



## Fact Sheet: Maryland Public Ethics Law

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This fact sheet provides a broad overview of the Maryland Public Ethics Law ([Title 5](#) of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Code). It attempts to cover the most significant parts of the law but does not cover all its prohibitions and requirements. For more detail, please see, in addition to the law itself, information available on the State Ethics Commission's [website](#) (including the commission's Public Ethics Law Summary, found on this [page](#), and Lobbying Law Summary, found on this [page](#)) and, with respect to the law's application to members of the General Assembly, the [Ethics Guide](#) published by the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics.

### In General

#### Purpose

The Ethics Law has the [purpose](#) of guarding against improper influence on government officials' and employees' actions in order to ensure officials' and employees' impartiality and independent judgment in conducting the government's business.

#### The Law's Provisions

The Ethics Law guards against improper influence by establishing:

- ***Conflict of Interest Provisions*** – prohibitions and requirements that primarily guard against the potential for a government official's or employee's personal financial interests, outside employment, or certain other private interests or actions to influence their actions as a governmental official or employee (Title 5, [Subtitle 5](#), "Conflicts of Interest");
- ***Financial Disclosure Requirements*** – requirements that government officials and candidates for office as a State official disclose their financial interests, their outside employment, and certain other information, to help ensure that officials do not have

- interests that may improperly influence their governmental actions (Title 5, [Subtitle 6](#), “Financial Disclosure”); and
- **Lobbying Provisions** – requirements and prohibitions applicable to persons (lobbyists) seeking to influence government officials or employees in the conduct of their duties (Title 5, [Subtitle 7](#), “Lobbying”).

## The Law’s Scope

The Ethics Law directly applies to State government officials (including certain elected officials who have not yet taken office) and employees, candidates for office as a State official (in the case of financial disclosure requirements), and lobbyists who seek to influence State government officials and employees. It also requires local governments, county school boards, and bicounty commissions to establish similar laws or regulations (Title 5, [Subtitle 8](#), “Local Government Provisions”).

## Administration/Enforcement

The Ethics Law is [primarily administered and enforced by the State Ethics Commission](#); however:

- the General Assembly’s [Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics](#) administers and enforces the conflict of interest provisions of the law that are applicable to members of the General Assembly; and
- while subject to portions of the Ethics Law, judges, judicial candidates, and judicial appointees (magistrates, examiners, auditors, and District Court commissioners), are primarily held instead to ethics standards and requirements found in [codes of conduct](#), and [financial disclosure requirements](#), established by the Supreme Court of Maryland, which are largely administered and enforced by the [Commission on Judicial Disabilities](#) (which enforces ethics/conduct standards for judges), the [Judicial Ethics Committee](#) (which primarily provides advice), and the [State Court Administrator](#) (which administers financial disclosure filing).

## Other State Laws That Guard Against Improper Influence

Other State laws that guard against improper influence on government officials and employees are:

- **State Criminal Law** – applicable when improper influence reaches the level of the crimes of bribery (§ [9-201](#) of the Criminal Law Article) and/or misconduct in office (a common law crime, see [Koushall v. State](#), p. 26); and
- **State Campaign Finance Law** ([Title 13](#) of the Election Law Article) – applicable to candidates for elected office and elected officials, limiting the amount of money that can be contributed to a candidate or elected official for an election campaign and requiring

public disclosure of candidates' and elected officials' campaign fundraising (including identifying contributors of funding) and spending.

## Conflicts of Interest

### In General

The conflict of interest provisions of the Ethics Law primarily address (1) financial or employment interests; (2) gifts; and (3) other potential improper private gain that may be derived from an official's/employee's position:

- **Financial or Employment Interests** – Separate provisions regarding financial or employment interests are established for members of the General Assembly and officials and employees other than members of the General Assembly:
- **Officials/Employees Other Than Members of the General Assembly:** For officials/employees other than members of the General Assembly, the Ethics Law guards against improper influence resulting from financial interests or outside employment primarily by:
  - **Prohibiting Participation in Certain Matters** – An official or employee is prohibited from participating in a government matter in which they or an immediate family member have an interest of which the official or employee is aware (or, in certain cases, reasonably could be expected to be aware), such as a financial interest in, or employment by, a business entity that is a party to the matter ([§ 5-501](#)).
  - **Prohibiting Certain Financial Interests or Employment** – An official or employee is prohibited from (1) being employed by or having a financial interest in an entity that is subject to the authority of the official or employee or the official's or employee's governmental unit, or is negotiating, or has entered into, a contract with the official's or employee's governmental unit or (2) holding any other employment relationship that would impair the impartiality and independent judgment of the official or employee ([§§ 5-502 – 5-504](#)).

There are exceptions to these prohibitions, including:

- exceptions, to the prohibition on participation in a matter, if (1) the official's or employee's participation is solely administrative or ministerial and does not affect the decision or disposition with respect to the matter or (2) pursuant to State Ethics Commission regulations, an immediate family member's affiliation with a business entity that would otherwise prohibit participation is found by the commission to not be contrary to the purposes of the Ethics Law and the official's or employee's agency or appointing authority supports the exception; and

- exceptions, to the prohibition on holding certain financial interests or outside employment, that are granted by the State Ethics Commission if various criteria ([established in commission regulations](#)) – relating, among other things, to the official’s or employee’s governmental position and duties (and outside employment position and duties, if applicable) – are met, in order to prevent any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest.

There are also specific conflict of interest provisions that apply only to the Governor:

- ***Blind Trust Requirement*** – Within six months of taking the oath of office, the Governor’s economic (generally financial) interests, except those exempted by the State Ethics Commission, must either be divested (if necessary to resolve likely or potential conflicts of interest) or placed into a certified blind trust that is approved by the commission and operated in accordance with commission regulations. For any interest exempted or otherwise approved for exclusion from the blind trust, the Governor must agree not to participate in any way in a matter that involves the interest, including a matter before the Board of Public Works.
- ***Public Reporting Relating to State Grants, Awards, or Contracts*** – Certain business entities – in which the Governor or a closely-related individual (specified family and those residing with the Governor) hold an interest (together or separately) – that seek to obtain a State grant, competitive award, or contract, must publicly report the interest held by the Governor or closely-related individual. In the case of a corporation, the requirement only applies if the interest is 10% or more of the capital stock of the corporation.
- **Members of the General Assembly:** For members of the General Assembly, the Ethics Law guards against improper influence from financial interests or outside employment primarily by:
  - ***Requiring a Sworn Statement of Impartiality in Order to Participate in Legislative Action Where There Is a Presumption of a Conflict of Interest But the Conflict Is Not “Direct and Personal”*** – In instances where their personal interests are presumed to disqualify them from participating in or influencing certain legislative action (instances enumerated in § [5-512\(c\)](#)), members must file a sworn statement (“disclaimer”) with the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics, with respect to a specific bill or to all matters that fall into a specific subject area, asserting that they are able to participate in the legislative action(s) fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. Filing the sworn statement suspends the disqualification and allows the member to participate in the legislative action(s), unless the conflict is “direct and personal,” requiring recusal (as described below); and

- **Requiring Recusal in Instances of “Direct and Personal” Conflicts** – Members must recuse themselves from participation in a legislative action in instances where the conflict of interest is “direct and personal” to the legislator, a member of the legislator’s immediate family, or the legislator’s employer. The Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics has interpreted these to be narrow instances in which the legislator, immediate family member, or employer would experience a clear financial impact as a result of the legislation that is unique to them, or to a very small number of individuals or entities.

The Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics’ [2025 Ethics Guide](#) (see page 6) indicates that while a General Assembly member who has a presumed or apparent conflict of interest that falls short of being a direct and personal conflict may nonetheless feel compelled to recuse themselves, the committee recommends that recusal in such circumstances be used sparingly, noting a rule in both the House and Senate Rules that establishes a legislator’s general duty to vote on all questions that arise on the floor of their chamber.

The guide also includes the committee’s Ethics Opinion #8 which states that “[w]hile conflicts and appearances of conflict must be addressed, the law recognizes that a member’s participation in legislative activity that relates to a conflict [provided the conflict is not direct and personal] is not only necessary but often beneficial to the effective crafting of laws” (e.g., farmers participating in legislative action on agriculture issues and physicians participating in legislative action on health care issues), and “[p]articipation is necessary because constituents’ interests depend upon a member’s active participation on all issues.”

- **Gifts** – Under § [5-505](#), the Ethics Law prohibits an official or employee from (1) soliciting a gift or (2) knowingly accepting a gift from certain entities, including those that engage in an activity that is regulated or controlled by the official’s or employee’s governmental unit, do (or seek to do) business with the official’s or employee’s governmental unit, otherwise have a financial interest that may be substantially and materially affected (in a manner distinguishable from the public generally) by the official’s actions, or are a regulated lobbyist with respect to matters within the jurisdiction of the official or employee. Certain exceptions apply, including for certain gifts of limited monetary value, certain food or beverages, and certain paid expenses, provided they (1) would not tend to impair the impartiality and independent judgment of the official or employee and (2) as to gifts of significant value, would not give the appearance of impairing the impartiality and independent judgment of the official or employee and are not believed by the official or employee to be designed to do so.
- **Other Improper Private Gain from an Official’s/Employee’s Position** – The Ethics Law also prohibits certain other types of private gain from an official’s or employee’s position. Under § [5-506](#), for example, the law prohibits an official or employee from intentionally using “the prestige of office or public position” for their private gain or the gain of another person (which does not include performance of usual and customary constituent services

without additional compensation). A legislator’s promotion of employment and community development in their district or the State as a whole, for example, is a usual and customary constituent service, but an official’s or employee’s use of their government title/role in their private business activities in a way that benefits them financially, or commercial endorsement of a for profit entity even without financial benefit, are examples of prohibited conduct. The Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics notes, in its Ethics Opinion #1, that the line (for a legislator) between prohibited commercial endorsement of a for-profit entity and allowable promotion of employment and community development may not always be clear and may require advice from the committee or its Ethics Counsel (discussed below).

## Judges and Judicial Appointees

While judges and judicial appointees (magistrates, examiners, auditors, and District Court commissioners) are technically subject to the conflict of interest provisions of the Ethics Law, they are primarily held instead to the standards established under the [Code of Judicial Conduct](#) and [Code of Conduct for Judicial Appointees](#), which contain rules similar in nature to the Ethics Law’s conflict-of-interest provisions alongside rules establishing other standards of conduct.

## Financial Disclosure

The Ethics Law’s [financial disclosure requirements](#) support its conflict of interest provisions by requiring officials (and candidates for office as a State official) to disclose financial interests, outside employment information, and receipt of certain gifts. While the conflict of interest provisions apply to all officials and employees in State government, the financial disclosure requirements only apply to “officials” and candidates for State elected office. The term “official” includes “State officials” and “public officials.” State officials, for the most part, are the State’s elected officials (including members of the General Assembly) and public officials are individuals designated as public officials based, in most cases, on their compensation (those compensated at a rate equivalent to at least State grade level 16, which has a base compensation level of just over \$66,000 in fiscal 2026) and/or the fact that their duties involve, or can affect, decision-making and are not merely administrative and ministerial.

The financial disclosure statements filed by officials and candidates must disclose, with respect to the reporting period (the previous calendar year, in most cases):

- **Financial Interests** – (1) interests held in real property; (2) interests held in corporations, partnerships, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships, whether or not they were doing business with the State during the reporting period; (3) interests held in any other business entities, if they were doing business with the State; (4) debts (excluding retail credit accounts) owed to entities doing business with or regulated by the filer’s agency; (5) any financial or contractual relationship the filer had with a State or local governmental entity or quasi-governmental entity or the University of Maryland Medical System (aside from the employment that caused the filer to be designated a public official); and (6) applicable only to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Treasurer, and Comptroller, and to the extent not already reported under other categories, the name of

- each for-profit business entity in which the individual has a 10% or greater interest and the name of each person who owns a 10% or greater interest in each entity;
- ***Positions/Employment*** – (1) offices, directorships, and salaried employment held by the filer or an immediate family member in business entities that were doing business with the State; (2) other places of salaried employment of the filer and immediate family members and any business entities the filer or immediate family members were sole or partial owners of and from which they received earned income (with the exception of employment or business ownership of a minor child if the employer/business is not regulated by, or contracting with, the filer's agency); (3) immediate family members who were employed by the State, in any capacity, during the reporting period; and (4) if the filer's spouse is a regulated lobbyist, each entity that has engaged the spouse for lobbying purposes.
- ***Gifts*** – gifts received (by the official or by another entity at the direction of the official) from a person doing business with the State, regulated by the State, or registered as a lobbyist (subject to certain exclusions, such as gifts from immediate family, certain food or beverages received by legislators as part of a legislative unit or organization, and gifts that have a value of not more than \$20 individually and are not part of a series of gifts from the same entity that have a cumulative value of \$100 or more).

Candidates file their financial disclosure statements with the appropriate election board (which are subsequently forwarded to the State Ethics Commission). Officials file financial disclosure statements directly with the State Ethics Commission, electronically; however, (1) members of the General Assembly file their statements with both the commission and the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics (the statement filed electronically with the commission is automatically shared with the committee) and (2) judges (and candidates for elective office as a judge) and judicial appointees (magistrates, examiners, auditors, and District Court commissioners) are instead subject to separate [financial disclosure requirements](#) established by the Supreme Court of Maryland (pursuant to §§ [5-601](#)(b) and [5-610](#) of the Ethics Law and Maryland Rules [18-603](#) and [18-604](#)) and judges and judicial appointees file their financial disclosure statements with the State Court Administrator which are then also transmitted to the State Ethics Commission. Legislators also file additional public disclosures with the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics (see § [5-514](#)(b)(1)) that overlap somewhat with the financial disclosure requirements, but focus primarily on financial or employment interests that have a relation to State or local government units. The disclosures are filed when the legislator acquires the interest, and the information is included in the legislator's annual financial disclosure statements.

Annual financial disclosure statements are filed by April 30 each year, covering the previous calendar year, with additional filing deadlines applicable to (1) officials beginning or ending their service/employment; (2) candidates for elective office; and (3) General Assembly members whose statements will reflect a substantial change and as a result must file a preliminary disclosure at the beginning of the legislative session.

## Lobbying

The Ethics Law [requires](#) individuals or entities who engage in certain compensated communication and/or spending for the purpose of influencing State government action to register with the State Ethics Commission as a regulated lobbyist and report information on their lobbying activities to the commission. The individuals/entities required to register are those in the following categories:

- ***Compensation Earned or Expenses Incurred for Communication with Officials/Employees to Influence (1) Legislative Action or (2) Executive Action on Regulations or an Executive Order*** – those that communicate with an official or employee of the legislative or executive branches to influence a legislative action or an executive action relating to regulations or an executive order and (1) earn at least \$5,000 as compensation related to the communication or (2) if the communication is in person, earn at least \$2,500 as compensation or incur expenses of at least \$500 (other than personal travel or subsistence expenses) related to the communication;
- ***Compensation Earned to Influence Executive Action on Procurement Contracts or Business Grants/Loans*** – those that are compensated to any extent to influence executive action on a procurement contract or a business grant or loan of more than \$100,000 (and are not sales persons/sales agents of the entity seeking the contract or bona fide full-time officials/employees of a business entity seeking a grant or loan);
- ***Spending on Gifts in Connection with, or to Influence, an Executive Action*** – those that spend at least \$100 for gifts, including meals, beverages, and special events, to one or more Executive Branch officials or employees in connection with, or to influence, an executive action; or
- ***Spending to Solicit Others to Communicate with an Official*** – those that spend at least \$2,000 to solicit others to communicate with an official to influence legislative or executive action.

Certain exemptions from the registration requirement apply, including for government officials for appearances that are part of their official duties and for individuals that are requested to appear before a government entity or unit at the entity's or unit's request or at the request of a regulated lobbyist (provided the request of the lobbyist is disclosed).

An entity that compensates a regulated lobbyist is not required to register or report information to the commission as long as the compensated regulated lobbyist reports all required information.

A regulated lobbyist must register separately for each entity that has engaged the lobbyist for lobbying purposes – within five days of beginning lobbying and annually by November 1 for as long as the lobbying continues. Regulated lobbyists must file reports, for each registration, by May 31 (covering the period from November 1 of the previous year through April 30) and November 30 (covering the period from May 1 through October 31) of each year, that detail the

matters on which they are lobbying and the compensation and expenses associated with the lobbyist's efforts for the individual or entity.

Separate, additional reporting is required that provides certain information on (1) legislative meals or receptions held by a regulated lobbyist; (2) gifts given by a regulated lobbyist to an official, employee, or their immediate family; (3) business transactions a regulated lobbyist engages in with certain officials or their spouses; (4) campaign contributions made by a regulated lobbyist (reported to the commission) or by an entity that compensates a regulated lobbyist (reported to the State Board of Elections); and (5) each entity that provides at least 5% of a lobbying firm's total receipts in a year.

## **Administration/Enforcement**

### **State Ethics Commission**

The State Ethics Commission administers and enforces the Ethics Law with respect to all officials and employees, with two exceptions: (1) the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics administers and enforces the conflict of interest provisions applicable to the members of the General Assembly; and (2) ethics standards and requirements applicable to judges, judicial candidates, and judicial appointees (magistrates, examiners, auditors, and District Court commissioners) are largely administered/enforced by the Commission on Judicial Disabilities, the Judicial Ethics Committee, and the State Court Administrator.

The five-member State Ethics Commission consists of three members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, one member nominated by the President of the Senate and appointed by the Governor, and one member nominated by the Speaker of the House and appointed by the Governor.

### **Administration**

The commission's administration of the Ethics law includes (1) providing information and training on the Ethics Law to officials, employees, and lobbyists (new financial disclosure filers, other than legislators, must take a training course on the Ethics Law, and lobbyists must take a training course on the provisions of the law relevant to them within six months after they initially register and every two years thereafter); (2) providing informal advice, memoranda, and formal advisory opinions regarding the application of the law; (3) pursuant to the Ethics Law and commission regulations, granting exceptions to conflict of interest provisions to officials or employees in certain instances detailed in regulation (e.g., allowing for secondary employment that might otherwise be prohibited but, in the official's or employee's specific circumstances, does not raise a conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict); (4) maintaining and administering the financial disclosure and lobbyist registration/reporting systems; and (5) reviewing and approving local government ethics laws/regulations (discussed below).

## **Enforcement**

The commission's staff investigates complaints of Ethics Law violations that the commission receives, or that the commission issues on its own initiative, and submits evidence resulting from the investigation to the commission. If, after a hearing, the commission determines an individual has violated the law, it can:

- issue a cease-and-desist order;
- issue a reprimand;
- recommend other appropriate discipline to the appropriate authority, including censure or removal;
- impose a fine of up to \$5,000 on a lobbyist;
- suspend a lobbyist's registration for a knowing and willful violation and suspend (and in certain cases revoke) a lobbyist's registration for a criminal conviction arising from lobbying activities; and/or
- petition a circuit court to (1) compel compliance with a commission order; (2) impose a fine; or (3) void an official act that was affected by a conflict of interest.

If the commission finds there are reasonable grounds to believe the individual may have committed a criminal offense, it must refer the matter to the appropriate prosecuting authority (typically the Office of the State Prosecutor (OSP) – see Criminal Procedure Article, §§ [14-107 – 14-109](#), and OSP's [2024 annual report](#), p. 2-4). Among other criminal offenses that may arise (e.g., bribery and/or misconduct in office, mentioned further above under *In General*), a knowing and willful violation of the lobbying provisions of the Ethics Law is a misdemeanor subject to criminal penalties ([§ 5-903](#)).

## **Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics**

The Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics administers and enforces the conflict of interest provisions of the Ethics Law applicable to members of the General Assembly. It is a 12-member committee made up of 6 senators and 6 delegates. The committee provides information and advice to legislators regarding the Ethics Law, including through a full-time Ethics Counsel that serves both the committee and legislators, meeting with each of the 188 legislators each year to provide advice and assistance. Communications between the Ethics Counsel and legislators are protected by attorney-client privilege, and the Ethics Counsel does not participate in any investigative or prosecutorial activities related to complaints against legislators. In addition, legislators can request written opinions from the committee and the committee also publishes general ethics opinions on its own motion (which are found in the committee's [Ethics Guide](#)).

The committee also reviews, at public meetings, disclaimers of presumed or apparent conflicts (mentioned above) filed by legislators, and if the committee determines recusal is more appropriate in any instance, it conveys that determination to the legislator in a letter explaining its reasoning.

The committee reviews ethics complaints against legislators (1) received from any person (which must be written and signed); (2) on motion of a majority of the membership of the committee; or (3) referred by a Presiding Officer (the Senate President or Speaker of the House). If determined to be merited, the committee can hold a hearing regarding a complaint and make recommendations to the appropriate Presiding Officer or the full house of the accused legislator, including recommendations for appropriate sanctions. If there are reasonable grounds to believe a legislator may have committed a crime, the committee must refer the matter to the appropriate prosecuting authority.

## **Commission on Judicial Disabilities, Judicial Ethics Committee, and State Court Administrator**

Ethics standards and requirements applicable to judges, judicial candidates, and judicial appointees are largely administered and enforced through a combination of the Commission on Judicial Disabilities, the Judicial Ethics Committee, and the State Court Administrator:

- ***Commission on Judicial Disabilities*** – The 11-member Commission on Judicial Disabilities is established in the Maryland Constitution (Article IV, §§ [4A](#) and [4B](#)), governed by the Maryland Rules (Title 18, [Chapter 400](#)), and serves in an enforcement role – with respect to judges – similar to the enforcement roles of the State Ethics Commission and the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics. (Similar enforcement with respect to judicial appointees appears to fall to the State Ethics Commission – see, for example, Maryland Rules [18-305](#)(d) and [18-604](#)(e)(2)(D)).

The Commission on Judicial Disabilities is appointed by the Governor, with advice and consent of the Senate, and consists of three judges (one each from the appellate courts, circuit courts, and the District Court), three attorneys, and five members of the public who are not judges or attorneys.

The commission investigates and evaluates complaints (with the assistance of an [Investigative Counsel and Judicial Inquiry Board](#)) against judges of (1) misconduct or (2) disability or impairment that interferes with the performance of their duties. While judges are subject to the Ethics Law's conflict of interest provisions, the commission evaluates conflict of interest complaints against judges based primarily on the Code of Judicial Conduct (Maryland Rules, Title 18, [Chapter 100](#)) established by the Supreme Court of Maryland. The Code of Judicial Conduct contains rules similar in nature to the conflict of interest provisions under the Ethics Law alongside rules establishing other standards of conduct. If the commission finds there is merit to a complaint, it can issue a reprimand and/or recommend removal, censure, or other appropriate discipline of a judge to the Supreme Court of Maryland.

- **Judicial Ethics Committee** – The 15-member Judicial Ethics Committee is established in the Maryland Rules (Title 18, [Chapter 300](#)) and primarily serves in an advisory role similar to the advisory roles of the State Ethics Commission and the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics. The committee is appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and consists of 11 judges, 1 clerk of a circuit court, 1 judicial appointee, and 2 members of the public that are neither a judge, another official or employee of the Judicial Branch, nor an attorney.

The committee gives advice regarding the application or interpretation of the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Judicial Appointees as well as the application of any of the conflict of interest or financial disclosure provisions of the Ethics Law to a State official in the Judicial Branch. The committee also (1) reviews appeals of a decision of the State Court Administrator not to extend the deadline for filing a financial disclosure statement and (2) determines, under Maryland Rule 18-305(d) (cited above), whether to allow a judge or judicial appointee to correct a deficiency in a financial disclosure statement or refer the matter to the Commission on Judicial Disabilities, in the case of a judge, or the State Ethics Commission, in the case of a judicial appointee.

- **State Court Administrator** – The State Court Administrator administers the filing of financial disclosure statements by judges and judicial appointees (judicial *candidates* file their statement with election officials when they file their certificate of candidacy), including granting or denying requests for extensions of time for filing the statements.

## **Local Government Public Ethics Laws/Regulations**

### **Counties and Municipalities**

The Ethics Law [requires](#) counties and municipalities to enact similar laws for their jurisdictions. The [conflict of interest](#) and [financial disclosure](#) provisions for elected local officials must be equivalent to or exceed the requirements of the Ethics Law, and those for nonelected local officials and employees must be similar to the provisions of the Ethics Law. [Lobbying](#) provisions must be substantially similar to those in the Ethics Law. State Ethics Commission regulations [further define](#) those requirements and allow for certain departures from them, through [modifications or exemptions](#), if local circumstances (such as the limited size of a given municipality) warrant a modification or exemption. Counties and municipalities must submit any new or amended ethics laws to the commission for the commission's [review and approval](#), and the commission's regulations contain [model local government ethics laws](#), for informational purposes, as [examples](#), for counties' and municipalities' use.

## School Boards

The Ethics Law also requires school boards to adopt conflict of interest and financial disclosure regulations for school board members, that are equivalent to or exceed the requirements of the Ethics Law. A school board *may* adopt conflict of interest and financial disclosure regulations applicable to other officials and employees of the school system that are similar to the Ethics Law provisions, and lobbying regulations that are substantially similar to the Ethics Law; but if regulations are not adopted, the county provisions apply to other officials and employees and to lobbyists. Similar to the county and municipality laws, the State Ethics Commission reviews and approves a school board's regulations and the commission's regulations further define the criteria for school board regulations and contain model school board regulations, as examples, for school boards' use.

## Bicounty Commissions

A member of a bicounty commission (the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, or the Washington Suburban Transit Commission) is subject to the Ethics Law as a “public official” (§ 5-103(e)), but with minor adjustments to financial disclosure requirements relevant to their service on a bicounty commission. The bicounty commissions, however, must adopt conflict of interest and financial disclosure regulations for their employees, as well as lobbying regulations.