

2021 Annual Report of the Ohio Ethics Commission



The Ohio Ethics Commission

Merom Brachman, Chairman
Mark Vander Laan, Vice Chairman
Bruce E. Bailey
Megan Kelley
Julie Rutter
Elizabeth E. Tracy

Paul M. Nick, Executive Director

Welcome

A Message from the Executive Director

It's my great pleasure to unveil the Ohio Ethics Commission Annual Report for 2021. We are excited to share all that the Commission has accomplished, in spite of all the challenges of the past two years. I hope you find this report helpful and that as you review the information contained within, you will be encouraged to rely upon the Commission's past precedence and advice and will feel free to call on our office for future assistance. As you will see in this report, Commission staff daily provide advice under the law, a myriad of educational opportunities, assistance with financial disclosure responsibilities, and investigative guidance in understanding the boundaries of the law.

As you review this Annual Report, I hope it will inspire you to approach your own public service with a renewed sense of purpose and ethical principles and that you would call upon the Ethics Commission in those endeavors.

Sincerely,
Paul M. Nick

About Us

The Ohio Ethics Law became effective on January 1, 1974. These laws set forth a code of ethics for public officials and employees, require financial disclosure requirements for certain public officials, and prohibit public officials and employees from:

- acting on conflicts of interest;
- selling goods or services to their own public entities;
- abusing public positions for private business opportunities.

The Ohio Ethics Commission is authorized to conduct investigations, render advisory opinions that offer immunity, provide a continuing program of education, receive financial disclosure statements, and make recommendations for future ethics related legislation.

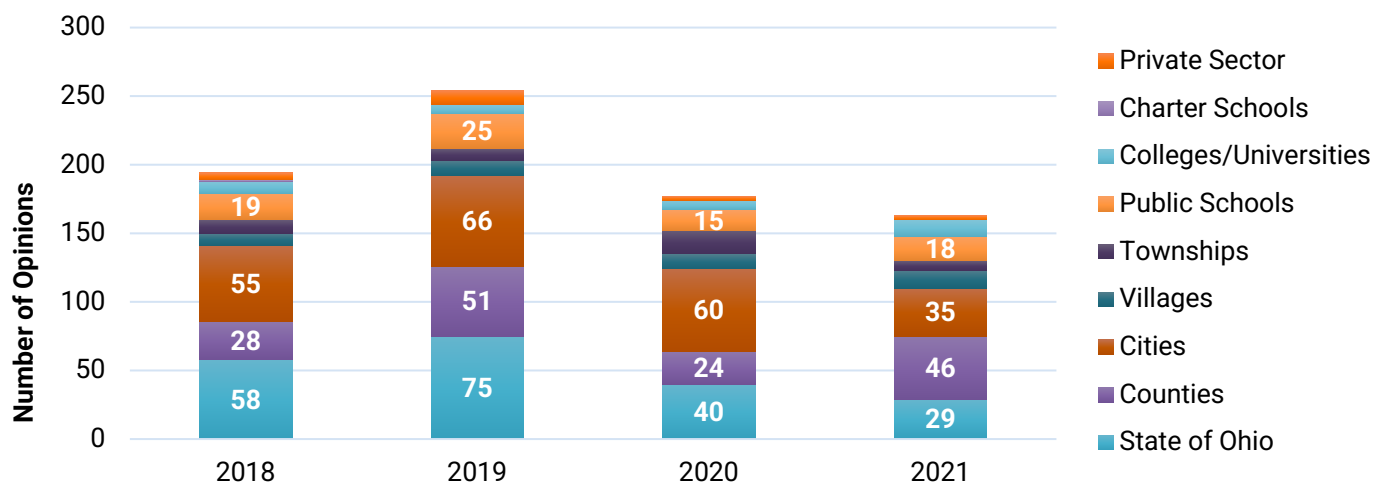
The Ethics Commission is an independent, bipartisan commission, comprised of six members serving staggered, six-year terms. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor subject to confirmation by the Ohio Senate. Review current and past members of the Ohio Ethics Commission on our [Commission Members page](#).

Advisory

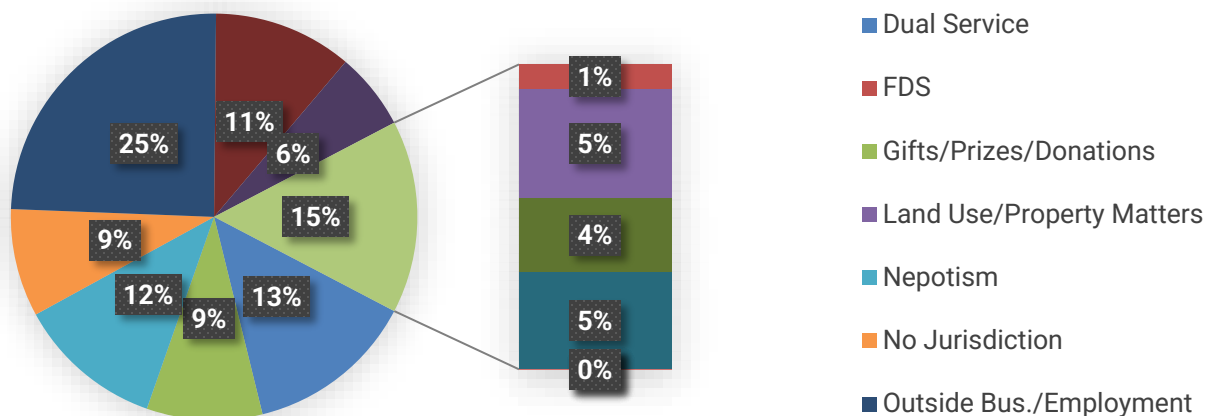
By the Numbers

- 163 written requests for advice
- 2,100 email correspondence
- 1,700 telephone communications
- All written requests issued within 45 days of receiving request
- Approximately 1/3 of advisory requests come from state government. The majority comes from local governments

Opinions Issued by Entity Type Per Year



2021 Opinions Issued by Topic



Investigations

The Ohio Ethics Commission is statutorily charged with investigating alleged violations of the Ethics Law and refers cases supported by substantial evidence for prosecution or alternative resolution. This important responsibility of the Ethics Commission holds accountable those who violate both the law and the public's trust. It also deters violations from public officials or employees and assures all Ohioans of their right to expect that government actions are for the public's benefit, not for the benefit of individual public officials or employees.

By the Numbers

- 158 cases investigated
- 1,021 telephone investigative inquiries
- 501 information requests or allegations of wrongdoing
- 32 new investigations opened; closed 101 cases, including settlement and censure cases

Top 5 Investigations in 2021:

- Outside business/employment violations
- Nepotism
- Securing Things of Value
- Gifts/Prizes/Donations
- Land Use/Property

Education and Training

By the Numbers

- 123 public appearances to more than 11,000 people
- 78 webinars with nearly 9,000 electronic attendees
- More than 57,000 public employees and officials trained by the 2021 e-course
- More than 65,000 visitors to our website

Financial Disclosure

As it does each year, the Ohio Ethics Commission efficiently administered in 2021 the financial disclosure program as mandated by statute. Financial disclosure provides significant benefits for both filers and all Ohioans.

The financial disclosure form is a helpful tool in increasing awareness of potential issues filers may face while serving in their public role. The form helps filers identify potential conflicts between public roles and private lives which likely prevents violations of the law.

The public benefits from financial disclosure through the additional government transparency it delivers. Ohio citizens have the right to know that public officials and employees have the citizens' best interests in mind and not their own when making decisions in their public role. The disclosure form makes that information available in a very accessible way.

By the Numbers

- More than 10,500 statements filed with the Ethics Commission
- More than 94 percent of filers used the convenient online filing system
- Staff collaborates with nearly 1,300 different filing entities each year
- Confidential reviews are conducted for nearly 800 different entities and 2,400 filers
- The FDS program maintains a near 100 percent compliance rate, with 97 percent filing on time in 2021