

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND
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Establishing an Independent Ethics Commission

Ethics reform is not just about compliance with rules and laws, but about instilling a culture of integrity and responsibility within government to the benefit of the constituents it serves. It sets the tone for how organizations govern and how elected and appointed leaders behave, ensuring a more ethical future, based on established principles and a deep-rooted sense of integrity.

Strong ethics policy, operating through an Ethics Commission, can be an essential part of a government that is representative, responsive, and accountable. It can also be supported through an established Office of Ethics Compliance. These functions can oversee ethics, financial disclosures, lobbying, and campaign finance laws.

The Board of Supervisors has the opportunity to adopt critical ethics reform that will enable the County to maintain a high level of ethical standards and address new challenges as they emerge. The Board can do this expeditiously without waiting for an upcoming election, serving as a model for other institutions in taking decisive action and moving forward without additional layers of bureaucracy.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel to report back in 30 days on the creation of a proposed Independent Ethics Commission, Office of Ethics Compliance, and the position of Ethics Compliance Officer. The report should include a review of other jurisdictions in the areas described below, including but not limited to membership, subject-matter expertise, subject areas of review, and funding of the Ethics Commission, Office of Ethics Compliance, and Ethics Compliance Officer.

- A proposed Independent Ethics Commission containing five members comprised of subject matter experts appointed by neutral appointing authorities (e.g., the

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Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, current members of academia - government ethics experts, and campaign finance legal experts). The Commission should have oversight authority over ethical conduct by County officials, financial disclosures, conflicts of interest, post-government employment, government contracts, lobbying, land use developer conflicts, and campaign finance laws (including SB 1439 compliance). The Commission should also be tasked with regularly reviewing the County Code and provide ongoing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on updates and enhancements to maintain ethical integrity throughout the County.

- A proposed Office of Ethics Compliance to support the work of the Commission and guide ethical compliance throughout the County, ensuring that all relevant policies and best practices are appropriately communicated and followed. The Office of Ethics Compliance should also be tasked with overseeing a publicly available data portal related to governmental ethics including lobbying information and campaign contributions and expenditures. The Office of Ethics Compliance should include the position of an Ethics Compliance Officer selected by a majority of the members of the Ethics Commission and be provided adequate staffing and resources based on similar compliance offices in other jurisdictions.

WE, FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel to revise Los Angeles County Code Section 2.175.030 to increase the cooling off period for County officials to lobby the County from one year to two years after leaving County service, and place on the Board's agenda for introduction on September 10, 2024.

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