

The Office of General Counsel and Legal Policy

The Office of General Counsel and Legal Policy establishes and maintains the uniform framework of Government-wide ethics law for executive branch employees by developing and interpreting executive branch ethics program policies, statutes and regulations, assisting agencies in implementing them, and recommending changes to them, as needed. The office also responds to requests for information from the public, and from the media, including newspapers, wire services, and other similar news organizations.

The Office of Government Relations and Special Projects

The Office of Government Relations and Special Projects serves as OGE's liaison to the Office of Management and Budget and to the Congress, coordinates OGE's support of U.S. efforts in promoting international ethics and anti-corruption initiatives, and initiates and coordinates special projects.

The Office of Administration and Information Management

The Office of Administration and Information Management provides essential support to all of OGE's operating programs through two divisions. The Administration Division accomplishes

OGE's program responsibilities related to personnel, payroll, fiscal resource management, facilities and property management, travel, procurement, graphics, and the publishing and printing of materials. The Information Resources Management Division's responsibilities include telecommunications and records management, as well as the management of information and web site technologies.

Employee Standards

Executive branch employees are subject to various ethics standards. The two primary sources of these standards are the criminal conflict of interest statutes and the executive branch-wide standards of ethical conduct.

Criminal Conflict of Interest Statutes (Chapter 11 of Title 18, United States Code)

The conflict of interest statutes prohibit a Federal employee from engaging in certain types of activities that would place the employee's own personal interests above the Federal Government's interests. The statutes cover such topics as:

- ◆ financial conflicts of interest
- ◆ representational activities
- ◆ post-employment activities
- ◆ supplementation of Government salary

Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 C.F.R. Part 2635)

The standards of ethical conduct regulation establishes general principles of ethical conduct for executive branch employees. It provides specific rules, as well as easy-to-understand examples of how the rules apply, covering topics such as:

- ◆ Gifts from outside sources
- ◆ Gifts between employees
- ◆ Conflicting financial interests
- ◆ Impartiality in performing official duties
- ◆ Seeking other employment
- ◆ Misuse of position
- ◆ Outside activities

For further information, please write or contact:

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United States Office of Government Ethics



“Public Service is a public trust. Each employee has a responsibility to the United States Government and its citizens to place loyalty to the Constitution, laws and ethical principles above private gain.”

(Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch)

Trust in Government operations is a fundamental principle of a democratic society. The executive branch ethics program helps support the public’s trust by ensuring that Government officials perform their duties impartially and free of conflicts of interest.

OGE’s Role

The U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) was established by the Ethics in Government Act of 1978. OGE provides policy leadership to executive branch departments and agencies in conducting their ethics programs, with the goal of preventing conflicts of interest on the part of Government employees, and resolving those conflicts of interest that do occur. By fostering high ethical standards for employees, OGE helps to strengthen the public’s confidence that the Government’s business will be conducted with impartiality and integrity. OGE exercises its leadership role through six major functions:

Ethics Policy

OGE creates executive branch-wide ethics policy by developing, issuing, and reviewing rules regarding conflicts of interest, standards of conduct, and public and confidential financial disclosure.

Financial Disclosure

OGE provides policy direction related to the filing of executive branch financial disclosure reports. OGE also reviews the executive branch public financial disclosure reports of certain White House officials, as well as Presidential appointees requiring Senate confirmation, in order to ensure that these officials are free from possible conflicts of interest, and recommends appropriate corrective action when such conflicts do exist. Finally, OGE oversees the creation and operation of blind trusts, and issues certificates of divestiture to employees who must sell assets in order to avoid or cure conflicts of interest.

Education and Training

OGE provides information on, and promotes understanding of, ethical laws and regulations primarily by developing and presenting workshops, by developing educational materials, and by assisting departments and agencies with their internal ethics education programs.

Guidance and Interpretation

OGE provides written advice interpreting the various ethics rules and statutes, upon request, to agency ethics officials and to members of the public. It also provides advice and counseling to agency ethics officials on how to interpret the conflict of interest statutes, as well as the standards of conduct, financial disclosure, and other regulations.

Monitoring

OGE reviews the components of executive branch agency ethics programs, including their financial disclosure systems, training programs, and counseling services, in order to ensure that they are administered properly, in accordance with all ethics laws and regulations. OGE also is authorized to order agency corrective action and, when necessary, to recommend individual disciplinary action.

Evaluation

OGE routinely evaluates the effectiveness of the conflict of interest laws, related statutes, the standards of conduct, and Executive Orders, and recommends amendments when appropriate.

OGE’s Structure

OGE provides comprehensive leadership and support to the executive branch

ethics program through the functions of its five offices:

Office of the Director

OGE is headed by a Director who is appointed to a five-year term by the President. The Office of the Director provides overall direction to the executive branch ethics program and is responsible for ensuring that OGE fulfills its Congressional and Presidential mandates.

The Office of Agency Programs

The Office of Agency Programs has three divisions that monitor, and provide necessary services to, executive branch agency ethics programs. The Program Services Division, the Program Review Division, and the Education Division coordinate their services with the goals of helping agencies to identify and resolve problem areas in their ethics programs, providing educational materials and training to agency ethics officials, staying abreast of budgetary concerns, and identifying the emerging issues that need to be addressed by OGE. The Office also holds an annual ethics conference for ethics officials from throughout the executive branch, and hosts smaller topic-specific events frequently during the year.

