

**NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATIVE ETHICS
COMMISSION**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2014**

Co-chairs

**Senator Andrew J. Lanza
Assemblymember Charles D. Lavine**

Members

**Senator Neil D. Breslin
Assemblymember Michael Montesano
Carlin Meyer, Esq.
Peter V. Coffey, Esq.
Ellen B. Holtzman, Esq.
Mr. John J. Nigro**

www.legethics.com

Legislative Ethics Commission

Staff

**Lisa P. Reid, Executive Director/Counsel
Kate Seibert, Deputy Director/Counsel
Nicole Manikas, Research/Technical Assistant
Vicky T. Doren, Executive Assistant
Michele B. Sainato, Legal Secretary**

Location

**Alfred E. Smith State Office Building
80 South Swan Street, Suite 1431
Albany, New York 12210**

Mailing Address

**Box 75
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12247**

Phone

**(518)432-7837
Senate extension 2142
Assembly extension 5218**

Website

www.legethics.com

Legislative Ethics Commission

The Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC) was created by Chapter 14 of the Laws of 2007 as part of the Public Employees Ethics Reform Act of 2007. The Commission was established to succeed the Legislative Ethics Committee, originally established in 1987. Pursuant to the 2007 Act, the successor commission is a nine-member commission consisting of four legislators and five non-legislative members. Each legislative leader appoints one legislator and one non-legislator to serve on the Commission. The Legislative Law provides for the appointment of a fifth non-legislative member to be named jointly by the Temporary President of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly. The terms of the legislative leaders run concurrently with their two year legislative terms. After the initial staggered terms of the non-legislative members have been served, subsequent appointments are four year terms. The legislative appointees of the majority conferences serve as the Commission's co-chairs.

For 2014, members of the Commission were:

- Senator Andrew J. Lanza, (24th Senate District, part of Richmond County)
- Assemblymember Charles D. Lavine (13th Assembly District, part of Nassau County)
- Senator Neil D. Breslin (44th Senate District, parts of Albany and Rensselaer Counties)
- Assemblymember Michael Montesano (15th Assembly District, part of Nassau County)
- Carlin Meyer, Esq, appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly September 16, 2013
- Peter V. Coffey, Esq., appointed by the Assembly Minority Leader
- Ellen B. Holtzman, Esq., appointed by the Senate Minority Leader
- Mr. John Nigro, appointed by the Temporary President of the Senate.

The Commission's responsibilities are set forth in Legislative Law Section 80 and include administration and enforcement of Sections 73, 73-a and 74 of the Public Officers Law. The Public Integrity Act of 2011 (Chapter 399 of the Laws of 2011, signed August 15, 2011) amended the duties and responsibilities of the Legislative Ethics Commission effective January 2012.

The Public Integrity Act established the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE). Chapter 399 provided that investigations of violations of Public Officers Law §§ 73, 73-a and 74 by legislators and legislative staff are to be conducted by the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. The LEC has jurisdiction to impose penalties for violations of Public Officers Law by legislative members and staff after receiving substantial basis investigation reports from JCOPE.

The Legislative Ethics Commission issues advisory opinions to legislators and legislative staff and receives and reviews financial disclosure statements of legislators, legislative staff and candidates for legislative office for filing with the LEC and JCOPE. In addition, the LEC responds to informal requests for guidance and maintains a public website.

The Commission is also required to develop educational materials and ethics training in conjunction with and at the request of the Legislature.

Legislative Ethics Commission Website

In compliance with Chapter 14 of the Laws of 2007, the Legislative Ethics Commission created and maintains a public website at www.legethics.com. Information on the website includes relevant statutes, bylaws, rules of the Commission, including the procedure for filing a complaint, and public documents. The website also provides forms and instructions, generic advisory opinions, and contact information. The website is updated on an ongoing basis.

Legislative Ethics Commission Meetings

Section 80 of the Legislative Law provides that the Commission shall meet bi-monthly and at such additional times as may be called for by the co-chairpersons jointly or any five members of the Commission. Five members of the Commission constitute a quorum, and the Commission has the power to act by majority vote of the total number of members of the Commission without vacancy. In 2014, the Commission met on the following dates:

Thursday, January 2, 2014
Wednesday, March 12, 2014
Friday, May 30, 2014
Wednesday, August 20, 2014
Thursday, October 30, 2014

Financial Disclosure

The Legislative Ethics Commission is responsible for administering the financial disclosure requirements of Public Officers Law (POL) §73 and §73-a. Legislative members, legislative employees who earn more than the filing rate set forth in §130(1)(a) of the Civil Service Law (\$88,256 annually during 2014), employees who are designated by their appointing authorities as policy makers for disclosure purposes, and candidates for the state legislature must file the disclosure statement set forth in POL §73-a. All other legislative employees are required to file the financial disclosure statement described in POL §73(6).

Pursuant to §73-a, completed Annual Statements of Financial Disclosure for legislative members and employees must be filed on or before May 15 of the filing year or thirty days after commencing employment. Generally, candidates for legislative office are required to file within ten days after the last day allowed by law for the filing of designating petitions. The Commission publishes a guidebook, also available online, to assist those individuals required to file the Annual Statement of Financial Disclosure. Commission staff also answers numerous inquiries regarding the completion of the statement and welcomes such inquiries by phone, e-mail, or in person at the Commission offices.

The statements are reviewed to assure that the responses to questions are complete, internally consistent, and consistent with filings for prior years. The Commission may also seek to confirm information reported on disclosure forms with publicly available sources of information such as attorney registration, professional licensing and corporate information. The Commission asks for additional information or clarification where it appears the filing may be deficient. Approximately fifteen percent of the legislative members filed amendments to their Annual Statements of Financial Disclosure after review to add or clarify information. Within forty-five days of receipt, the LEC forwards Annual Statements of Financial Disclosure to JCOPE for filing.

The following chart summarizes the number of disclosure statements filed:

	2012	2013	2014
Legislative Members	212	211	201
Employees-File Rate	161	183	193
Employees-Designated Policy Makers	294	300	292
Candidates for Legislative Office	320	14	229
Total	987	708	915

*Legislative Members who filed as candidates in a special election held prior to May 15th of the filing year are not required to refile on May 15th with the same information.

*Legislators who filed in May in their legislative capacities do not need to refile the same information if they seek reelection.

Public Inspection

Completed Annual Statements of Financial Disclosure filed through calendar year 2010 are available for public inspection at the Commission offices, except for the categories of value, which are redacted pursuant to Public Officers Law §80(14)(a). Those disclosure forms filed in 2012 (for calendar year 2011) are available at the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. A member of the public may obtain a copy of a statement by mail, fax or e-mail.

Annual Statements of Financial Disclosure filed by legislators in 2013 (for calendar year 2012) and going forward are available online at the Joint Commission on Public Ethics website, www.jcope.ny.gov, and are no longer redacted for categories of value.

Legal Activity

Advisory Opinions

Upon the written request of any person who is subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission and the requirements of sections 73, 73-a and 74 of the Public Officers Law, the Commission renders confidential advisory opinions on the application of the laws to particular, specific, facts. Last year, the Commission issued a number of formal opinions on subjects including, post employment restrictions, employee pro bono and volunteer work with not for profit organizations, and outside employment opportunities. The Commission also offered informal advice and guidance on a variety of requests from current and former members of the legislature, candidates for legislative office, potential, current and former legislative employees and others who deal with the legislature.

Complaints and Investigations

As complaints must be filed with the Joint Commission on Public Ethics, the instructions for filing complaints with JCOPE are available on the LEC website. In 2014, the Legislative Ethics Commission referred all parties who wished to file a complaint to JCOPE.

Substantial Basis Investigation Report

The Legislative Ethics Commission received no Substantial Basis Investigation Reports from the Joint Commission on Public Ethics pursuant to Executive Law §94(14-a) in 2014.

Training

Pursuant to Section 94 of the Executive Law, legislators and staff who earn over the filing rate (set pursuant to Public Officers Law Section 73-a as SG-24 set forth in Civil Service Law §131(1)(a)) or are designated as policy makers are required to complete a two-hour comprehensive ethics training course. Although the legislature has conducted various training programs in the past, formal training programs have been implemented with the assistance of the Legislative Ethics Commission pursuant to the statute.

All legislators have completed a comprehensive ethics training course and more than ninety percent of employees have completed ethics training.

Finally, the LEC has also developed and begun implementation of the online ethics orientation course, which all new employees are required to complete within three months of being hired.