

Wisconsin Ethics Board

January through December 2005

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

The Ethics Board investigates possible violations of the Ethics Code and lobbying law whenever circumstances warrant; no complaint is necessary. On its own authority the Board may issue subpoenas to require testimony and the production of documents. The Ethics Board may file complaints alleging violations whenever it discovers probable cause to believe that a person has violated a law that the Board administers.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT MATTERS MERITING PENALTIES

ETHICS BOARD PLACES RESTRICTIONS ON RAILROAD COMMISSIONER. The Ethics Board investigated whether Railroad Commissioner Rodney Kreunen was using a state vehicle for personal use and state resources to distribute gifts unrelated to state business. As a result of the investigation, the Board concluded that prosecuting a complaint was unwarranted but directed that Mr. Kreunen (1) not seek the State's reimbursement for expenses except those related to official travel; (2) delegate the purchase and control of office supplies to a classified employee; (3) cease the purchase of packaging and mailing supplies designed for gifts; (4) rid his office of items not related to the functioning of his office; and (5) not drive any state-owned vehicle unaccompanied by another state employee.

[QA-2004-011]

ETHICS BOARD FINES TAVERN LEAGUE OF WISCONSIN \$2,500. The Ethics Board investigated whether the Tavern League of Wisconsin entertained legislators and legislators' staffs at a March 29, 2005 reception without charging them the full value of the food and drink that the Tavern League provided. The Board found that the Tavern League, a lobbying principal, charged each state official attending the reception only \$5 for food and drink the value of which was really between \$27.50 and \$30. This action violated Wisconsin's lobbying law. For this violation, the Tavern League of Wisconsin forfeited \$2,500.

[QA-2005-003]

ETHICS BOARD FINES FORMER LEGISLATIVE AIDE. The Ethics Board investigated whether Christopher Slinker, a Senate aide, had used state resources for campaigning or had engaged in campaign activities while on state time. As a result of the investigation Mr. Slinker paid a forfeiture of \$500 for failing to properly account for time during which he was engaged in legislative employment.

ETHICS BOARD PENALIZES LOBBYISTS \$3,750 FOR IMPROPER CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS. The Ethics Board found that nine lobbyists had made campaign contributions to candidates during a time not permitted by the lobbying law. Each lobbyist secured the return of the improper contribution and forfeited the amount of the contribution to the State of Wisconsin. The lobbyists, penalties they paid, and the candidates to whom the contributions were furnished are:

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|-------------------|---------|--------------------|
| • Raymond Carey | \$500 | J.B. Van Hollen |
| • Michael Heifetz | \$100 | Mark Green |
| • Ken Lucht | \$250 | Ted Kanavas |
| • James Stewart | \$100 | James Doyle |
| • William Gardner | \$1,000 | Scott Walker |
| • William Gansner | \$1,000 | Peg Lautenschlager |
| • Ken Lucht | \$500 | Scott Walker |
| • George Petak | \$100 | Scott Walker |
| • George Petak | \$100 | Mark Green |
| • Brian Schimming | \$100 | Gregg Underheim |

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

INVESTIGATIONS CONCLUDING SANCTIONS NOT MERITED

CANDIDATES FOR STATE OFFICE RECEIVING PAYMENTS FROM LOBBYING PRINCIPALS. The Ethics Board found that the individuals investigated were not candidates.

[QA-2005-06; QA-2005-08]

CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE'S TREASURER SOLICITS LOBBYISTS FOR DAUGHTER'S TRAVEL EXPENSES. Representative Jeff Stone's campaign treasurer sent a letter to lobbyists on campaign stationery asking for contributions for his niece's participation in a student program. The Board found that Representative Stone did not solicit, authorize, or have knowledge of his campaign treasurer's solicitation.

[QA-2005-04]

FORMER OFFICIAL DID NOT BENEFIT FROM CONTACT WITH STATE AGENCY. The Board investigated whether Tom Carlsen, former Acting Secretary at the Department of Transportation, used his position of Acting Secretary to award a contract for creation of a website to HNTB, a company in which Mr. Carlsen owned a tiny fraction of stock. The Board found that the award of the contract did not affect the stock's value and produced no financial benefit for Mr. Carlsen. Mr. Carlsen's interest in the company was below the statutory threshold for prohibiting such an award.

[QA-2005-02]

USE OF GOVERNMENT RESOURCES FOR CAMPAIGNING. The Ethics Board found that the official investigated had not used government resources in his campaign.

[QA-2005-01]

USE OF STATE-OWNED COMPUTER IN CAMPAIGN FOR LOCAL OFFICE. The Ethics Board investigated whether a legislative aide had used state computers to create documents and transmit e-mails related to a campaign for a local office. The

Board found that the legislative employee used the state's computer to view pornography and to create scurrilous images to smear a local official. The Board found that, while the use of the state's computer was not in furtherance of a governmental purpose, there was insufficient evidence that it was for a campaign purpose. The aide's employer imposed discipline on the employee consisting of a suspension and an enforced leave without pay.

[QA-2004-41]

LOBBYING REGISTRATIONS, LICENSES, AND REPORTS

LATE STATEMENTS OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURES. As penalty for late filing of its Statement of Lobbying Activities and Expenditures for the last half of 2004, the Great Dane Pub & Brewery Company paid a penalty of \$25.00. As penalty for late filing of their Statements of Lobbying Activities and Expenditures for the first half of 2005, E4 Inc. and Wisconsin Citizen Action each paid a penalty of \$25.00.

LATE LOBBYING REGISTRATION. As a penalty for not registering as a lobbying principal on a timely basis, Onyx Waste Systems paid a penalty of \$525.

STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

LATE STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS. Every official required to file a Statement of economic Interests with the Ethics Board did so and nearly every Statement was filed by the date due. Of roughly 2,400 people filing Statements, only the following merited a penalty for filing late. In each case, the penalty was ten dollars.

- Frances J. Bohon, member, Professional Standards Council for Teachers
- Charles F. Kahn Jr., Circuit Court Judge
- Janet Hamik, member, Prison Industries Board

The Ethics Board deposits all forfeitures that the Board collects into the state school fund.