

## Vermont Ethics Commission (draft 101116)

**Mission:** To clarify, articulate, inspire, and enforce the highest level of ethical behavior among Vermont government officials and elected politicians.

**Positioning:** The *Vermont Ethics Commission* will be an independent entity, not positioned within any other agency.

**Purpose:**

1. To be a prospective resource for government officials and politicians by clarifying boundaries between government service and self-service,
2. To seek out and communicate inherent conflicts of interest, promote transparency in government sector decision-making, and require recusal or withdrawal from such decision-making where appropriate.
3. To develop and promulgate with the Secretary of State an ethical canon for private-sector and non-profit government lobbying by clarifying the principles of fair and open government so as to inspire citizen trust in government policy-making.
4. To adjudicate matters of self-dealing within government and make recommendations to the Attorney General as requested.

**Composition:**

One trustee each will be appointed by the Supreme Court, the Legislature, the Executive Branch (Governor); one by agreement of the five statewide business organizations, and one more each by ACLU-VT, the Attorney General, and the Secretary of State.

The seven trustees will serve up to two four-year terms by appointment and reappointment. The commission makeup will reflect Vermont's diverse resources, including academic, business, ethics, community and non-profit leadership. The President of VT Law School and the Chancellor of the VT State College System shall each choose an intern to serve a one-year term.

**Authorities:**

The Commission shall have authority over the executive, legislative and municipal branches of government. In the case of the legislature, which claims sole prosecutorial power over itself constitutionally, the Ethics Commission shall receive and investigate all ethics allegations and refer its findings to the appropriate legislative committee for prosecution.

Without compromising its role as a primary investigator and prosecutor of ethical violations, its primary role shall be educational and advisory. It may make

recommendations to the legislature for the consideration of new law, to the administration for new administrative rulings, or to the Attorney General for the investigation of wrong-doing.

**Annual Cost:** by legislative appropriation: \$250,000

7 trustees paid by honorarium - \$2,500/annum = \$17,500

2 interns paid by school credit & honorarium - \$1000/annum = \$2,000

Administrative Director (w benefit load) - \$95,000/ annum

Ombudsman to educate and oversee Open Meeting and Public Records violations -- \$70,000

Legal staff (shared w ACLU?) or paid - (\$160,000 ?)

Travel budget - 6 meetings/ annum \$1000 ea. = \$6000.

Office overhead - \$34,500

Website maintenance, supplies, and communications - \$25,000.

**Total: \$250,000 per annum (\$410,000 w dedicated legal staff)**