
2010 Legislative Session
SB 17 Ethics Reform - Impact on City Officials

All candidates for municipal office and municipal officials must file campaign contribution disclosure reports and personal financial disclosure reports directly with the new Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission (formally State Ethics Commission).

Municipal officers and candidates must provide, in writing, a current email address to the Commission prior to January 31 of each year. Any change in email address must be provided to the Commission within ten days of such change.

All campaign committees which accept contributions or make expenditures for a municipal election must register with the Commission and file a declaration of intent with the Commission.

Campaign contribution disclosure reports must be filed with the Commission on June 30 and December 31 of each non-election year and on March 31, June 30, September 30, October 25 and December 31 of an election year. Additional filings are required for primary and runoff elections.

If a candidate has no opposition in either a primary or general election and does not receive contributions of more than \$100, the candidate is required only to file an initial and final report.

If a candidate or official has excess contributions upon leaving public office, supplemental disclosure filings are required.

If the campaign raises or spends more than \$20,000 in an election cycle, campaign contribution disclosure reports must be filed electronically with the Commission.

Public officials must file a personal financial disclosure report with the Commission between January 1 and July 1 of each year in which the officer holds office. In an election year, candidates and officials must file a personal financial disclosure within 15 days of qualifying as a candidate.

Penalties and Fees would be put in place for failure to file reports in a timely fashion:

A late filing fee of \$125 will be imposed for each campaign contribution disclosure report and personal financial disclosure report that is filed late.

Notice of the late fee will be sent to the candidate by registered mail and will include a schedule of increasing fees for late filings and the dates on which the late fees will be increased and imposed.

A late fee of \$250 will be imposed if a filing is 15 days late, and the fee will increase to \$1,000 if the report is 45 days late.

Campaign funds may not be used to pay the late fee.

The Commission has the discretion to waive or suspend late fees if the imposition of the fee would impose an undue hardship on the person required to pay.

The qualifying officer for municipal elections is required to electronically notify the Commission of the names and addresses of all candidates and offices sought by each candidate within ten business days of the close of the qualification period.

The legislation includes provisions that affect lobbying at the municipal level, including registration and disclosure requirements for local lobbyists.