

# TITLE 2

## GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

Ch.

2. Standards of Conduct.

### CHAPTER 2 STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

#### Part 1 — Code of Ethics

- 2-2-101. Statement of purpose.
- 2-2-102. Definitions.
- 2-2-103. Public trust — public duty.
- 2-2-104. Rules of conduct for public officers, legislators, and public employees.
- 2-2-105. Ethical requirements for public officers and public employees.
- 2-2-106. Disclosure.
- 2-2-107 through 2-2-110 reserved.
- 2-2-111. Rules of conduct for legislators.
- 2-2-112. Ethical requirements for legislators.
- 2-2-113 through 2-2-120 reserved.
- 2-2-121. Rules of conduct for public officers and public employees.
- 2-2-122 through 2-2-124 reserved.
- 2-2-125. Repealed.
- 2-2-126 through 2-2-130 reserved.
- 2-2-131. Disclosure.
- 2-2-132. Repealed.
- 2-2-133 and 2-2-134 reserved.
- 2-2-135. Ethics committees.
- 2-2-136. Enforcement for state officers, legislators, and state employees — referral of complaint involving county attorney.
- 2-2-137. Repealed.
- 2-2-138. Repealed.
- 2-2-139. Repealed.
- 2-2-140. Repealed.
- 2-2-141 reserved.
- 2-2-142. Repealed.
- 2-2-143. Repealed.
- 2-2-144. Enforcement for local government.
- 2-2-145. Retaliation unlawful — civil liability — remedies — statute of limitations — definitions.

#### Part 2 — Proscribed Acts Related to Contracts and Claims

- 2-2-201. Public officers, employees, and former employees not to have interest in contracts.
- 2-2-202. Public officers not to have interest in sales or purchases.
- 2-2-203. Voidable contracts.
- 2-2-204. Dealings in warrants and other claims prohibited.
- 2-2-205. Affidavit to be required by auditing officers.
- 2-2-206. Officers not to pay illegal warrant.
- 2-2-207. Settlements to be withheld on affidavit.

#### Part 3 — Nepotism

- 2-2-301. Nepotism defined.
- 2-2-302. Appointment of relative to office of trust or emolument unlawful — exceptions — publication of notice.
- 2-2-303. Agreements to appoint relative to office unlawful.
- 2-2-304. Penalty for violation of nepotism law.

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#### Chapter Cross-References

- Elected official's business disclosure statement, 2-2-106.
- Arrest of public officer in certain civil actions involving officer's act or omission, 27-16-102.

### Part 1 Code of Ethics

#### Part Cross-References

- Impeachment, Art. V, sec. 13, Mont. Const.
- Judges — removal and discipline, Art. VII, sec. 11, Mont. Const.

**2-2-101. Statement of purpose.** The purpose of this part is to set forth a code of ethics prohibiting conflict between public duty and private interest as required by the constitution of Montana. This code recognizes distinctions between legislators, other officers and employees of state government, and officers and employees of local government and prescribes some standards of conduct common to all categories and some standards of conduct adapted to each category. The provisions of this part recognize that some actions are conflicts per se between public duty and private interest while other actions may or may not pose such conflicts depending upon the surrounding circumstances.

**History:** En. 59-1701 by Sec. 1, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1701.

**Cross-References**

Constitutional mandate to provide code of ethics, Art. XIII, sec. 4, Mont. Const.  
Code of fair campaign practices, 13-35-301.

**2-2-102. Definitions.** As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Business" includes a corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, trust or foundation, or any other individual or organization carrying on a business, whether or not operated for profit.

(2) "Compensation" means any money or economic benefit conferred on or received by any person in return for services rendered or to be rendered by the person or another.

(3) (a) "Gift of substantial value" means a gift with a value of \$50 or more for an individual.

(b) The term does not include:

(i) a gift that is not used and that, within 30 days after receipt, is returned to the donor or delivered to a charitable organization or the state and that is not claimed as a charitable contribution for federal income tax purposes;

(ii) food and beverages consumed on the occasion when participation in a charitable, civic, or community event bears a relationship to the public officer's or public employee's office or employment or when the officer or employee is in attendance in an official capacity;

(iii) educational material directly related to official governmental duties;

(iv) an award publicly presented in recognition of public service; or

(v) educational activity that:

(A) does not place or appear to place the recipient under obligation;

(B) clearly serves the public good; and

(C) is not lavish or extravagant.

(4) "Local government" means a county, a consolidated government, an incorporated city or town, a school district, or a special district.

(5) "Official act" or "official action" means a vote, decision, recommendation, approval, disapproval, or other action, including inaction, that involves the use of discretionary authority.

(6) "Private interest" means an interest held by an individual that is:

(a) an ownership interest in a business;

(b) a creditor interest in an insolvent business;

(c) an employment or prospective employment for which negotiations have begun;

(d) an ownership interest in real property;

(e) a loan or other debtor interest; or

(f) a directorship or officership in a business.

(7) "Public employee" means:

(a) any temporary or permanent employee of the state;

(b) any temporary or permanent employee of a local government;

(c) a member of a quasi-judicial board or commission or of a board, commission, or committee with rulemaking authority; and

(d) a person under contract to the state.

(8) "Public information" has the meaning provided in 2-6-1002.

(9) (a) "Public officer" includes any state officer and any elected officer of a local government.

(b) For the purposes of 67-11-104, the term also includes a commissioner of an airport authority.

(10) "Special district" means a unit of local government, authorized by law to perform a single function or a limited number of functions. The term includes but is not limited to conservation districts, water districts, weed management districts, irrigation districts, fire districts, community college districts, hospital districts, sewer districts, and transportation districts. The term also includes any district or other entity formed by interlocal agreement.

(11) (a) “State agency” includes:

- (i) the state;
  - (ii) the legislature and its committees;
  - (iii) all executive departments, boards, commissions, committees, bureaus, and offices;
  - (iv) the university system; and
  - (v) all independent commissions and other establishments of the state government.
- (b) The term does not include the judicial branch.

(12) “State officer” includes all elected officers and directors of the executive branch of state government as defined in 2-15-102.

**History:** En. 59-1702 by Sec. 2, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1702; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 18, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 122, L. 2001; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 77, L. 2009; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 156, L. 2019.

**2-2-103. Public trust — public duty.** (1) The holding of public office or employment is a public trust, created by the confidence that the electorate reposes in the integrity of public officers, legislators, and public employees. A public officer, legislator, or public employee shall carry out the individual’s duties for the benefit of the people of the state.

(2) A public officer, legislator, or public employee whose conduct departs from the person’s public duty is liable to the people of the state and is subject to the penalties provided in this part for abuse of the public’s trust.

(3) This part sets forth various rules of conduct, the transgression of any of which is a violation of public duty, and various ethical principles, the transgression of any of which must be avoided.

(4) (a) The enforcement of this part for:

- (i) state officers, legislators, and state employees is provided for in 2-2-136;
- (ii) legislators, involving legislative acts, is provided for in 2-2-135 and for all other acts is provided for in 2-2-136;
- (iii) local government officers and employees is provided for in 2-2-144.

(b) Any money collected in the civil actions that is not reimbursement for the cost of the action must be deposited in the general fund of the unit of government.

**History:** En. 59-1703 by Sec. 3, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1703; amd. Sec. 216, Ch. 685, L. 1989; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**Cross-References**

All state officers and employees to be bonded, 2-9-602.

**2-2-104. Rules of conduct for public officers, legislators, and public employees.**

(1) Proof of commission of any act enumerated in this section is proof that the actor has breached the actor’s public duty. A public officer, legislator, or public employee may not:

- (a) disclose or use confidential information acquired in the course of official duties in order to further substantially the individual’s personal economic interests; or
- (b) accept a gift of substantial value or a substantial economic benefit tantamount to a gift:
  - (i) that would tend improperly to influence a reasonable person in the person’s position to depart from the faithful and impartial discharge of the person’s public duties; or
  - (ii) that the person knows or that a reasonable person in that position should know under the circumstances is primarily for the purpose of rewarding the person for official action taken.

(2) An economic benefit tantamount to a gift includes without limitation a loan at a rate of interest substantially lower than the commercial rate then currently prevalent for similar loans and compensation received for private services rendered at a rate substantially exceeding the fair market value of the services. Campaign contributions reported as required by statute are not gifts or economic benefits tantamount to gifts.

(3) (a) Except as provided in subsection (3)(b), a public officer, legislator, or public employee may not receive salaries from two separate public employment positions that overlap for the hours being compensated, unless:

- (i) the public officer, legislator, or public employee reimburses the public entity from which the employee is absent for the salary paid for performing the function from which the officer, legislator, or employee is absent; or
- (ii) the public officer’s, legislator’s, or public employee’s salary from one employer is reduced by the amount of salary received from the other public employer in order to avoid duplicate compensation for the overlapping hours.

(b) Subsection (3)(a) does not prohibit:

(i) a public officer, legislator, or public employee from receiving income from the use of accrued leave or compensatory time during the period of overlapping employment; or

(ii) a public school teacher from receiving payment from a college or university for the supervision of student teachers who are enrolled in a teacher education program at the college or university if the supervision is performed concurrently with the school teacher's duties for a public school district.

(c) In order to determine compliance with this subsection (3), a public officer, legislator, or public employee subject to this subsection (3) shall disclose the amounts received from the two separate public employment positions to the commissioner of political practices.

**History:** En. 59-1704 by Sec. 4, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1704; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 243, L. 1997.

**Cross-References**

Prohibited campaign practices, Title 13, ch. 35, part 2.

Reports of campaign contributions required, 13-37-225.

**2-2-105. Ethical requirements for public officers and public employees.** (1) The requirements in this section are intended as rules of conduct, and violations constitute a breach of the public trust and public duty of office or employment in state or local government.

(2) Except as provided in subsection (4), a public officer or public employee may not acquire an interest in any business or undertaking that the officer or employee has reason to believe may be directly and substantially affected to its economic benefit by official action to be taken by the officer's or employee's agency.

(3) A public officer or public employee may not, within 12 months following the voluntary termination of office or employment, obtain employment in which the officer or employee will take direct advantage, unavailable to others, of matters with which the officer or employee was directly involved during a term of office or during employment. These matters are rules, other than rules of general application, that the officer or employee actively helped to formulate and applications, claims, or contested cases in the consideration of which the officer or employee was an active participant.

(4) When a public employee who is a member of a quasi-judicial board or commission or of a board, commission, or committee with rulemaking authority is required to take official action on a matter as to which the public employee has a conflict created by a personal or private interest that would directly give rise to an appearance of impropriety as to the public employee's influence, benefit, or detriment in regard to the matter, the public employee shall disclose the interest creating the conflict prior to participating in the official action.

(5) A public officer or public employee may not perform an official act directly and substantially affecting a business or other undertaking to its economic detriment when the officer or employee has a substantial personal interest in a competing firm or undertaking.

**History:** En. 59-1709 by Sec. 9, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1709; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**Cross-References**

Definitions of rules and contested cases relating to administrative rules, 2-4-102.

Public contracts generally, Title 18, ch. 1.

**2-2-106. Disclosure.** (1) (a) Prior to December 15 of each even-numbered year, each state officer, holdover senator, supreme court justice, and district court judge shall file with the commissioner of political practices a business disclosure statement on a form provided by the commissioner. An individual filing pursuant to subsection (1)(b) or (1)(c) is not required to file under this subsection (1)(a) during the same period.

(b) Each candidate for a statewide or a state office elected from a district shall, within 5 days of the time that the candidate files for office, file a business disclosure statement with the commissioner of political practices on a form provided by the commissioner.

(c) An individual appointed to office who would be required to file under subsection (1)(a) or (1)(b) is required to file the business disclosure statement at the earlier of the time of submission of the person's name for confirmation or the assumption of the office.

(2) Except as provided in subsection (4), the statement must provide the following information:

(a) the name, address, and type of business of the individual;

(b) each present or past employing entity from which benefits, including retirement benefits, are currently received by the individual;

(c) each business, firm, corporation, partnership, and other business or professional entity or trust in which the individual holds an interest;

(d) each entity not listed under subsections (2)(a) through (2)(c) in which the individual is an officer or director, regardless of whether or not the entity is organized for profit; and

(e) all real property, other than a personal residence, in which the individual holds an interest. Real property may be described by general description.

(3) An individual may not assume or continue to exercise the powers and duties of the office to which that individual has been elected or appointed until the statement has been filed as provided in subsection (1).

(4) An individual required to file a business disclosure statement may certify that the information required by subsection (2) has not changed from the most recent statement filed by the individual. The commissioner shall provide a certification form.

(5) The commissioner of political practices shall make the business disclosure statements and certification forms available to any individual upon request.

**History:** En. Sec. 16, I.M. No. 85, approved Nov. 4, 1980; amd. Sec. 12, Ch. 562, L. 1995; Sec. 5-7-213, MCA 1993; redes. 2-2-106 by Code Commissioner, 1995; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 114, L. 2003; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 130, L. 2005; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 156, L. 2015; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 166, L. 2017.

**2-2-107 through 2-2-110 reserved.**

**2-2-111. Rules of conduct for legislators.** Proof of commission of any act enumerated in this section is proof that the legislator committing the act has breached the legislator's public duty. A legislator may not:

(1) accept a fee, contingent fee, or any other compensation, except the official compensation provided by statute, for promoting or opposing the passage of legislation;

(2) seek other employment for the legislator or solicit a contract for the legislator's services by the use of the office; or

(3) accept a fee or other compensation, except as provided for in 5-2-302, from a Montana state agency or a political subdivision of the state of Montana for speaking to the agency or political subdivision.

**History:** En. 59-1705 by Sec. 5, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1705; amd. Sec. 5, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 327, L. 2003.

**Cross-References**

Compensation of members of Legislature, Title 5, ch. 2, part 3.

**2-2-112. Ethical requirements for legislators.** (1) The requirements in this section are intended as rules for legislator conduct, and violations constitute a breach of the public trust of legislative office.

(2) A legislator has a responsibility to the legislator's constituents to participate in all matters as required in the rules of the legislature. A legislator concerned with the possibility of a conflict may briefly present the facts to the committee of that house that is assigned the determination of ethical issues. The committee shall advise the legislator as to whether the legislator should disclose the interest prior to voting on the issue pursuant to the provisions of subsection (5). The legislator may, subject to legislative rule, vote on an issue on which the legislator has a conflict, after disclosing the interest.

(3) When a legislator is required to take official action on a legislative matter as to which the legislator has a conflict created by a personal or private interest that would directly give rise to an appearance of impropriety as to the legislator's influence, benefit, or detriment in regard to the legislative matter, the legislator shall disclose the interest creating the conflict prior to participating in the official action, as provided in subsections (2) and (5) and the rules of the legislature. In making a decision, the legislator shall consider:

(a) whether the conflict impedes the legislator's independence of judgment;

(b) the effect of the legislator's participation on public confidence in the integrity of the legislature;

(c) whether the legislator's participation is likely to have any significant effect on the disposition of the matter; and

(d) whether a pecuniary interest is involved or whether a potential occupational, personal, or family benefit could arise from the legislator's participation.

(4) A conflict situation does not arise from legislation or legislative duties affecting the membership of a profession, occupation, or class.

(5) A legislator shall disclose an interest creating a conflict, as provided in the rules of the legislature. A legislator who is a member of a profession, occupation, or class affected by legislation is not required to disclose an interest unless the class contained in the legislation is so narrow that the vote will have a direct and distinctive personal impact on the legislator. A legislator may seek a determination from the appropriate committee provided for in 2-2-135.

**History:** En. 59-1708 by Sec. 8, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1708; amd. Sec. 6, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**Cross-References**

Legislature — organization and procedure, Art. V, sec. 10, Mont. Const.

**2-2-113 through 2-2-120 reserved.**

**2-2-121. Rules of conduct for public officers and public employees.** (1) Proof of commission of any act enumerated in subsection (2) is proof that the actor has breached a public duty.

(2) A public officer or a public employee may not:

(a) subject to subsection (7), use public time, facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, or funds for the officer's or employee's private business purposes;

(b) engage in a substantial financial transaction for the officer's or employee's private business purposes with a person whom the officer or employee inspects or supervises in the course of official duties;

(c) assist any person for a fee or other compensation in obtaining a contract, claim, license, or other economic benefit from the officer's or employee's agency;

(d) assist any person for a contingent fee in obtaining a contract, claim, license, or other economic benefit from any agency;

(e) perform an official act directly and substantially affecting to its economic benefit a business or other undertaking in which the officer or employee either has a substantial financial interest or is engaged as counsel, consultant, representative, or agent; or

(f) solicit or accept employment, or engage in negotiations or meetings to consider employment, with a person whom the officer or employee regulates in the course of official duties without first giving written notification to the officer's or employee's supervisor and department director.

(3) (a) Except as provided in subsection (3)(b), a public officer or public employee may not use or permit the use of public time, facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, or funds to solicit support for or opposition to any political committee, the nomination or election of any person to public office, or the passage of a ballot issue unless the use is:

(i) authorized by law; or

(ii) properly incidental to another activity required or authorized by law, such as the function of an elected public officer, the officer's staff, or the legislative staff in the normal course of duties.

(b) As used in this subsection (3), "properly incidental to another activity required or authorized by law" does not include any activities related to solicitation of support for or opposition to the nomination or election of a person to public office or political committees organized to support or oppose a candidate or candidates for public office. With respect to ballot issues, properly incidental activities are restricted to:

(i) the activities of a public officer, the public officer's staff, or legislative staff related to determining the impact of passage or failure of a ballot issue on state or local government operations;

(ii) in the case of a school district, as defined in Title 20, chapter 6, compliance with the requirements of law governing public meetings of the local board of trustees, including the resulting dissemination of information by a board of trustees or a school superintendent or a designated employee in a district with no superintendent in support of or opposition to a bond issue or levy submitted to the electors. Public funds may not be expended for any form of commercial advertising in support of or opposition to a bond issue or levy submitted to the electors.

(c) This subsection (3) is not intended to restrict the right of a public officer or public employee to express personal political views.

(d) (i) If the public officer or public employee is a Montana highway patrol chief or highway patrol officer appointed under Title 44, chapter 1, the term “equipment” as used in this subsection (3) includes the chief’s or officer’s official highway patrol uniform.

(ii) A Montana highway patrol chief’s or highway patrol officer’s title may not be referred to in the solicitation of support for or opposition to any political committee, the nomination or election of any person to public office, or the passage of a ballot issue.

(4) (a) A candidate, as defined in 13-1-101(8)(a), may not use or permit the use of state funds for any advertisement or public service announcement in a newspaper, on radio, or on television that contains the candidate’s name, picture, or voice except in the case of a state or national emergency and then only if the announcement is reasonably necessary to the candidate’s official functions.

(b) A state officer may not use or permit the use of public time, facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, or funds to produce, print, or broadcast any advertisement or public service announcement in a newspaper, on radio, or on television that contains the state officer’s name, picture, or voice except in the case of a state or national emergency if the announcement is reasonably necessary to the state officer’s official functions or in the case of an announcement directly related to a program or activity under the jurisdiction of the office or position to which the state officer was elected or appointed.

(5) A public officer or public employee may not participate in a proceeding when an organization, other than an organization or association of local government officials, of which the public officer or public employee is an officer or director is:

(a) involved in a proceeding before the employing agency that is within the scope of the public officer’s or public employee’s job duties; or

(b) attempting to influence a local, state, or federal proceeding in which the public officer or public employee represents the state or local government.

(6) A public officer or public employee may not engage in any activity, including lobbying, as defined in 5-7-102, on behalf of an organization, other than an organization or association of local government officials, of which the public officer or public employee is a member while performing the public officer’s or public employee’s job duties. The provisions of this subsection do not prohibit a public officer or public employee from performing charitable fundraising activities if approved by the public officer’s or public employee’s supervisor or authorized by law.

(7) A listing by a public officer or a public employee in the electronic directory provided for in 30-17-101 of any product created outside of work in a public agency is not in violation of subsection (2)(a) of this section. The public officer or public employee may not make arrangements for the listing in the electronic directory during work hours.

(8) A department head or a member of a quasi-judicial or rulemaking board may perform an official act notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (2)(e) if participation is necessary to the administration of a statute and if the person complies with the disclosure procedures under 2-2-131.

(9) Subsection (2)(d) does not apply to a member of a board, commission, council, or committee unless the member is also a full-time public employee.

(10) Subsections (2)(b) and (2)(e) do not prevent a member of the governing body of a local government from performing an official act when the member’s participation is necessary to obtain a quorum or to otherwise enable the body to act. The member shall disclose the interest creating the appearance of impropriety prior to performing the official act.

**History:** En. 59-1706 by Sec. 6, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1706; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 59, L. 1991; amd. Sec. 7, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 42, L. 1997; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 122, L. 2001; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 58, L. 2003; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 145, L. 2005; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 173, L. 2005; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 437, L. 2005; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 386, L. 2011; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 14, L. 2013; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 259, L. 2015; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 156, L. 2019.

**Cross-References**

Quasi-judicial function defined, 2-15-102.

Unofficial use of state-owned motor vehicle — misdemeanor, 2-17-432.

Bribery, 45-7-101.

Compensation for past official behavior — misdemeanor, 45-7-103.

**2-2-122 through 2-2-124 reserved.**

**2-2-125. Repealed.** Sec. 6, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**History:** En. 59-1707 by Sec. 7, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1707; amd. Sec. 8, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**2-2-126 through 2-2-130 reserved.**

**2-2-131. Disclosure.** A public officer or public employee shall, prior to acting in a manner that may impinge on public duty, including the award of a permit, contract, or license, disclose the nature of the private interest that creates the conflict. The public officer or public employee shall make the disclosure in writing to the commissioner of political practices, listing the amount of private interest, if any, the purpose and duration of the person's services rendered, if any, and the compensation received for the services or other information that is necessary to describe the interest. If the public officer or public employee then performs the official act involved, the officer or employee shall state for the record the fact and summary nature of the interest disclosed at the time of performing the act.

**History:** En. 59-1710 by Sec. 10, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1710; amd. Sec. 9, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 65, L. 2005.

**2-2-132. Repealed.** Sec. 22, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**History:** En. 59-1711 by Sec. 11, Ch. 569, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1711.

**2-2-133 and 2-2-134 reserved.**

**2-2-135. Ethics committees.** (1) Each house of the legislature shall establish an ethics committee. Subject to 5-5-234, the committee must consist of two members of the majority party and two members of the minority party. The committees may meet jointly. Each committee shall educate members concerning the provisions of this part concerning legislators and may consider conflicts between public duty and private interest as provided in 2-2-112. The joint committee may consider matters affecting the entire legislature.

(2) Pursuant to Article V, section 10, of the Montana constitution, the legislature is responsible for enforcement of the provisions of this part concerning legislators.

**History:** En. Sec. 14, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 4, Sp. L. May 2007.

**2-2-136. Enforcement for state officers, legislators, and state employees — referral of complaint involving county attorney.** (1) (a) A person alleging a violation of this part by a state officer, legislator, or state employee may file a complaint with the commissioner of political practices. The commissioner does not have jurisdiction for a complaint concerning a legislator if a legislative act is involved in the complaint. The commissioner also has jurisdiction over complaints against a county attorney that are referred by a local government review panel pursuant to 2-2-144 or filed by a person directly with the commissioner pursuant to 2-2-144(6). If a complaint is filed against the commissioner or another individual employed in the office of the commissioner, the complaint must be resolved in the manner provided for in 13-37-111(5).

(b) The commissioner may request additional information from the complainant or the person who is the subject of the complaint to make an initial determination of whether the complaint states a potential violation of this part.

(c) The commissioner may dismiss a complaint that is frivolous, does not state a potential violation of this part, or does not contain sufficient allegations to enable the commissioner to determine whether the complaint states a potential violation of this part.

(d) When a complaint is filed, the commissioner may issue statements or respond to inquiries to confirm that a complaint has been filed, to identify against whom it has been filed, and to describe the procedural aspects and status of the case.

(2) (a) If the commissioner determines that the complaint states a potential violation of this part, the commissioner shall hold an informal contested case hearing on the complaint as provided in Title 2, chapter 4, part 6. However, if the issues presented in a complaint have been addressed and decided in a prior decision and the commissioner determines that no additional factual development is necessary, the commissioner may issue a summary decision without holding an informal contested case hearing on the complaint.

(b) Except as provided in 2-3-203, an informal contested case proceeding must be open to the public. Except as provided in Title 2, chapter 6, part 10, documents submitted to the commissioner for the informal contested case proceeding are presumed to be public information.



(c) The commissioner shall issue a decision based on the record established before the commissioner. The decision issued after a hearing is public information open to inspection.

(3) (a) Except as provided in subsection (3)(b), if the commissioner determines that a violation of this part has occurred, the commissioner may impose an administrative penalty of not less than \$50 or more than \$1,000.

(b) If the commissioner determines that a violation of 2-2-121(4)(b) has occurred, the commissioner may impose an administrative penalty of not less than \$500 or more than \$10,000.

(c) If the violation was committed by a state employee, the commissioner may also recommend that the employing state agency discipline the employee. The employing entity of a state employee may take disciplinary action against an employee for a violation of this part, regardless of whether the commissioner makes a recommendation for discipline.

(d) The commissioner may assess the costs of the proceeding against the person bringing the charges if the commissioner determines that a violation did not occur or against the officer or employee if the commissioner determines that a violation did occur.

(4) A party may seek judicial review of the commissioner's decision, as provided in Title 2, chapter 4, part 7, after a hearing, a dismissal, or a summary decision issued pursuant to this section.

(5) The commissioner may adopt rules to carry out the responsibilities and duties assigned by this part.

**History:** En. Sec. 15, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 42, L. 1997; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 122, L. 2001; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 386, L. 2011; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 234, L. 2013; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 156, L. 2019.

**Cross-References**

Commissioner of Political Practices, Title 13, ch. 37, part 1.

**2-2-137. Repealed.** Sec. 6, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**History:** En. Sec. 16, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**2-2-138. Repealed.** Sec. 6, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**History:** En. Sec. 17, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**2-2-139. Repealed.** Sec. 6, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**History:** En. Sec. 18, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**2-2-140. Repealed.** Sec. 1, Ch. 159, L. 2021.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 156, L. 2019.

**2-2-141 reserved.**

**2-2-142. Repealed.** Sec. 6, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**History:** En. Sec. 19, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**2-2-143. Repealed.** Sec. 6, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**History:** En. Sec. 20, Ch. 562, L. 1995.

**2-2-144. Enforcement for local government.** (1) Except as provided in subsections (5) and (6), a person alleging a violation of this part by a local government officer or local government employee shall notify the county attorney of the county where the local government is located. The county attorney shall request from the complainant or the person who is the subject of the complaint any information necessary to make a determination concerning the validity of the complaint.

(2) If the county attorney determines that the complaint is justified, the county attorney may bring an action in district court seeking a civil fine of not less than \$50 or more than \$1,000. If the county attorney determines that the complaint alleges a criminal violation, the county attorney shall bring criminal charges against the officer or employee.

(3) If the county attorney declines to bring an action under this section, the person alleging a violation of this part may file a civil action in district court seeking a civil fine of not less than \$50 or more than \$1,000. In an action filed under this subsection, the court may assess the costs and attorney fees against the person bringing the charges if the court determines that a violation did not occur or against the officer or employee if the court determines that a violation did occur. The court may impose sanctions if the court determines that the action was frivolous or intended for harassment.

(4) The employing entity of a local government employee may take disciplinary action against an employee for a violation of this part.

(5) (a) A local government may establish a three-member panel to review complaints alleging violations of this part by officers or employees of the local government. The local government shall establish procedures and rules for the panel. The members of the panel may not be officers or employees of the local government. The panel shall review complaints and may refer to the county attorney complaints that appear to be substantiated. If the complaint is against the county attorney, the panel shall refer the matter to the commissioner of political practices and the complaint must then be processed by the commissioner pursuant to 2-2-136.

(b) In a local government that establishes a panel under this subsection (5), a complaint must be referred to the panel prior to making a complaint to the county attorney.

(6) If a local government review panel has not been established pursuant to subsection (5), a person alleging a violation of this part by a county attorney shall file the complaint with the commissioner of political practices pursuant to 2-2-136.

**History:** En. Sec. 21, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 5, Ch. 122, L. 2001.

**2-2-145. Retaliation unlawful — civil liability — remedies — statute of limitations — definitions.** (1) It is unlawful for a state agency, state officer, public officer, or public employee to retaliate against, or to condone or threaten retaliation against, an individual who, in good faith, alleges waste, fraud, or abuse.

(2) A person who violates a provision of this section is liable in a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction. The provisions of 2-9-305 apply if the person is being sued in a civil action for actions taken within the course and scope of the person's employment and the person is a state officer, public officer, or public employee.

(3) For purposes of this section:

(a) "person" has the meaning provided in 2-5-103;

(b) "retaliate" means to take any of the following actions against an individual because the individual, in good faith, alleged waste, fraud, or abuse:

(i) terminate employment;

(ii) demote;

(iii) deny overtime, benefits, or promotion;

(iv) discipline;

(v) decline to hire or rehire;

(vi) threaten or intimidate;

(vii) reassign to a position that hurts future career prospects;

(viii) reduce pay, work hours, or benefits; or

(ix) take another adverse personnel action; and

(c) "state agency" has the meaning provided in 1-2-116.

(4) Remedies available to an aggrieved individual for a violation may include:

(a) reinstatement to a lost position;

(b) compensation for lost benefits, including service credit;

(c) compensation for lost wages;

(d) payment of reasonable attorney fees;

(e) payment of court costs;

(f) injunctive relief; and

(g) compensatory damages.

(5) A lawsuit alleging a violation of this section must be brought within 2 years of the alleged violation.

(6) If a state agency maintains written internal procedures under which an individual may appeal an action described in subsection (3)(b) within the agency's organizational structure, the individual shall first exhaust those procedures before filing an action under this section. The individual's failure to initiate or exhaust available internal procedures is a defense to an action brought under this section.

(7) For purposes of this subsection, if the state agency's internal procedures are not completed within 90 days from the date the individual may file an action under this section, the agency's internal procedures are considered exhausted. The limitation period in subsection (5)

is tolled until the procedures are exhausted. The provisions of the agency's internal procedures may not in any case extend the limitation period in subsection (5) more than 240 days.

(8) If the state agency maintains written internal procedures described in subsection (6), the agency shall, within 7 days of receiving written notice from the complaining individual of the action described in subsection (3)(b), notify the individual of the existence of the written procedures and supply the individual with a copy. If the agency fails to comply with this subsection, the individual is relieved from compliance with subsection (6).

(9) The commissioner of political practices is not required or authorized to enforce this section.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 215, L. 2017.

## Part 2 Proscribed Acts Related to Contracts and Claims

**2-2-201. Public officers, employees, and former employees not to have interest in contracts.** (1) Members of the legislature; state, county, city, town, or township officers; or any deputies or employees of an enumerated governmental entity may not be interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity or by any body, agency, or board of which they are members or employees if they are directly involved with the contract. A former employee may not, within 6 months following the termination of employment, contract or be employed by an employer who contracts with the state or any of its subdivisions involving matters with which the former employee was directly involved during employment.

(2) In this section, the term:

(a) "be interested in" does not include holding a minority interest in a corporation;

(b) "contract" does not include:

(i) contracts awarded based on competitive procurement procedures conducted after the date of employment termination;

(ii) merchandise sold to the highest bidder at public auctions;

(iii) investments or deposits in financial institutions that are in the business of loaning or receiving money;

(iv) a contract with an interested party if, because of geographic restrictions, a local government could not otherwise reasonably afford itself of the subject of the contract. It is presumed that a local government could not otherwise reasonably afford itself of the subject of a contract if the additional cost to the local government is greater than 10% of a contract with an interested party or if the contract is for services that must be performed within a limited time period and no other contractor can provide those services within that time period.

(c) "directly involved" means the person directly monitors a contract, extends or amends a contract, audits a contractor, is responsible for conducting the procurement or for evaluating proposals or vendor responsibility, or renders legal advice concerning the contract;

(d) "former employee" does not include a person whose employment with the state was involuntarily terminated because of a reduction in force or other involuntary termination not involving violation of the provisions of this chapter.

**History:** En. Sec. 1020, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 368, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 444, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 920; re-en. Sec. 444, R.C.M. 1935; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 43, L. 1973; R.C.M. 1947, 59-501; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 377, L. 1979; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 458, L. 1981; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 65, L. 1991; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 322, L. 1993; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 181, L. 2001.

### Cross-References

Ethical principles relating to interest in contract, 2-2-105, 2-2-121.

Transfers and collusion prohibited, 18-4-141.

**2-2-202. Public officers not to have interest in sales or purchases.** State, county, town, township, and city officers must not be purchasers at any sale or vendors at any purchase made by them in their official capacity.

**History:** En. Sec. 1021, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 369, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 445, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 921; re-en. Sec. 445, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-502.

**2-2-203. Voidable contracts.** Every contract made in violation of any of the provisions of 2-2-201 or 2-2-202 may be avoided at the instance of any party except the officer interested therein.

**History:** En. Sec. 1022, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 370, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 446, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 922; re-en. Sec. 446, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-503.

**2-2-204. Dealings in warrants and other claims prohibited.** The state officers, the several county, city, town, and township officers of this state, their deputies and clerks, are prohibited from purchasing or selling or in any manner receiving to their own use or benefit or to the use or benefit of any person or persons whatever any state, county, or city warrants, scrip, orders, demands, claims, or other evidences of indebtedness against the state or any county, city, town, or township thereof except evidences of indebtedness issued to or held by them for services rendered as such officer, deputy, clerk, and evidences of the funded indebtedness of such state, county, city, township, town, or corporation.

**History:** En. Sec. 1023, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 371, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 447, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 923; re-en. Sec. 447, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-504.

**2-2-205. Affidavit to be required by auditing officers.** Each officer whose duty it is to audit and allow the accounts of other state, county, city, township, or town officers shall, before allowing the accounts, require each of the officers to make and file with the auditing officer an affidavit that the affiant has not violated any of the provisions of this part.

**History:** En. Sec. 1024, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 372, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 448, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 924; re-en. Sec. 448, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-505; amd. Sec. 35, Ch. 61, L. 2007.

**2-2-206. Officers not to pay illegal warrant.** Officers charged with the disbursement of public moneys must not pay any warrant or other evidence of indebtedness against the state, county, city, town, or township when the same has been purchased, sold, received, or transferred contrary to any of the provisions of this part.

**History:** En. Sec. 1025, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 373, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 449, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 925; re-en. Sec. 449, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-506.

**2-2-207. Settlements to be withheld on affidavit.** (1) Each officer charged with the disbursement of public money who is informed by affidavit establishing probable cause that an officer whose account is about to be settled, audited, or paid has violated any of the provisions of this part shall suspend the settlement or payment and cause the officer to be prosecuted for the violation by the county attorney.

(2) If there is a judgment for the defendant upon prosecution, the proper officer may proceed to settle, audit, or pay the account as if an affidavit had not been filed.

**History:** En. Sec. 1026, Pol. C. 1895; re-en. Sec. 374, Rev. C. 1907; re-en. Sec. 450, R.C.M. 1921; Cal. Pol. C. Sec. 926; re-en. Sec. 450, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-507; amd. Sec. 36, Ch. 61, L. 2007.

## Part 3 Nepotism

### Part Cross-References

Discrimination in employment, 49-2-303.

Employment of state and local government personnel, 49-3-201.

**2-2-301. Nepotism defined.** Nepotism is the bestowal of political patronage by reason of relationship rather than of merit.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 12, L. 1933; re-en. Sec. 456.1, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-518.

**2-2-302. Appointment of relative to office of trust or emolument unlawful — exceptions — publication of notice.** (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), it is unlawful for a person or member of any board, bureau, or commission or employee at the head of a department of this state or any political subdivision of this state to appoint to any position of trust or emolument any person related or connected by consanguinity within the fourth degree or by affinity within the second degree.

(2) The provisions of 2-2-303 and this section do not apply to:

(a) a sheriff in the appointment of a person as a cook or an attendant;

(b) school district trustees if all the trustees, with the exception of any trustee who is related to the person being appointed and who must abstain from voting for the appointment, approve the appointment of a person related to a trustee;

(c) a school district in the employment of a person as a substitute teacher who is not employed as a substitute teacher for more than 30 consecutive school days as defined by the trustees in 20-1-302;

(d) the renewal of an employment contract of a person who was initially hired before the member of the board, bureau, or commission or the department head to whom the person is related assumed the duties of the office;

(e) the employment of election judges;

(f) the employment of pages or temporary session staff by the legislature; or

(g) county commissioners of a county with a population of less than 10,000 if all the commissioners, with the exception of any commissioner who is related to the person being appointed and who must abstain from voting for the appointment, approve the appointment of a person related to a commissioner.

(3) Prior to the appointment of a person referred to in subsection (2)(b) or (2)(g), written notice of the time and place for the intended action must be published at least 15 days prior to the intended action in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the school district is located or the county office or position is located.

**History:** En. Sec. 2, Ch. 12, L. 1933; re-en. Sec. 456.2, R.C.M. 1935; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 94, L. 1955; amd. Sec. 27, Ch. 535, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 59-519(part); amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 117, L. 1987; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 55, L. 1991; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 238, L. 1991; amd. Sec. 10, Ch. 562, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 138, L. 2005; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 316, L. 2005.

**Cross-References**

Affinity, 1-1-219.

Consanguinity, 72-11-102 through 72-11-104.

**2-2-303. Agreements to appoint relative to office unlawful.** It shall further be unlawful for any person or any member of any board, bureau, or commission or employee of any department of this state or any political subdivision thereof to enter into any agreement or any promise with other persons or any members of any boards, bureaus, or commissions or employees of any department of this state or any of its political subdivisions thereof to appoint to any position of trust or emolument any person or persons related to them or connected with them by consanguinity within the fourth degree or by affinity within the second degree.

**History:** En. Sec. 2, Ch. 12, L. 1933; re-en. Sec. 456.2, R.C.M. 1935; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 94, L. 1955; amd. Sec. 27, Ch. 535, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 59-519(part).

**2-2-304. Penalty for violation of nepotism law.** A public officer or employee or a member of any board, bureau, or commission of this state or any political subdivision who, by virtue of the person's office, has the right to make or appoint any person to render services to this state or any subdivision of this state and who makes or appoints a person to the services or enters into any agreement or promise with any other person or employee or any member of any board, bureau, or commission of any other department of this state or any of its subdivisions to appoint to any position any person or persons related to the person making the appointment or connected with the person making the appointment by consanguinity within the fourth degree or by affinity within the second degree is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be punished by a fine not less than \$50 or more than \$1,000, by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than 6 months, or both.

**History:** En. Sec. 3, Ch. 12, L. 1933; re-en. Sec. 456.3, R.C.M. 1935; R.C.M. 1947, 59-520; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 253, L. 1989; amd. Sec. 37, Ch. 61, L. 2007.

