



STAFF OF THE SEC ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING DUTIES:

01

Training and Compliance
Reviews of all Executive Branch agencies.

03

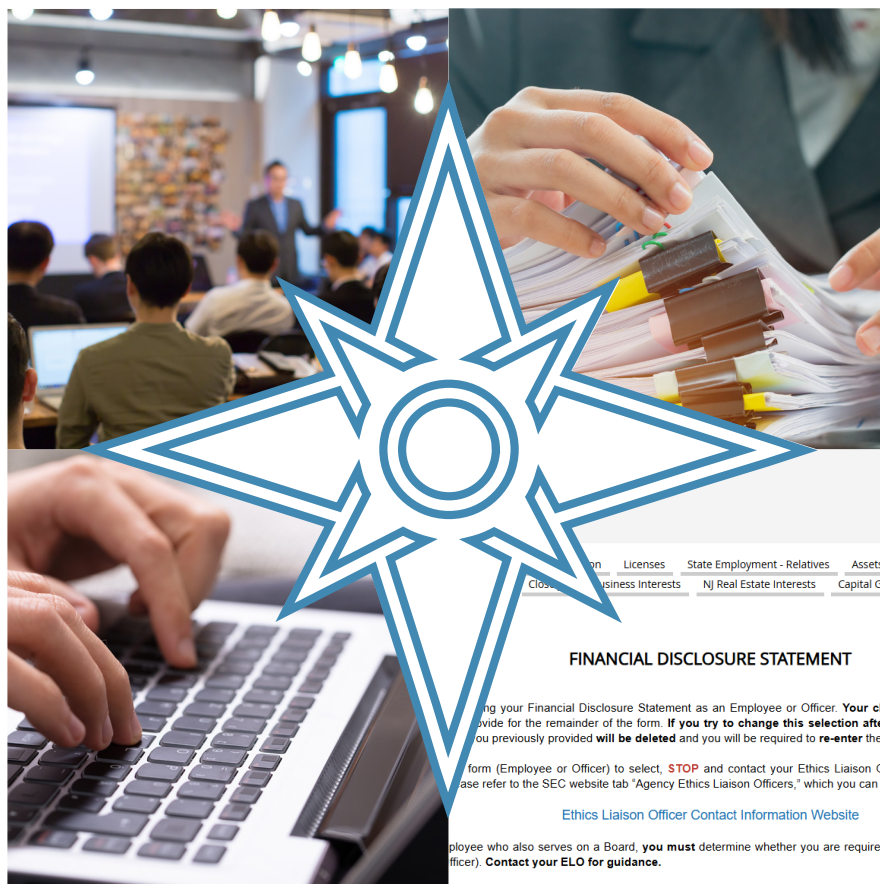
Advisory Opinions;
Casino and Cannabis Waivers.

02

Investigations into allegations of violations of the COI, Ethics Codes and Regulations.

04

Financial Disclosure Statements.



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STATE ETHICS COMMISSION DUTIES

As our 4² feature shows, the Staff of the State Ethics Commission (SEC) is responsible for a number of important duties that impact State officials in the Executive Branch of New Jersey. The following information is also available on the NJ State Ethics Commission website.

Training:

The SEC provides ethics training to members of the Executive Branch of State Government, including the Governor, Governor's Executive Staff, Cabinet members, Department Heads, Special State Officers (e.g. Appointed Board members and Commissioners), and all approximately 100,000 State Executive Branch employees. Training is conducted live in-person, live virtual through video conferencing, and through pre-recorded training modules available on the SEC website.

The Commission Staff also host frequent orientations and quarterly training meetings for Ethics Liaison Officers (ELOs) and are available to provide guidance to all ELOs as needed.

Compliance:

The SEC Staff conducts a number of ethics compliance reviews each year, drawn from the totality of all Executive branch agencies. The primary purpose of the Commission's compliance reviews is to ensure that State agencies are meeting reporting, training and other requirements of the State's ethics laws and regulations. The compliance review process is also designed to determine whether State agencies have implemented needed procedures and practices that will prevent and detect ethics violations.

Investigations:

The SEC legal staff conduct confidential investigations into allegations of violations of the State Conflict of Interest Law, Ethics Codes, and rules and regulations of the Commission. The Commission receives allegations from other State agencies, State employees, members of the public, and anonymous sources. All investigations are confidential. Complaints can be made by calling the SEC's toll free hotline, 1-888-223-1355, or in writing via mail, or emailing the general mailbox at: ethics@ethics.nj.gov.

State agency ELOs may also take complaints of State Ethics violations about employees or special State officers within their agencies. The State agency is required to file a copy of the complaint with the Commission and the Commission may retain jurisdiction or permit the agency to conduct the preliminary investigation. Whether the preliminary investigation is conducted by the Commission or an agency, the investigation is confidential. All determinations made by State agencies must be submitted to the Commission for approval by the Commissioners during a public meeting and an agency may not take disciplinary action prior to Commission approval.

The Commission may act against a former State officer or employee or special State officer or employee for violations that occurred during State service. The investigation, however, must be commenced within two years of the termination of State service.

At the conclusion of a confidential investigation by the Commission or an agency, the matter will be presented to the Commissioners for determination as to whether violations have occurred.

Advisory Opinions:

The Commission has the authority to issue advisory opinions concerning whether a given set of facts and circumstances would, in the Commission's opinion, constitute possible violations of the Conflicts Law or any ethics code, rules or regulations promulgated pursuant thereto. To request a Staff or Commission Advisory opinion, submit correspondence to ethics@ethics.nj.gov or mail to the PO Box.

Financial Disclosure Statements:

Executive Order No. 2, promulgated by Governor Murphy on January 17, 2018, requires the annual filing of Financial Disclosure Statements ("FDSs") by certain designated State employees and designated Special State officers. Pursuant to section 21(2) (n) of the Conflicts Law, FDSs required to be submitted to the Commission by law, regulation or executive order are available and searchable on the SEC website. Commission Staff advise filers of their deadlines, review submissions for compliance, and assist in answering questions for filers. The Commission is also empowered to impose penalties for late or delinquent filings.

Casino & Cannabis Waivers:

A State officer or employee is not permitted to hold an interest in, or represent, appear for, or negotiate on behalf of a casino licensee or applicant, a medical cannabis permit holder, applicant, or entity, or a personal use cannabis license holder, applicant, or entity. A State officer or employee is also not permitted to hold employment with a casino licensee or applicant, a medical cannabis permit holder, applicant, or entity, or a personal use cannabis license holder, applicant, or entity, unless the Commission grants a waiver. A waiver is granted in circumstances where it is determined by the Commission that such activity will not interfere with the responsibilities of the State officer or employee and will not create a conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:13D-17.2, the Commission may grant an exception from the above employment restrictions for a person's immediate family member or an employee who was terminated as a result of a reduction in force, (provided that the employee did not hold a related policy-making management position during the five years prior to termination of employment) whenever it determines that such waiver will not create a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The above information illustrates the principal duties of the SEC Staff on a day-to-day basis and describes the various areas over which the SEC has jurisdiction for State officials of the Executive Branch of New Jersey State government. The Staff is readily available to answer questions from State officials in the Executive Branch as well as members of the public. The fastest way to get a response is by email sent to ethics@ethics.nj.gov or by phone at 609-292-1892 (toll free @ 1-888-223-1355).



DECEMBER 12TH, 2024 ELO QUARTERLY: ROUNDTABLE PANEL DISCUSSION



On December 12, 2024, the SEC hosted its first ELO Roundtable Panel Discussion during the 4th Quarter ELO Meeting. The four ELO members of the panel were (from left to right): **Rachel Hammond**, Chief, Data Privacy & Research Integrity Officer from the NJ State Department of Health; **Dave Zipin**, *Legal Research Analyst/EEO/AA Officer, Alternate/Division of Regulatory Affairs/ELO from the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency*; **Dr. Valerie Hayes**, Chief Officer for Diversity & Inclusion, University ADA-504 Coordinator, and ELO from Stockton University; and **Melissa Liebermann**, Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer & Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Law and Public Safety.

The meeting kicked off with the Roundtable discussion moderated by **Susan Flynn-Hollander**, Training Officer for the State Ethics Commission, followed by an Ethics Trivia Challenge moderated by **Rachel Eger**, SEC Compliance Officer.

Well over 100 Ethics Liaison Officers from various NJ agencies, boards, commissions, departments and divisions of the Executive Branch participated in this live virtual program.

The panelists were from various backgrounds representing large departments, a State University and a very public facing but smaller agency. Each panelist shared information about their current role and background, and provided a description of what their typical day looks like in their capacity as an ELO. It was clear that each of these attorney ELOs wears many hats in their various agencies and is tasked with ensuring that all the ethics requirements are disseminated and complied with by their employees and Board members. The examples given underscored the complexity of the role of ELO and provided helpful tips to newer ELOs as to how to navigate responsibilities and succeed in the job.

The SEC is very grateful to these amazing panelists for their time and willingness to contribute to the roundtable. There was good participation, thoughtful questions from the audience, and much of the information shared assisted the ELOs to give correct polling responses to the ethics Trivia Challenge that followed the Roundtable Panel Discussion.



FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT REMINDER

FDS Season is almost upon us. Legal Specialist Jessica Calella reminds filers to be aware of our new filing system and provides a short overview and preview (see below).

The NJ State Ethics Commission and Staff are pleased to share the news that we have transitioned to a new, web-based Financial Disclosure Statement (FDS) filing system through SimpliGov. The PDF-based system was discontinued on 10/31/24. State employees, State officers, and Special State officers required to file an FDS will be provided a link to the SimpliGov system to complete and submit their statements. Filers may access the link through any internet-connected device (i.e., computer, tablet, and/or phone) through a web browser.

Most first-time filers must submit their forms within 120 days of appointment and thereafter annually by May 15 each year. Existing filers must file by May 15 of each year. A \$50 per-day penalty is assessed for each day past the deadline for late filers.

The SEC is very excited to offer this new filing system to its FDS filers, and thanks the Staff members who worked diligently to meet deadlines, test, and design the system. As always, SEC Staff are available to assist with technical issues or to answer general questions. You may call the SEC office at 609-292-1892 during regular business hours or email ethics@ethics.nj.gov for help.

Form Selection	Instructions	General Information	Licenses	State Employment - Relatives	Assets	Income	Positions Held	Liabilities	Stocks and Bonds Held
Closely-Held Business Interests		NJ Real Estate Interests	Capital Gains	Attachments	Attestation				



FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Choose whether you are filing your Financial Disclosure Statement as an Employee or Officer. **Your choice here** determines the information that you are required to provide for the remainder of the form. **If you try to change this selection after** you have entered information on the form, the information that you previously provided **will be deleted** and you will be required to **re-enter** the information.

If you are unsure which form (Employee or Officer) to select, **STOP** and contact your Ethics Liaison Officer ("ELO") for guidance. If you are unsure of your ELO, please refer to the SEC website tab "Agency Ethics Liaison Officers," which you can access by clicking the following link:

[Ethics Liaison Officer Contact Information Website](#)

If you are a State employee who also serves on a Board, **you must** determine whether you are required to file an FDS as an Employee or as the Board member (Officer). **Contact your ELO for guidance.**

You must answer the following question prior to proceeding to the other sections.

Select which you are filing as: *

- ☒ Employee
☐ Officer

First Name *
Required Field

Taylor

Middle Initial

Last Name *
Required Field

Swift

Email Address *
Required Field - Use State email address.

Taylor.swift@nj.gov

Save

Next

Tips

&

Quips

BROUGHT
TO YOU BY
THE SEC STAFF



Some ethics rules are common sense, but others might surprise you. Check the Plain Language Guide at <https://nj.gov/ethics/>

- Harvey Coffman, Legal Secretary

In addition to the Uniform Ethics Code, some agencies have supplemental codes of ethics. It is important to know if you are subject to any agency-specific rules or restrictions. Check out the SEC website or contact your ELO for more information.

- Rachel Eger, Compliance Officer

“A true leader has the courage to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”

- Douglas MacArthur; Submitted by Jessica Calella, Legal Specialist



VIEWS

GET TO KNOW AN ELO

Dave Zipin

Legal Research Analyst/EEO/AA Officer, Alternate/Division of Regulatory Affairs/ELO from the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency



Dave Zipin, Legal Research Analyst/EEO/AA Officer, Alternate/Division of Regulatory Affairs/ELO from the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency is our featured Ethics Liaison Officer for this issue. If you are ever in a situation where you are asked the question: “if you could have dinner with one interesting or famous NJ person – who would that be, and where should the dinner take place?” – your answer should be – David Zipin – with reservations made down the shore, preferably at a sports bar on LBI, where you should plan to stay until closing as you get to know this phenomenal human, who will probably end up as a new friend. Here’s a preview!

Dave joined NJHFMA in 2008, becoming the ELO in May of 2012; before that, he spent five years in the Department of Community Affairs with the Government Records Council, the Local Finance Board, and the Division of Local Government Services. Other public service along the way included working for Cherry Hill Township while attending Rutgers Law at Camden, earning joint JD/MBA degrees. After being admitted to the NJ and PA Bars, Dave continued to work for Cherry Hill Township as the Assistant Solicitor and at one point, the Acting Director of Community Development. Truly a committed public servant, Dave was elected to the Moorestown Township Council in 2020, just concluded his term and decided not to seek reelection. Prior to his term on the Council, he served on the Moorestown Planning Board and as the Board’s selected designee to the Moorestown Economic Development Advisory Committee.

One of Dave’s favorite parts about being responsible for ethics issues for his agency is the opportunity to interface with colleagues and Senior Administrators from within the agency as well as other departments and outside groups; activities that provide a welcome reprieve from job-related screen time. Dave was responsible for migrating the agency’s OAQ (Outside Activities Questionnaire) from hard copy/paper to digital in a SharePoint format. In addition, an Ethics help desk (email), and an Ethics drive have been established to provide quick access for the agency’s users, as well as for the 2-person Ethics Team (Dave and Alternate ELO Tina Vignali). They work closely with the dedicated HR team member who is responsible for continuing education and annual trainings (including ethics) through the agency’s LMS (Learning Management System).

Pressed to provide an example of a weird and/or difficult ethics issue he has handled elicited a list of prohibited gifts that

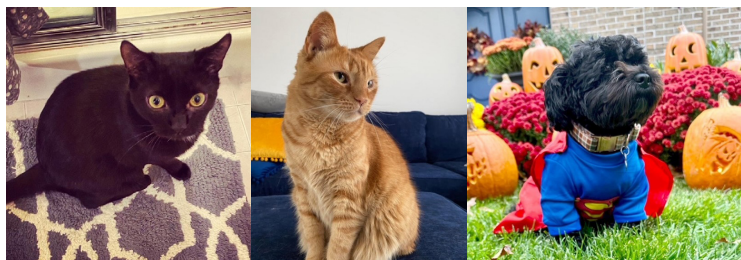
found their way to his office for disposal. These include wine, vodka, out-of-state distillery tour tickets, an office themed putting green, and a remote-control boat missing the controller. In order to retrieve the controller, the recipient might have been in a position of breaking another Ethics rule. Hence, New Jersey’s zero tolerance rule with regard to gifts; experienced ELOs have a disposal process in place to get these items to soup kitchens, state museums, non-profits for fundraising purposes, and the like.

Life away from the rigors of State work finds this ELO working in his approved outside activity - teaching Graduate and Undergraduate management, ethics and legal courses at American Military University; and spending time with his family – wife Cyndi, a recovering but still licensed attorney who is a college Professor in the HR/Management Department; 17 year old twin daughters, Abby and Maddie, who are busy applying to colleges and vying for use of the family car; recent Masters grad niece Carly who is temporarily staying with the Zipins while pursuing a social work job in the Philly area; and importantly, two cats, Leo and Teddy, and finally, the heart of the household, Zach, a Havanese.

A self-proclaimed fan in the category of “Sports as a Spectator,” Dave champions his “South NJ” position by rooting for all the Philly teams – Eagles, Phillies, Sixers and Flyers. His new gluten free diet means Dave has developed an interest in baking and cooking, in-between woodworking, home renovation, maintaining his marine/reef tank, and restoring old cars. A passion for real estate investment means mostly buying houses and fixing them up while the family lives in them. The current address is # 5 and the powers that be have already explained to Dave that it is also the last such project. Dave sees future potential in flipping a home in the Jersey Shore area when the girls go off to college and all the electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and painting projects in # 5 are complete.

For now, family time is a priority; the group enjoys the beach, any beach with palm trees and sand, and any tropical location. That includes Santorini and Jamaica, with plans to broaden that list. There is talk of a family trip to Italy as a gift to the girls for their high school graduation that ideally will include time to sit on an Italian beach.

Shout-outs to Abington (Elkins Park) PA where Dave grew up, Albright College, Rutgers, his much-missed late Dad, and his Mom (although at times she is not quite sure what Dave does in his job), for their part in helping shape this industrious, humble, artistic, and smart individual. Dave is inspired by the works and writings of Founding Fathers John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, crediting them for his choice to give back in the form of public service. That being said, bartending on LBI during off-from-school-summertime no doubt had their own influences, and as we all know in Jersey – when Summer beckons, it’s time to go down the Shore. No doubt, you may find yourself near the beach, having that dinner with our spotlighted ELO.





THE NJSEC ATTENDS THE 2024 NATIONAL COGEL CONFERENCE

Legal Specialist Claudia Gallagher highlights key points from the conference on the growing challenges to State Ethics Commissions, and strategies employed to preserve their authority.

The Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL) is a professional organization for government agencies and other organizations working in ethics, elections, freedom of information, lobbying, and campaign finance. COGEL hosts a conference every year, and this past December, the SEC sent three of its staff members (Executive Director Christina Fullam, Deputy Director Shamecca Bernardini, and Legal Specialist Claudia Gallagher) to the conference. Here is a highlight from one of the sessions that dealt with threats to ethics laws and agencies:

Over the past year, there have been several challenges to ethics commissions across the country. These threats seek to question ethics commissions' enforcement powers and subject matter jurisdiction, and some have even challenged the validity and constitutionality of the commissions. While the speakers gave several examples of states where this is occurring, we will focus on three: Alabama, Florida and Vermont. In Alabama, there have been several attempted revisions to the ethics laws during legislative sessions. Most recently, legislation was introduced to remove criminal penalties from the ethics code, allow the legislature to remove the ethics commission director and commissioners, reduce the number of people to which the ethics laws apply, and raise the gift threshold. It failed to pass through the Legislature. In Florida, legislation was sponsored that would require an ethics complaint to be based on personal knowledge, a standard that many complainants would have difficulty meeting. This was passed and signed into law by Governor DeSantis on June 24, 2024. There were a few states, though, where ethics laws were strengthened. For example, before 2017, Vermont did not have an ethics commission, and even when that was changed, the commission did not have legal authority. A new bill

established a municipal code of ethics, allowed the state ethics commission to provide training and guidance to municipalities, and more broadly, gave the state ethics commission enforcement powers.

The officials from these agencies gave several suggestions based on what they did to combat these threats. They first discussed learning how to anticipate the challenges, either to prevent them or to be prepared when they do occur. The speakers recommended that agencies keep alerts for when the commission, or more broadly, ethics, is mentioned; watch every public meeting and hearing; and be alert when handling high-profile cases. Once there has been a threat, it is important to know one's allies. In many cases, the challenge to the agency's authority came from a state official who did not want to be subject to the ethics requirements. In Alabama, on the other hand, it was the Chair of the commission who promulgated the legislation. If the issue is internal, an agency may use the press to provide information to the public, as long as the information is directed to trustworthy outlets. If there are external threats, agencies can use their staff and commissioners to speak out and reiterate the importance of enforcement, and they should establish a relationship with the commissioners to ensure they are also invested in the ethics rules. Finally, the speakers advised making the ethics agency indispensable. Attempts to weaken the power of ethics commissions are inevitable, but there are ways agencies can prepare and preserve their authority. For more information, please see the Campaign Legal Center's report, "Threat Assessment 2024: Risks and Challenges Facing State Ethics Commissions," available at https://campaignlegal.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/CLC_ThreatAssessment2024.pdf.

PUZZLES



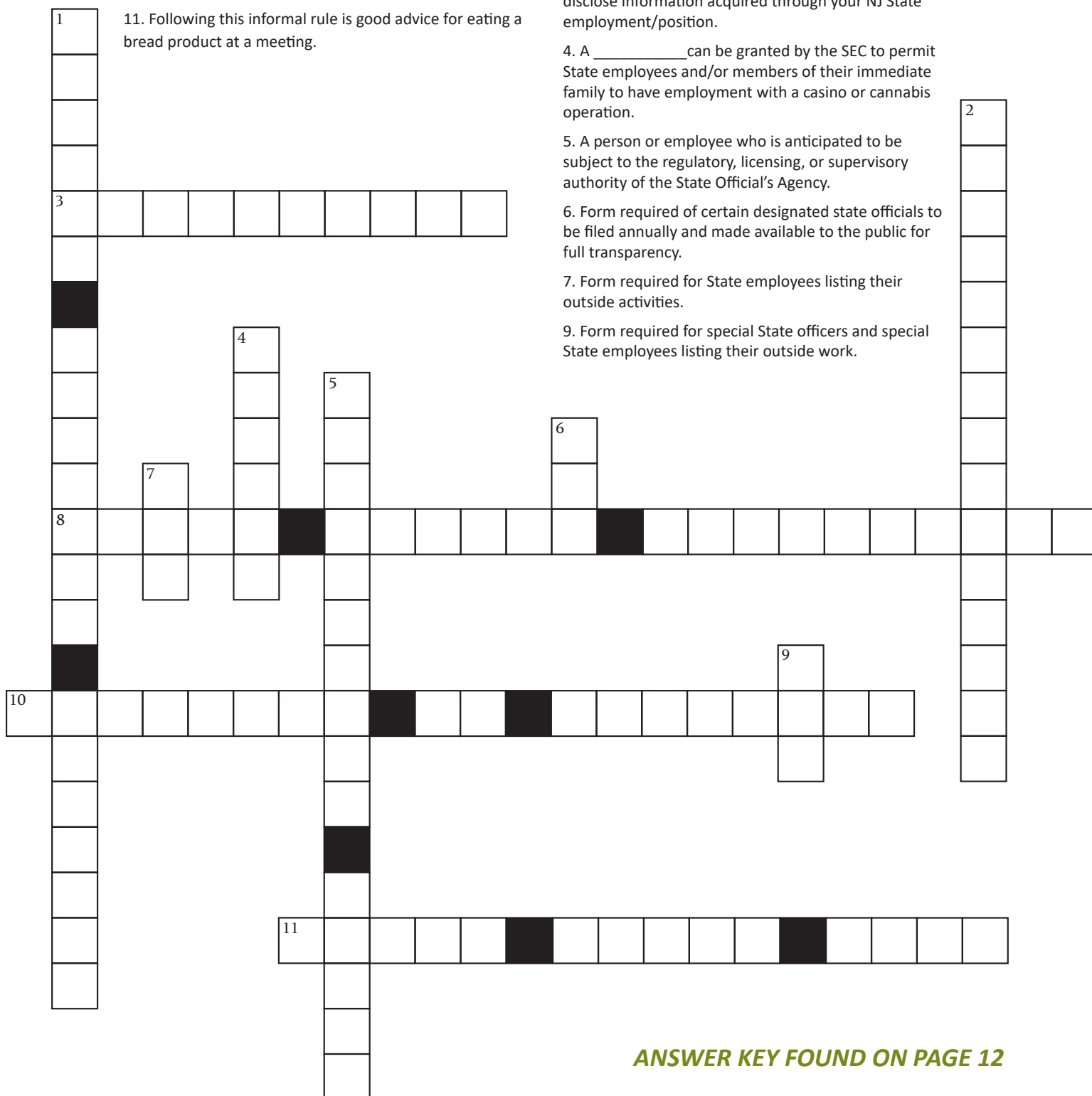
Identify the key terms associated with ethics and compliance.

Across

3. Meeting standards and rules.
8. Governing Board within the Executive Branch of NJ government responsible for ethics matters.
10. Governing Statute for State ethics.
11. Following this informal rule is good advice for eating a bread product at a meeting.

Down

1. Individual assigned within a State agency to assist the SEC to implement and enforce ethics rules and requirements.
2. It is important to maintain _____ and not disclose information acquired through your NJ State employment/position.
4. A _____ can be granted by the SEC to permit State employees and/or members of their immediate family to have employment with a casino or cannabis operation.
5. A person or employee who is anticipated to be subject to the regulatory, licensing, or supervisory authority of the State Official's Agency.
6. Form required of certain designated state officials to be filed annually and made available to the public for full transparency.
7. Form required for State employees listing their outside activities.
9. Form required for special State officers and special State employees listing their outside work.



ANSWER KEY FOUND ON PAGE 12

PUZZLES



Find and circle the key terms associated with ethics and compliance.

C	O	M	P	L	I	A	N	C	E	A	C	T	F
R	E	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	A	T	I	O	N
A	P	N	T	X	N	E	P	O	T	I	S	M	E
P	E	E	R	C	I	T	S	P	E	N	N	X	E
R	R	P	A	E	E	T	H	I	C	S	U	E	V
O	E	T	I	P	N	E	E	L	I	Z	P	O	E
C	C	O	N	T	R	A	C	T	I	N	G	A	N
U	U	L	I	I	I	A	X	T	T	G	I	I	T
R	S	A	N	O	C	R	R	L	E	R	F	E	S
E	A	O	G	N	N	O	I	T	P	E	T	X	M
M	L	E	U	S	C	O	M	P	A	S	S	S	V
E	I	N	T	D	I	S	C	L	O	S	U	R	E
N	I	R	L	A	I	U	C	E	R	T	A	E	N
T	S	A	U	D	I	T	E	R	O	N	O	E	R

EXCEPTIONS
AUDIT
PROCUREMENT
TRAINING
COMPASS
REPRESENTATION
EVENTS

COMPLIANCE
CONTRACTING
RECUSAL
ETHICS
GIFTS
DISCLOSURE
NEPOTISM

ANSWER KEY FOUND ON PAGE 12

CALENDAR

2025 DATES TO NOTE



Commission Meeting Dates:

Tuesday, February 4
Tuesday, March 11
Tuesday, April 1
Tuesday, June 3
Tuesday, July 29
Tuesday, September 30
Tuesday, December 2



ELOs PLEASE NOTE

THE DEADLINES FOR 23d SUBMISSIONS AND REQUESTS FOR ADVISORY OPINIONS ARE MARCH 7 FOR THE APRIL COMMISSION MEETING, AND MAY 9 FOR THE JUNE COMMISSION MEETING.

ELO Quarterly Meeting Dates:

Thursday, February 27
Thursday, June 26
Thursday, October 16
(non-college)
Thursday, October 23
(college)
Thursday, December 11

ELO Orientation Dates:

Thursday, January 30
Thursday, April 10
Thursday, July 10
Thursday, September 11
Thursday, November 20



Commission Members

- Stephanie A. Brown, Esq.
Chair, Public Member
- Patricia C. Morgan, Esq.
Vice Chair, Public Member
- Christine Norbut Beyer
*SEC Commissioner; Commissioner,
Department of Children and Families*
- Victor J. Herlinsky, Jr., Esq.
SEC Commissioner, Public Member
- Brian Bridges, Ph.D.
*SEC Commissioner; Secretary of Higher
Education*
- Sarah Adelman
*SEC Commissioner; Commissioner,
Department of Human Services*
- Vacancy
SEC Commissioner, Public Member

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 - Shamecca Bernardini, Esq.
Deputy Director
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 - Susan J. Flynn-Hollander, Esq.
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Legal Specialist
 - Claudia Gallagher, Esq.*
Legal Specialist
 - Alicia M. Reaves, J.D.
Legal Specialist
 - Shanna Cook
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 - Harvey Coffman*
Legal Secretary
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 - Daisy Siedlecki
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PUZZLES

ANSWER KEYS

