Harold "Skip" Finn

On August 17, 1994, Sen. Finn pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges involving theft of \$13,345 from the Leech Lake Band. (He later withdrew this conditional guilty plea when the terms of his sentencing, on March 3, 1995, were higher than he would accept.)

A complaint was filed with the Subcommittee on January 3, 1995. The Subcommittee met a total of eight times – January 27, March 10, March 21, March 29, April 3, April 19, May 5 and May 17 – to determine the scope of the complaint, gather documentation about the federal case facing Sen. Finn, and identify potential witnesses to interview.

Outcome: The Subcommittee encountered several obstacles to getting live testimony from witnesses and was not able to complete its proceedings before the end of the 1995 session.

Sen. Finn was indicted on June 7 for conspiring to steal, with two other men, nearly \$1 million from the Band. On October 3, he resigned his leadership positions. He was convicted the following year, on April 12, 1996. Sen. Finn resigned from the Senate on April 26, effective July 1. On September 5, Sen. Finn was sentenced to nearly five years in prison.

- [Materials from the Senate Subcommittee on Ethical Conduct, Vol. 3, 1995 \(including materials on Senator Harold Finn\)](#)

1994 - Sen. Sam Solon

(See 1996 entry.)