



## Support Reasonable Ethics Reform this Session

We support the intent of Oregon’s public meetings laws and the work of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) to ensure transparency in government decision-making and to prevent the misuse of public office for personal gain. However, recent legislation, rulemaking, and agency opinions have unintentionally limited the ability of local elected officials and governments to conduct routine business, organize meeting logistics, gather information, and support volunteers. These constraints have created uncertainty and fear among public officials and made public service a less attractive option.

**Immediate action is needed to refocus Oregon’s ethics framework on its core purpose: addressing true misconduct while allowing local governments to function effectively and transparently.**

We appreciate Representative Nathan Sosa’s leadership in convening stakeholders to advance a practical path forward. We urge support for the three bills emerging from this interim workgroup:

- **HB 4177 – Public Meetings Law & Serial Communications Clean Up**  
Ensures that substantive deliberation by a quorum occurs in public while allowing individual officials to seek information, discuss procedural matters, and communicate with constituents and the media without penalty.
- **HB 4159 – Oregon Government Ethics Commission Membership**  
Requires the Governor’s appointee to the OGEC to represent the local government perspective, ensuring more balanced oversight of the public officials under the commission’s jurisdiction.
- **HB 4161 – Reasonable Food & Beverage Accommodation**  
Clarifies a recent agency opinion that providing food and beverages to public officials is a “prohibited use of office.” This bill recognizes that providing local officials – who are often volunteers – with sustenance during long public meetings facilitates productivity and is not unethical.

Together, these bills address unintended consequences of prior policies and represent an important step toward restoring clarity, practicality, and fairness in Oregon’s ethics laws. While additional work is needed to ensure Oregon has fair, practical framework, we strongly encourage passage of these bills this session.

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