



# The COE

PALM BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS NEWSLETTER

## Fall 2024

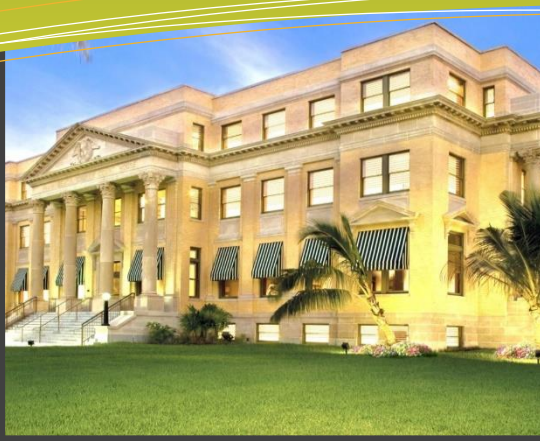
### Mission Statement

The mission of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics is to foster integrity in public services, to promote the public's trust and confidence in that service, and to prevent conflicts between private interests and public duties.

### The ONE Ethics Movement

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics and the Office of the Inspector General were both established in 2010. The ONE Ethics movement speaks to our joint and collaborative efforts to provide independent and objective oversight for ethics in our local government.

COE Hotline:  
877-766-5920



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## Best Practices: Ethics in Government

In our mission to serve Palm Beach County's citizens, county government, and municipal governments, the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE) has established seven Best Practices to help county and municipal employees, elected officials, and appointed officials put ethics first.

- 1) Ethics First! We value Honesty, Integrity, and Character at the heart of what we do in Palm Beach County. Your conduct and behaviors could not only be a violation of the Code of Ethics, but it could also reflect poorly on your agency, department, or municipality.
- 2) We believe in our motto, "Ask First, Act Later." Simply, just ask. When in doubt, request an advisory opinion. The COE has more than 575 opinions available on our database.
- 3) We need your participation. The COE Hotline works best when you make that call.
- 4) We believe in "YOU." It takes all of us to build a culture of ethics in Palm Beach County - one person at a time.
- 5) We have limited jurisdiction over lobbyists and vendors. Our ethical practices extend to lobbyists and their principals or employers, as well as individuals or entities that bid, propose to bid, and/or contract with the County or its municipalities.
- 6) We have online training, but the best way to interact with us is in person. Request live Code of Ethics training at your work location. The COE also conducts informational sessions for your professional group or civic organization.
- 7) Our Code of Ethics doesn't extend to constitutional officers or their employees. Fortunately, Florida has a State Ethics Commission too: [Home - Ethics \(state.fl.us\)](https://www.state.fl.us/ethics).



Florida City Government Week  
October 21 – 27, 2024

*Celebrating Florida's cities and the work of municipal government.*



# Lobbyist Registration

## CENTRAL LOBBYIST REGISTRY

Lobbying is seeking to influence a decision, through oral or written communication or an attempt to obtain the good will, of any county commissioner, municipal official, advisory board member, or public employee with respect to the passage, defeat or modification of anything which may foreseeably be presented for consideration to the advisory board, county or municipal governing body.

To preserve and maintain the integrity of the governmental decision-making process, it is necessary that the identity and activities of lobbyists, be publicly and regularly disclosed.

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**Lobbying prior to registration is prohibited.**

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## REGISTRATION

All lobbyists shall submit to Palm Beach County Central Lobbyist Registry fully executed registration forms either in paper or electronically.

By February 1 of each year, lobbyists shall submit a signed statement under oath listing all expenditures made by the lobbyist in lobbying county or municipal officials in excess of \$25.

## COE Database

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics publishes, stores, and maintains a database where individuals can search for:

- Complaints
- Charitable solicitation logs
- Gift forms
- Outside employment forms
- Active vendors
- Registered lobbyists
- Training compliance reviews
- Voting conflict forms

Interested individuals can also find the appropriate forms to complete from the COE's main website menu.

## Sunshine Law Quick Overview

Florida's Sunshine Law requires all meetings of any county, state, or municipal board or commission to be open to the public. More about open government can be found in Chapter 286 of the Florida Statutes.

Following each monthly meeting of the COE, staff publishes a press release and updates the COE database with all relevant advisory opinions or case files. Recordings of the meetings can also be found on the COE website.

## 2023 Achievements

### Legal Affairs

- Requests for assistance from the public received: 720
- New advisory opinions published: 28
- Average number of days to complete advisory opinions: 7

### Enforcement

- Inquiries initiated: 15
- Complaints investigated: 35
- Gift forms reviewed: 1,072
- Voting conflict forms reviewed: 100

### Education and Outreach

- In-person training sessions completed: 21
- Website views: 23,388
- Municipal meetings attended: 39





## Book a Speaker

The COE offers training programs designed to enhance ethical insights, knowledge, and skills for civic-minded individuals and groups. Led by our ethics experts, we provide opportunities to learn more about the role of ethics in our community, what we do, and how you can help our efforts to foster a culture of integrity, respect, and ethical behavior in public service. We are excited to offer this opportunity to your civic, professional, business, or educational groups or organizations.

For more details or if you would like to schedule a speaker, contact us.

## Upcoming Dates

- December 14, 2024: Regional High School Ethics Bowl**  
 High school students throughout South Florida participate in this annual competition at FAU that gives students the opportunity to engage in civil discourse and discuss real-life ethical issues.
- January 9, 2025: First COE meeting of the New Year**  
 The COE monthly commission meetings is normally held on the first Thursday of the month—but in January it is on the second Thursday. Your attendance and/or civic participation are encouraged to support our mission and efforts.
- January 31, 2025: Gift Reporting Deadline**  
 The COE annual gift reporting deadline for any gifts with a value over \$100 that are received between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024.
- January: ONE Ethics Movement Joint Meet & Greet**  
 Join the COE and the OIG outside the Robert Weisman Governmental Center, located in downtown West Palm Beach, to learn more about the ONE Ethics Movement in Palm Beach County and how you can support ethics throughout Palm Beach County.
- March: National Ethics Awareness Month.**  
 Don't be a sideline viewer. Bring ethical awareness to your department or organization— demonstrate: Honesty, Integrity and Character as you adhere to the PBC Code of Ethics.



The COE  
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Commission on Ethics  
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### Contact us:

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Phone: 561-355-1915

Website: [www.PalmBeachCountyEthics.com](http://www.PalmBeachCountyEthics.com)

### Connect with us:

@pbccoe  

Got Ethics? When faced with a possible ethical dilemma, local public officials and employees are encouraged to follow the "Ask First, Act Later" motto. The COE staff is available to help you understand your responsibilities under the Code of Ethics. See our FAQ page online.