

Complaints and Investigations under Wisconsin's Ethics Code and Lobbying Law

The Ethics Board may investigate possible violations of the Ethics Code and lobbying law whenever circumstances warrant and may file complaints alleging violations whenever it concludes there is probable cause to do so.

During the period January through December 2001, the Board completed investigations of the following matters pertaining to possible violations of the statutorily prescribed standards of conduct for state officials, lobbyists, and principals.

IMPROPER USE OF OFFICE. The Board opened an investigation into whether one or more state public officials may have used or attempted to use the public position held by the public official to influence or gain unlawful benefits, advantages or privileges personally or for others by using state time and resources for campaign activities. The Board negotiated a resolution of the matter that abolished the legislative partisan caucus staffs and imposed strict new work rules for legislative employees. The four legislative campaign committees agreed to forfeit a total of \$300,000 with that payment divided equally among them. Of this amount \$260,000 is held in abeyance and \$40,000 paid and deposited by the Elections Board into the state school fund. Each of the four legislative campaign committees also agreed to pay \$5,000 to the Ethic Board and \$5,000 to the Elections Board for a total of \$20,000 to each agency to pay costs of seminars on the ethics code. [2001-SC-01]

IMPROPER FURNISHING OF CAMPAGIN CONTRIBUTIONS. The Ethics Board investigated whether a lobbyist had furnished a campaign contribution at a time not permitted by the lobbying law as prohibited by §13.625(1)(c), *Wisconsin Statutes*. The Board concluded that the lobbyist did not make the contribution therefore there was no violated of the law. [2001-SC-03]

OFFICIAL'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST. The Ethics Board investigated whether a state public official had a substantial financial interest in a company with which the official's agency entered a substantial financial relationship. The Board concluded that there was insufficient evidence to warrant proceeding further. [2001-SC-04]

OFFICIAL'S FAILURE TO REPORT STOCK OWNERSHIP ON STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS. The Ethics Board investigated whether former Governor Tommy Thompson had owned a reportable interest in stock of Riverwood 2000 Corporation, which he had

not reported on his annual Statement of Economic Interests form in violation of §§19.43 and 19.44, *Wisconsin Statutes*. The Board concluded that Mr. Thompson violated the law and imposed a forfeiture of \$3,000. [2001-SEI-01]

FAILURE TO REGISTER AS A PRINCIPAL, AUTHORIZE A LOBBYIST, OR OBTAIN A LOBBYING LICENSE. The following lobbying organization paid a penalty for failing to register and properly authorize a lobbyist to lobby on their behalf: Extendicare Health Services Inc. (\$750). The following lobbying organization paid a penalty for failing to obtain a lobbying license for their in-house lobbyist and properly authorize the lobbyist to lobby on their behalf: Metropolitan Milwaukee Assoc. of Commerce (\$300).

LATE STATEMENTS OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURES. The following three lobbying organizations paid penalties for filing their Statements of Lobbying Activities and Expenditures for the second half of 2000 late: HAH Enterprises Inc. paid \$25.00; Commonwealth Edison/Unicom and Environmental Compliance Consultants Inc., each paid a \$100 penalty.

The Board in this period collected \$150 in forfeitures for late filing of Statements of Economic Interests.

The Ethics Board deposits the penalties it collects in the state school fund.