

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

Moving Forward on Ethics Reform in LA County

The Board of Supervisors (Board) continues to reaffirm its commitment to transparency and accountability in moving forward with rigorous ethics compliance efforts. Strong ethics policy is an important component of a responsive and representative government.

Previously, the Board approved a motion that asked County Counsel to report back on various components to support ethics reform, such as a proposed Ethics Commission, Office of Ethics Compliance, Ethics Compliance Officer, and effective data reporting and tracking structures. The goal of these efforts is to develop a robust system that can oversee ethics, financial disclosures, lobbying, and campaign finance laws for the County.

The County Counsel confidential report addressed the Board's authority to establish an independent Ethics Commission, an Ethics Compliance Office and create the position of Ethics Compliance Officer vested with oversight authority over various ethics and conflict of interest issues. The report surveyed local jurisdictions with ethics commissions and provided an overview of options for appointment, oversight, and enforcement. Some jurisdictions with Ethics Commissions are modeled after the California Fair Political Practices Commission, which is a five-member independent, non-partisan commission that has primary responsibility for the impartial and effective administration of the state's Political Reform Act.

The County's current Civil Service Commission may also be instructive. The Civil Service Commission is the only County Charter mandated independent Commission, and it serves as the quasi-judicial appellate body for classified employees who have been disciplined. They are charged with jurisdiction regarding allegations of discrimination in the imposition of discipline or the treatment of persons seeking

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classified employment in the County. The Civil Service Commission hears appeals of employees, and persons seeking employment.

Based on the duties and responsibilities granted to the Ethics Commission, the Compliance Office and an Ethics Compliance Officer, the Board can outline administrative, advisory, enforcement, adjudicatory and/or appeals duties to ensure the independence of the ethics reform bodies. Moving forward with ethics reform with a structure that can oversee ethics and conflict of interest issues in Los Angeles County will support our existing efforts to maintain a culture of integrity and responsibility, while providing a structure for oversight that the public expects and deserves.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct County Counsel, in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office, to report back in 30 days with a comprehensive analysis on proposed implementation timelines and cost scenarios for the options outlined in the confidential report. The report back should also include recommendations to provide structure in any of the proposed options with appropriate separation of duties and an ethical wall to ensure fairness and objectivity, and in line with the model in place by the California Fair Political Practices Commission.

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