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ETHICS AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING

A guide for persons or business entities that have or seek contracts with Cook County



Cook County Board of Ethics

The Cook County Ethics Ordinance (Chapter 2 Administration, Article VII Ethics, Sections 2-560-2-639 of the Cook County Code) imposes restrictions on persons and business entities who are Cook County contractors or vendors (or who seek Cook County contracts) in their interactions with Cook County employees or officials. These restrictions are summarized in this brochure.

Note: This publication contains only an overview intended to help persons or businesses that have or seek Cook County contracts to develop a basic understanding of their responsibilities under this Ordinance. To the extent this summary differs from the language of the Ordinance, the language of the Ordinance controls. For authoritative guidance about specific situations, please consult with the Board of Ethics. For assistance call 312-603-4304.

Gifts and Favors



▶ Section 2-574 of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance restricts Cook County officials and employees from receiving or soliciting gifts from prohibited sources.

▶ *Gift* means any gratuity, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, or other tangible or intangible item having monetary value including, but not limited to, cash, food and drink, and honoraria for speaking engagements related to or attributable to government employment or the official position of an official or employee.

▶ No Cook County official or employee (or their spouse or other immediate family members living with a Cook County official or employee) shall intentionally solicit or accept any gift from a prohibited source.

▶ *Prohibited source* means any person or entity who:

- is seeking official action by the official or by the employee or by the official, Cook County agency or other employee directing the employee.
- does business or seeks to do business with Cook County.
- conducts activities regulated by the official or by the employee or by the official, Cook County agency or other employee directing the employee.
- has interests that may be substantially affected by the

performance or non-performance of the official duties of the official or employee.

→is registered or required to be registered with Cook County pursuant to the Cook County Lobbyist Ordinance.

NOTE: Any item or items (from any one person or business entity) having a cumulative value of less than \$100 during any calendar year may be given to any Cook County official or employee.



Restrictions regarding retaining or hiring current or former Cook County employees

▶ Section 2-580 of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance places certain post-employment restrictions on former Cook County officials and employees.

▶ No former Cook County official or employee may assist or represent any person other than Cook County in a judicial or administrative proceeding or business transaction involving Cook County if, while in Cook County service, they were substantially involved in the subject matter of that transaction.

▶ No former Cook County official or employee, who exercised contract management authority over Cook County contracts, may, for one year after leaving Cook County service, accept employment (part-time, full-time, or contract) from an employer if, while in Cook County service, they were personally and substantially involved in the decision to award that employer a Cook County contract of \$25,000 or more.

▶ *Contract Management Authority* means personal involvement in or direct supervisory responsibility for the formation or execution of a Cook County contract, including without limitation the preparation of

specifications, evaluation of bids or proposals, negotiation of contract terms or supervision of performance.

▶ No current Cook County official or employee shall have a financial interest in any contract, sale or business paid for with Cook County funds.

▶ A *financial interest* is payment of \$2,500 per year; an interest worth \$5,000 or more; or an interest of 10% or more of a for-profit entity.

Disclosure of Familial Relationships

▶ Section 2-582 of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance sets guidelines for the employment of relatives with Cook County.

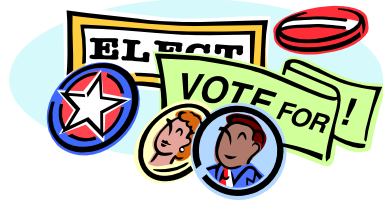
▶ Any person or persons doing business with Cook County shall be required, upon execution of a contract with Cook County, to disclose to the Board of Ethics, the existence of familial relationships they may have with all persons, as defined by the Ordinance.

▶ For purposes of this section *relative or familial relationship* shall mean a person who is related to an official or employee as spouse or any of the following, whether by blood, marriage or adoption: parent, child, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother or half-sister.



Political Contributions

▶ Section 2-585 of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance limits political campaign contributions to candidates for any elected Cook County government office, as well as political campaign contributions to elected Cook County officials.



Limitations on Contributions

▶ Certain persons shall not contribute more than \$750 to any candidate for Cook County office or elected Cook County official during a single candidacy, or to a Cook County elected official during any nonelection year of his or her term, or to any local, state, or federal campaign committee that is controlled by, or established in support of, a candidate for Cook County office or an elected Cook County official.

These persons are:

- persons who have done business with Cook County within the preceding four years.
- persons who are seeking to do business with Cook County.
- lobbyists registered with Cook County.* (see below section on Lobbyists)

▶ Total contributions, per candidate, may not exceed \$1,500 in the course of a year in which a candidacy occurs.

▶ A year for the purposes of the Ordinance is from January 1 to December 31 of each year.

▶ An entity and its subsidiaries, parent company or otherwise affiliated companies, and any of their employees, officers, directors and partners who make a political contribution for which they are reimbursed by the entity or its affiliates shall be considered a single person for purposes of these contribution limitations.

Note: An employee, officer, director or partner is not prohibited from making a political contribution for which he or she is not reimbursed by a person of whom he or she is affiliated with, even if that person has made the maximum contribution allowed under the Ordinance.

For purposes of these contribution limitations:

▶ "done business" or "doing business" means 1) any one or any combination of sales, purchases, leases or contracts, to, from or with Cook County or any Cook County agency in excess of \$10,000 in any 12 consecutive months and also 2) representation involving real property assessments, property tax appeals, zoning matters, and property tax incentives, the total fees of which earned or accrued by a person exceed \$10,000 in any 12 consecutive months.

▶ "seeking to do business" means taking action within the past 6 months to obtain a contract or business with Cook County when, if such action were successful, it would result in the person doing business with Cook County.

Note: Any attorney or tax representative who has done business with the Zoning Board, Zoning Administrator, Board of Review, and Cook County Assessor and earned or accrued greater than \$10,000 in any 12 consecutive months during the previous 4 years must adhere to these campaign contribution limitations.



Compliance and Penalties

► Under Section 2-603 of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance, any contract negotiated, entered into, or performed in violation of any of the provisions of the Ethics Ordinance shall be voidable by Cook County.

► A person who intentionally violates any provision of the Ethics Ordinance may also be subjected to a fine of at least \$500 and up to \$5,000.



Information regarding Lobbyists*

► A lobbyist is a person who means to, for compensation, attempt to influence a Cook County official or Cook County employee with respect to a Cook County matter.

Note: For more information regarding lobbyists, please refer to the Cook County Lobbyist Ordinance (Chapter 2 Administration, Article VII Ethics, Sections 2-621-2-639 of the Cook County Code) or contact the Cook County Clerk's Office at (312) 603-0907.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, and a complete text of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance, please visit our website:

www.cookcountygov.com/ethics

or contact:

COOK COUNTY BOARD OF ETHICS



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