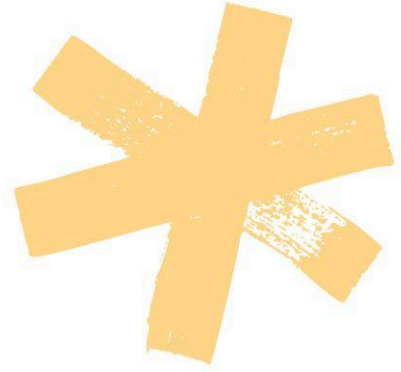


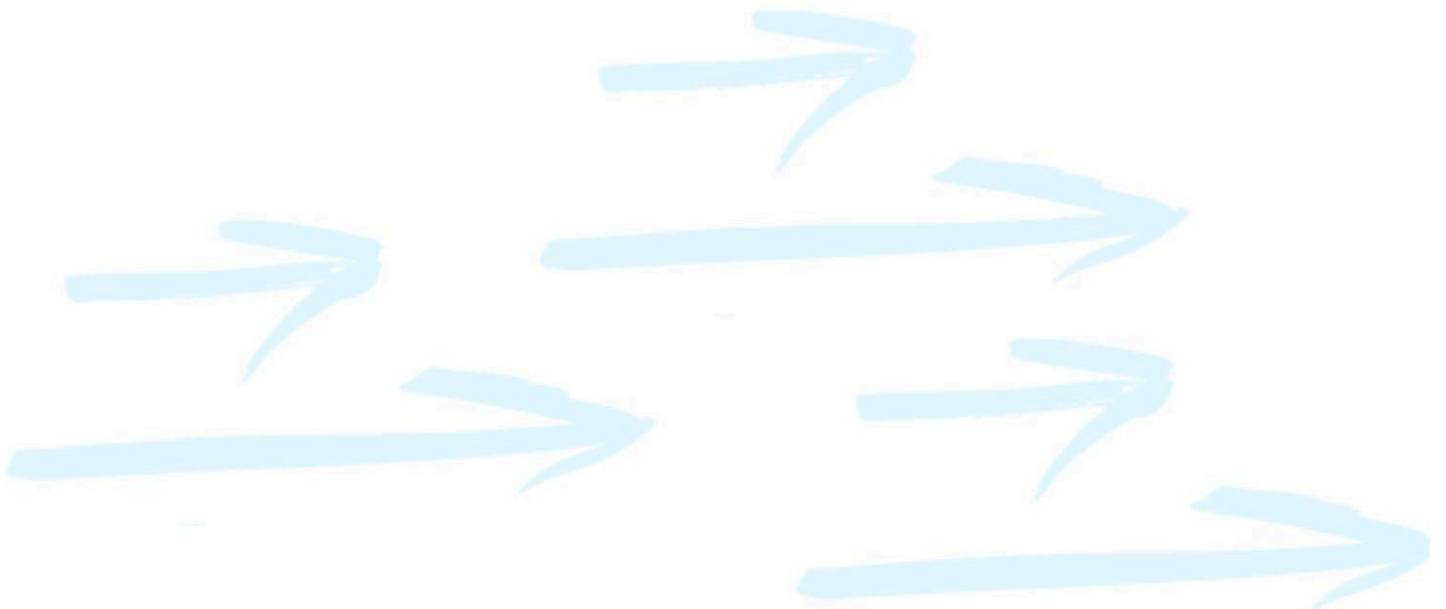
POSSIBILITY LAB

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY



**GOVERNANCE
REFORM
TASK FORCE
ETHICS
COMMISSION
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

MARCH 2026



PREPARED FOR



Community Feedback on Draft Recommendations for the LA County Ethics Commission

Governance Reform Task Force Community Engagement, March 2026

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Background

Event Summary

On Saturday, March 7, 2026, the Governance Reform Task Force's Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Community Engagement hosted a community listening session at St. Anne's Family Services Center, focused on considerations for the design of an Ethics Commission (hereafter, "the Commission") for Los Angeles County.

This two-hour session guided community leaders and members of the public through the Task Force's proposed recommendations for the Commission (in the form of a [draft ordinance](#) compiled by the Task Force's Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Ethics, included in Appendix A), and asked for specific feedback on the following:

- Who should appoint Commissioners?
- Who should be eligible to serve as a Commissioner?
- How can we ensure the Commission's budget is sufficient and independent?

Outreach

In addition to social media posts and email announcements distributed through the County Board of Supervisors, email invitations were sent to 27 organizations and coalitions identified by GRTF members as having been actively engaged in direct advocacy and campaigning on issues related to accountability and governance in Los Angeles.

Participants

About 25 individuals participated in the meeting, and participants were split among four discussion groups of 5-7 individuals. This was the first Task Force event attended by 10 of the participants, with the others having previously engaged with the Task Force.

Participants represented a range of organizations including Black Pact, Catalyst California, California Native Vote Project, Democratic Socialists of America - L.A., Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE), L.A. Forward, Long Beach Forward, Park Mesa Heights Neighborhood Council, TransLatina@ Coalition, and the Working Families Party - L.A.

During the workshop, two members of the Community Engagement Ad-hoc who also serve on the Task Force's Ethics Ad-hoc Subcommittee presented on the structure and composition of other ethics commissions in California, as well as describing the proposed

recommendations in detail. Each discussion group was guided by a Task Force member from the Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Community Engagement, who asked a series of discussion questions to gather feedback.

Following each discussion, feedback was shared with the larger group. During this summary conversation, individual participants shared both what they had discussed with each other and their personal opinions regarding the conversation.

Feedback Analysis Methods

The Possibility Lab collected data for this report from two key sources:

1. "Conversation guides," which served as templates where participants could write their own notes about what their group discussed, and
2. Live notes from the share-out portions of the event, capturing sentiments expressed to the whole group.

To better understand all of the feedback received, Lab staff then transcribed information from each source and coded each piece of feedback by topic. Below is a summary of feedback participants offered on each topic.

Appointments: Who should appoint Commissioners?

The first topic discussed with participants was "Who should appoint Commissioners?" Participants first learned about how other California commissions structure their appointments process and were then asked to deliberate on how the LA commission should be structured.

Most California ethics commissions use divided appointments, where multiple elected officials appoint commissioners. To create a further degree of independence, Oakland and Long Beach also have existing commissioners select the candidates for a certain number of seats, which is referred to as *self-selection* rather than "appointment."

In its initial proposal, the Governance Reform Task Force recommended the inclusion of three self-selected Commissioners. The Task Force wished to gather feedback on: 1) whether or not self-selected Commissioners should represent a minority (3/7) or a majority (4/7) of Commission members; and 2) which County officials, if any, should be responsible for appointing the remaining Commissioners.

Participants were presented with two different options.

- **Option 1** reflected the appointment powers included in the Task Force’s draft ordinance, in which a majority (4/7) of Commissioners are *appointed* by a County official, with the rest (3/7) being self-selected. County officials responsible for appointments would include:
 - County Executive¹
 - District Attorney
 - County Assessor
 - Registrar-Recorder
- **Option 2** included the inverted approach, with a majority (4/7) of *self-selected* Commissioners, and excluded the Registrar-Recorder and the District Attorney as appointing officials. County officials responsible for the remaining 3 appointments would include:
 - County Executive²
 - County Assessor
 - Board Chair

Participants were asked to discuss these options, as well as propose other models not represented here for consideration.

Of the Two Listed Options, Participants Overwhelmingly Preferred Option 2, Allowing for the Majority of Commissioners to be Self-Selected

Preference for a majority of Commissioners to be “self-selected” (Option 2) was expressed among all groups. Participants mentioned that including more self-selected Commissioners would help to ensure that the Commission is not overly subject to the influence of elected or other County officials.

¹ The Board Chair would fill this role until the first County Executive takes office in 2029.

² The Board Chair would fill this role until the first County Executive takes office in 2029. If the Task Force decided to revise its current proposal (Option 1) in order to recommend Option 2 to the Board of Supervisors, the Board Chair would effectively be able to appoint two members until 2029.

Participants Shared Concerns for Proceeding with Option 1 and Elected Officer Appointments

General Concern Regarding County Officials Making Appointment Decisions

When presented with the two potential options for appointing Ethics Commissioners, four participants raised concerns about County officials having *any* involvement in the appointment process. Some felt that the proposed appointment structure “defeats the purpose of citizens leading the Commission,” and that the public would prefer a “civilian appointed structure.” One participant noted their view that the “Priority is for [the] Ethics Commission to be truly independent. Appointments dilute the Ethics Commission's goals and purpose.” Another participant expressed concern that the proposed appointments process may “continue a cycle of corruption and prevent the Commission from remaining truly independent.”

In Response to Option 1 Concerns, Participants Suggested Alternative Models for Appointing Commissioners

As a remedy to these appointment concerns, a proposal was floated to select Commissioners similarly to how neighborhood councils are constituted: through a local election process. A local election process could help ensure Commissioners are actively involved in and responsive to the communities they serve.

Alternatively, another group proposed that appointments could be discontinued after the initial Commission is established and seated. After the initial round of appointments to stand up the Ethics Commission, all future Commissioners would be chosen “at large” through an application, election, or self-selection process (e.g., be chosen by existing Commissioners).

Clear Opposition to District Attorney Appointment Power

In small-group discussions and in the full group share-out, participants expressed distrust of the County's District Attorney and suggested that the person in this position should not have the power to appoint Commissioners. This was mentioned at least five times across small groups and share-outs. In particular, participants questioned the District Attorney's ability to be impartial in their appointments to the Commission. Participants also expressed

concern that the District Attorney has “low trust within many communities” and would therefore not be the right person to appoint Commissioners.

Contradicting Opinions on Allowing the Registrar-Recorder to Make An Appointment

Two out of four discussion groups brought up the appointment power of the County Registrar-Recorder. One mentioned that this position should not have appointment power, as they are not directly elected by the people and report to the Board of Supervisors. In contrast, another discussion group mentioned that the Registrar-Recorder may actually be a trustworthy source for Commission appointments, since they are responsible for the administration of local elections.

Eligibility Criteria: Who should be eligible to serve as a Commissioner?

The next session opened with a presentation on the Task Force’s draft list of qualifications that candidates would need to meet in order to be eligible to serve on the Commission. As currently written in the draft ordinance under consideration, these qualifications are specific to each appointment. As drafted, these qualifications include:

Commissioner Eligibility Criteria ([Draft Language from the Ethics Ad-hoc Subcommittee](#))

Potential Appointer	Qualifications of Appointee
Chair of the Board of Supervisors ³	<i>“A background in public information and public meetings, community outreach and engagement, or using technology as relates to open government”</i>
District Attorney	<i>“A background in public policy or public law”⁴</i>
County Assessor	<i>“A background in campaign finance, accounting, auditing, compliance with ethics laws in the public or</i>

³ The Board Chair would fill this role until the first County Executive takes office in 2029.

⁴ Participants at the listening session did not directly express their support for these qualifications, with the exception of one discussion group asserting their support to require one Commissioner with a background in public policy or public law.

	<i>private sector, or protection of whistleblowers”</i>
Registrar-Recorder	<i>“A demonstrated history of involvement in or knowledge of local governance issues”</i>
Ethics Commission (self-selected)	<i>“Be broadly representative of the general public and at least one member nominated by the Commission shall be a resident of an unincorporated area”</i>

The presentation also included an overview of exclusion criteria, or reasons why someone would be *ineligible* to serve on the Commission. Such exclusions are intended to prevent conflicts of interest. As drafted, these exclusions include:

Exclusion Criteria ([Language from the Ethics Ad-hoc Subcommittee’s Draft Ordinance](#))

<p><i>Each member of the Commission shall be a resident of the County. A person is ineligible to be appointed to the Commission if that person, in the two (2) years <u>preceding their appointment</u>, has been any of the following:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. A County elected official;</i> <i>2. A spouse, registered domestic partner, parent, sibling, or child of a County elected official;</i> <i>3. An employee of, or paid consultant to, a County elected official;</i> <i>4. A candidate for a County elected office;</i> <i>5. An employee of, or paid consultant to, a candidate running for a County elected office, or a campaign committee controlled by a County elected official;</i> <i>6. An officer or paid employee of a political party;</i> <i>7. A County registered lobbyist; or</i> <i>8. A person who qualified as a major donor as provided under the Political Reform Act or who contributed, in the aggregate, more than \$___ to one or more candidates for County elected office.</i>
<p><u>During and Post-Service Restrictions.</u> <i>No member of the Commission, nor the Ethics Compliance Officer, shall:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Seek election to a Los Angeles County elected office during the member’s tenure and for two (2) years thereafter, or seek election to any other elected office in a jurisdiction</i>

that intersects with the geographic boundaries of Los Angeles County during the member's tenure.

- 2. Endorse, support, oppose, contribute to, or volunteer or work on behalf of, any candidate or ballot measure in a County election, or any County elected official running for any elected office, during the member's tenure.*
- 3. Serve as an officer or employee of a political party during the member's tenure.*
- 4. Employ or be employed as a person required to register as a County lobbyist during the member's tenure and for one (1) year thereafter.*
- 5. Have an employment or contractual relationship with a County elected official, or receive a gift or other compensation from such officials, during the member's tenure and for one (1) year thereafter.*
- 6. Receive a no-bid contract from the County during the member's tenure and for one (1) year thereafter.*

Participants discussed their responses to the question, “Do these rules (qualifications and exclusions) help make for a fair Commission?” in an open, full group discussion. Their recommendations are outlined below.

Qualifications

Amend the Proposed Qualifications to Allow for a Broader Diversity of Perspectives and Backgrounds on the Commission

The full-group discussion surfaced concerns that the list of qualifications, as written in the draft ordinance, are, as one participant put it, “quite elitist and exclusionary from general public participation.” Similar concerns showed up in the notes from one of the discussion groups as: “avoid excluding people by education or elitism.” Another participant worried that tying qualifications to specific professional backgrounds would limit the Commission’s inclusivity and diversity, making it so that “working class people... may not be able to participate.”

Include the Opportunity for Non-Citizen Residents with Long-Term Residency in L.A. to Serve

In reporting back on their small-group discussions during the appointments section, one of the groups proposed to “make it explicit that non-citizen residents should be eligible” to serve on the Commission. After some attendees expressed concerns about non-citizens’

proof of commitment to the Los Angeles community, the individual reporting out suggested a requirement of 10 or more years of established residence as a condition for the eligibility of non-citizen residents. The participants who had expressed concerns about the suggestion to extend eligibility to non-citizens voiced their satisfaction with this proposed compromise.

The desire to make service inclusive of non-citizens showed up in multiple conversation guides. Notes on this subject included: “non-citizens: allow for opportunity based on how long they’ve been [a] resident (expand eligibility),” and “add a line about allowing undocumented people to be... eligible.”

Prioritize Candidates with Demonstrated Commitment to Serving Communities Who Experience Systemic Oppression

Participants suggested that the list of qualifications should include community engagement experience and racial equity work. The concept of Commissioners having a racial equity “lens” or “background” came up frequently during the full group discussion. This type of qualification was described as “someone who understands the dynamics of harm, representation, and underrepresentation,” as well as “systemic oppression.”

Strong ties to and experience working directly with various Los Angeles County communities was another qualification that came up multiple times during the discussion and in discussion guide notes. This type of qualification was described in terms of

- **Public service experience:** “documented evidence of serving the community” and “direct work with the community,”
- **Community engagement skillsets:** “ability to engage [with the] community,” “ability to strengthen the voice of community,” and
- **Professional experience:** Commissioners “should have a background in local non-profit, service, CBO [community-based organization] work.”

Additionally, one of the four discussion groups noted their support for one of the qualifications listed in the draft ordinance, specifically the requirement that one Commissioner have a “legal background.”

Exclusion Criteria

Protect Against Careerism, but Ensure that Pre- and Post-Service Restrictions are Not Needlessly Restrictive

One group expressed concern about *careerism*—the practice of prioritizing career advancement, power, and prestige above other factors, frequently at the expense of personal life, ethics, or integrity—which was echoed in the larger group discussion. Currently, the proposed ordinance includes provisions for pre-service exclusions (conditions that would make someone ineligible prior to their nomination to the Commission) and post-service restrictions (roles, such as County elected positions, a Commissioner could not take on for a certain extent of time after serving).

One participant called for extending pre-service exclusions and post-service restrictions from the current proposal of two years, to five or even ten years. Another participant responded (particularly with respect to post-service restrictions) by cautioning that those restrictions might be unnecessarily restrictive, and may prevent those most committed to government accountability and transparency from being able to “do more good at a higher level.” Others appeared to agree that these parameters shouldn’t overly constrain Commissioners’ future career prospects.

Set a \$1,000 Donation Cap

In the draft ordinance, the Ethics Ad-hoc Subcommittee specified that there should be a maximum amount that potential Commissioners could donate to County campaigns in order to remain eligible. Discussion groups discussed what amount would be appropriate for this cap.

In the group share-out, one participant suggested a \$1,000 maximum donation cap, which was met with almost unanimous agreement across the room. Supporters of this proposal noted that a cap of \$1,000 would be helpful in promoting impartiality, but not exclude actively engaged Angelenos who might donate to County campaigns.

Budget: How can we ensure the Commission’s budget is sufficient and independent?

When discussing the Commission’s budget, Task Force members reviewed why protecting the budget is an important concern. Specifically, they discussed how other California ethics

commissions (such as the commissions in [Oakland](#) and [San Francisco](#)) have investigated powerful elected officials and have subsequently had their budgets threatened with significant reductions, raising concerns of retaliation. Given this concern and the proposed function of the Ethics Commission, the discussion centered around how the budget should be protected, and what should happen in the event of County budget cuts.

Establish a Minimum Viable Budget for the Commission

Participants appeared to need more information before deciding whether the Commission's budget should be set proportionally (as a percentage of the County's overall budget or revenue levels) or at a base, "fixed" level. The group asked a number of questions about budget formula examples, precedents, and considerations, such as:

- "What is the average fluctuation of the annual L.A. County budget?"
- "Are there any current commissions in LA County that have a fixed budget?"
- "Are there any other commissions that are exempt from cuts?"
- "What is the budget of other independent commissions [in LA County]?"

County staff members were able to answer some questions in real time during the session. But participants appeared reluctant to offer a strong recommendation on this question. For example, one discussion group noted in their worksheet the "need to look at how much L.A. [County] spends on commissions relative to other jurisdictions," and another suggested "to research what other budgets look like based on an average."

In reporting back on their small group discussions, two groups expressed support for establishing a fixed Commission budget untethered to County revenue or budget levels, calling for a "minimum fixed budget" and a "minimum budget," respectively. This approach would have the benefit of "not fluctuating," and would secure funding "no matter [the state of] the economy." In contrast, two groups indicated support for a proportional budget, with one group noting "1% [of the County budget] was sufficient" and another that the budget should be a "percentage of the County budget."

The Commission Should be Immune from Budget Cuts

However, there was a consensus that whatever the formula, the established budget should be “a reliable source of funding so [Commissioners] could do their work.”

Participants in the summary discussion, as well in group notes, insisted that the Commission’s funding should remain “immune from budget cuts.” As one group noted, the Commission funding would be “a minor portion of the budget” and that immunity from budget cuts “can prevent retaliation from elected officials.” Some argued that these protections should be extended to prevent significant fluctuations in Commission funding related to shifts in the County’s revenue levels or general budget.

Notably, budget independence was also framed in concrete terms, focused on the Commission’s ability to secure internal staffing and retain key capacities or functions. In the share out, one group mentioned their desire to see a “budget minimum”—a level at which the budget can’t be further reduced—in part due to a desire for the Commission “to select its own outside counsel.”

One group expressed support for the proposal to adjust the budget each fiscal year relative to changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Stipends and Reimbursements

Although the presentation did not include specific content on or questions regarding stipends and reimbursements, participants were eager to discuss these topics during the conversation about the Commission’s budget. Participants’ concerns about stipends and reimbursements related back to two themes that emerged throughout the engagement:

1. The goal of securing a sustainable and responsible budget for the Commission, and
2. The desire to ensure Commissioners remain accountable and responsible in their role as public servants.

Commissioners Must Receive Sufficient Stipends for their Service

Four participants spoke of the need for stipends to be sufficient to make service on the Commission inclusive and accessible. One attendee also described sufficient stipends as a

corruption mitigation strategy, arguing that when “municipalities... don’t pay well, that incentivizes corruption.”

Set Clear Parameters for the Reimbursement of Commissioners’ Expenses

Two participants suggested a “cap on reimbursements” for expenses incurred during service on the Commission. This proposal emerged out of discussions about responsible use of the Commission’s funds.

Another, speaking from personal experience, pointed out that reimbursements can make participation challenging for some. By expecting Commissioners to pay for expenses out-of-pocket, “you might be cutting out demographic groups that do not have reimbursement money.” They suggested expenses should be covered upfront and, if that is not possible, that reimbursements should be provided as quickly as possible after being incurred.

Additional Feedback Shared Throughout the Workshop

Finally, participants shared some general thoughts on the work of the Task Force. This included:

Continue holding engagements: Participants appreciated the opportunity to weigh in on the design of the Ethics Commission. Participants requested that the Task Force do additional community engagements throughout their work.

Diversify engagement locations: Participants noted that, in the future, Task Force engagements should be held in different places across the county, including in other locations like South Central Los Angeles.

**DRAFT LANGUAGE FROM ETHICS AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE OF
THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY GOVERNANCE REFORM TASKFORCE**

An Ordinance amending Division 3 - Departments and Other Administrative Bodies of Title 2 – Administration of the Los Angeles County Code, by adding Chapter 2.37, relating to governmental ethics, lobbying, and campaign finance, by establishing the County of Los Angeles Ethics Commission and the Los Angeles County Office of Ethics Compliance.

Chapter 2.37 - ETHICS COMMISSION & OFFICE OF ETHICS COMPLIANCE

2.37.010. County Ethics Commission.

(a) **Establishment.** There shall be a County of Los Angeles Ethics Commission, which shall oversee the Los Angeles County Office of Ethics Compliance, that shall have the powers, duties and responsibilities set forth in this chapter and Article III-D of the Los Angeles County Charter. The Ethics Commission and the Office of Ethics Compliance shall operate as an independent department within County government, free from control by the Board of Supervisors or the County Executive.

(b) **Appointment.** The Commission shall have seven members, each of whom shall be a part-time Commissioner.

(1) Members shall be nominated to serve on the Commission as follows:

- A. The Chair of the Board of Supervisors shall nominate one (1) member who has a background in public information and public meetings, community outreach and engagement, or using technology as relates to open government. Beginning on January 1, 2029, this member shall instead be nominated by the elected County Executive.
- B. The District Attorney shall nominate one (1) member who has a background in public policy or public law.
- C. The Assessor shall nominate one (1) member who has a background in campaign finance, accounting, auditing, compliance with ethics laws in the public or private sector, or protection of whistleblowers.
- D. The Registrar-Recorder shall nominate one (1) member who has a demonstrated history of involvement in or knowledge of local governance issues. The Registrar-Recorder shall not communicate with a county elected official, or an agent of a county elected official, about whom the Registrar-Recorder should nominate to serve on the Commission.
- E. The Commission, by a vote of four members, shall nominate the remaining three members following a public recruitment and application process. The Commission’s nominees shall be broadly representative of the general public and at least one member nominated by the Commission shall be a resident of an unincorporated area.

(2) Within 45 days of a person being nominated to serve on the Commission, the Board of Supervisors shall schedule a meeting to appoint or reject the nominee by a majority vote

of the Board. If the Board does not act on a nomination within 45 days, the nominee shall be deemed appointed.

- (3) A nominator shall nominate a person to serve on the Commission, and the Board shall consider such a nomination, based on the nominee's relevant analytical skills, ability to be impartial, and appreciation for the County's diverse demographics, including the County's race, gender, age, and geographic diversity. However, formulas or specific ratios shall not be applied for this purpose.

(c) **Terms of Office.**

- (1) The members of the Commission shall serve staggered five-year terms beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30. No member who has served a complete five-year term shall be eligible for reappointment.
- (2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), to create staggered terms, the initial terms of members of the Commission shall be as follows:
 - a. The term of the member nominated by the Registrar-Recorder shall expire on June 30, 2027.
 - b. The term of the member nominated by the Assessor shall expire on June 30, 2028.
 - c. The term of the member nominated by the District Attorney and one member nominated by the Commission shall expire on June 30, 2029.
 - d. The term of the member nominated by the Chair of the Board of Supervisors (and subsequently the County Executive) shall expire on June 30, 2030.
 - e. The term of two members nominated by the Commission shall expire on June 30, 2031. At least one of the two Commission-nominated members for this term, and for succeeding terms, shall be a resident of an unincorporated area.

After the completion of these initial terms, each subsequent term shall be for a period of five years, as provided in paragraph (1).

- (3) In the event a member's replacement has not been appointed by the conclusion of the member's term, that member may continue to serve as a member of the Commission during the following term in a holdover capacity until a new member is appointed for a period not to exceed one (1) year.

(d) **Qualifications.** Each member of the Commission shall be a resident of the County. A person is ineligible to be appointed to the Commission if that person, in the two (2) years preceding their appointment, has been any of the following:

- (1) A County elected official;
- (2) A spouse, registered domestic partner, parent, sibling, or child of a County elected official;
- (3) An employee of, or paid consultant to, a County elected official;
- (4) A candidate for a County elected office;
- (5) An employee of, or paid consultant to, a candidate running for a County elected office, or a campaign committee controlled by a County elected official;
- (6) An officer or paid employee of a political party;
- (7) A County registered lobbyist; or
- (8) A person who qualified as a major donor as provided under the Political Reform Act or who contributed, in the aggregate, more than \$ ____ to one or more candidates for County elected office.

(e) **During and Post-Service Restrictions.** No member of the Commission, nor the Ethics Compliance Officer, shall:

(1) Seek election to a Los Angeles County elected office during the member's tenure and for two (2) years thereafter, or seek election to any other elected office in a jurisdiction that intersects with the geographic boundaries of Los Angeles County during the member's tenure.

(3) Endorse, support, oppose, contribute to, or volunteer or work on behalf of, any candidate or ballot measure in a County election, or any County elected official running for any elected office, during the member's tenure.

(3) Serve as an officer or employee of a political party during the member's tenure.

(4) Employ or be employed as a person required to register as a County lobbyist during the member's tenure and for one (1) year thereafter.

(5) Have an employment or contractual relationship with a County elected official, or receive a gift or other compensation from such officials, during the member's tenure and for one (1) year thereafter.

(5) Receive a no-bid contract from the County during the member's tenure and for one (1) year thereafter.

(f) **Removal.** A member of the Commission may be removed by a minimum of four (4) votes of the other Commissioners. Removal shall be for cause for substantial neglect of duty, gross misconduct in office, inability to discharge the powers and duties of office, or violation of this Chapter, after written notice of the grounds on which removal is sought and an opportunity for a reply.

(g) **Vacancies.** A vacancy on the Commission will exist whenever a member dies, resigns, ceases to be a resident of the County, is removed from the Commission, is convicted of a felony during the member's term, or is absent from three (3) consecutive regular Commission meetings without permission from the President of the Commission. The Ethics Compliance Officer shall notify the nominator responsible for nominating a replacement within 7 days of a vacancy occurring. If the Chair of the Board of Supervisors, County Executive, Registrar-Recorder, District Attorney, or Assessor fails to nominate a person to fill a vacancy they are responsible for filling within one hundred twenty (120) days after the seat became vacant, or fails to nominate a new person within one hundred twenty (120) days after the Board of Supervisors rejected their previous nominee, the Commission shall instead nominate a candidate to fill that seat for the remainder of the term by the affirmative vote of at least four (4) members. Any nominee proposed by the Commission shall meet the same background qualifications required of a nominee of the original nominator. For purposes of this subsection, a seat held by a member serving in a holdover capacity shall be deemed vacant upon expiration of the member's prior term. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be for the unexpired term and shall not impair the authority of the remaining members to exercise the powers of the Commission. This subsection shall take effect on January 1, 2027.

(h) **Meetings.** The Commission shall adopt a calendar of regular Commission meetings for the calendar year which shall be posted to the Commission's website. The Commission shall meet a minimum of six (6) times per calendar year.

(i) **Quorum.** Four (4) members shall constitute a quorum, and the concurring vote of at least four (4) members shall be required to take any action.

(j) **Officers.** The Commission shall select a President and Vice President annually.

(k) **Compensation; Expenses.** Members of the Commission shall be compensated \$250 per meeting. The members of the Commission shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

2.37.020. Office of Ethics Compliance, Ethics Compliance Officer; Office of Ethics Compliance Staff and Delegation of Authority.

(a) There shall be an Office of Ethics Compliance to support the Los Angeles County Ethics Commission and to accomplish the Commission's duties and objectives. The Commission shall oversee the Office of Ethics Compliance and adopt policies and regulations to govern the Office.

(b) The Ethics Compliance Officer shall be the chief executive of the Office of Ethics Compliance and shall have all the powers provided for department heads. The Commission shall appoint and has the authority to discharge the Ethics Compliance Officer, who shall act in accordance with Commission policies and regulations and with applicable law. The Ethics Compliance Officer shall serve at the will of the Commission and shall not be subject to civil service provisions. The Commission shall establish a salary range for the Ethics Compliance Officer consistent with other County of Los Angeles executive officers, considering similar duties and responsibilities, and shall annually set or adjust the salary for the Ethics Compliance Officer from within that range.

(c) The Ethics Compliance Officer shall appoint and has the authority to discharge the Enforcement Chief, Chief Counsel, other chief deputies, and assistant chief deputies of the Office of Ethics Compliance, who shall serve at the will of the Ethics Compliance Officer and shall not be subject to civil service provisions.

(d) The Ethics Compliance Officer shall appoint and has the authority to discharge other employees of the Office of Ethics Compliance subject to applicable civil service provisions.

(e) The Ethics Compliance Officer shall act on behalf of the Commission between meetings of the Commission, except that rules, regulations and adjudicatory decisions may only be acted upon by the Commission.

2.37.030. Duties and Responsibilities of the Ethics Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance.

The purpose of the Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance shall be to promote fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in County government. The Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance shall have responsibility for the impartial and effective administration and implementation of the provisions of the Charter, statutes and ordinances concerning campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, and other laws as provided by the Charter or County ordinance.

It shall be the function and duty of the Ethics Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance to do all of the following:

- (a) Develop a robust education program to promote understanding of, and compliance with, state and County campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics laws, and other laws the Commission enforces, including, but not limited to, conducting trainings for persons subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission and creating a manual that summarizes, in simple, non-technical language, ethics laws and reporting requirements applicable to County officers and employees.
- (b) Investigate allegations of misconduct by County officials, county employees, candidates, campaign committees, lobbyists, contractors, and other persons subject to the laws the Commission enforces.
- (c) Monitor and enforce laws in coordination with other agencies related to campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, including:
 - (1) Chapters 2.160, 2.175, 2.180, 2.190, and 2.195 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Los Angeles County Code;
 - (2) Section 2.165.040 and 2.165.060 of Chapter 2.165 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Los Angeles County Code;
 - (3) Section 2.37.060 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Los Angeles County Code;
 - (4) Sections 5.02.060 of Chapter. 5.02 of Title 5 of the Los Angeles County Code;
 - (5) Sections 5.44.020 and 5.44.170 of Chapter 5.44 of Title 5 of the Los Angeles County Code;
 - (6) other laws as provided by the Charter or County ordinance; and
 - (7) in the Commission's discretion, Chapter 7 (Conflicts of Interest) of Title 9 of the California Government Code, Article 4 (Prohibitions Applicable to Specified Officers) of Chapter 1 of Division 4 of Title 1 of the California Government Code, and Sections 8314 (Misuse of Public Resources), 84308 (Levine Act), and 89503 (Gifts) of the California Government Code, as these provisions relate to Los Angeles County.
- (d) No later than January 1, 2028, serve as the filing officer and receive and retain documents required to be filed pursuant to, and to otherwise administer, the provisions of Chapter 2.160 of the Los Angeles County Code, in lieu of the executive officer of the board of supervisors.
- (e) No later than January 1, 2028, serve as the filing officer and receive and retain the original or a copy of the following forms created by the Fair Political Practices Commission and which must be filed with the County under the California Political Reform Act of 1974 (Government Code Section 81000, et seq.), as amended:
 - (1) Form 700 (Statement of Economic Interest);
 - (2) Form 801 (Payments to Agency Report);

- (3) Form 802 (Agency Report of Ceremonial Role Events and Ticket Distributions);
and
- (4) Form 803 (Behested Payment Report).
- (f) Develop and/or implement additional updates and features to enable searchable public data portals related to campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, including, but not limited to, all lobbying activities such as registration, activity, contributions and expenditures, to be updated in real time, or as close to real time as practicable.
- (g) Issue informal oral and written advice and formal written opinions concerning the laws the Commission enforces. Formal written opinions shall only be adopted by vote of the Commission.
- (h) Prescribe forms for reports, statements, notices and other documents required by the Charter, ordinances or other laws relating to campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, and other laws the Commission administers or enforces.
- (i) Publish an annual public report summarizing the Commission's activities in the prior calendar year, including complaints received, investigations opened, enforcement actions completed, and penalties imposed.
- (j) Assist departments in developing their conflict of interest codes as required by state law.
- (k) Receive grants, gifts and appropriations to support the Commission's functions;
- (l) Submit by July 2027 a draft ordinance for consideration by the Board of Supervisors that will prohibit former County officials, including a member of the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff, the Assessor, the District Attorney, the County Executive and any County employee or member of a County board or commission required to file a statement of economic interests pursuant to the Political Reform Act of 1974, as amended, from engaging in direct communication with any County agency, for the purpose of attempting to influence any action or decision on any matter pending before that County agency on behalf of any person or entity, other than a government agency, for a minimum of two years after leaving County service.
- (m) Submit by December 31, 2027, a draft Ethics Code ordinance, enforceable by the Commission, for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.
- (n) Regularly review the County Code and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for updates regarding campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, and other laws the Commission is responsible for administering or enforcing. The Commission may propose amendments to any law it enforces or administers which, upon request to the President of the Commission, shall be considered by the Board within one hundred eighty (180) days.

- (o) Commencing in 2030, by a vote of at least five (5) members of the Commission, submit directly to the voters for consideration at the next general election any ordinance which the Supervisors are empowered to pass relating to campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, but not more than once per decade.
- (p) Perform such other functions and duties as may be prescribed by the County Charter or County ordinance.

2.37.040. Rules, Regulations and Proposals.

- (a) The Commission may adopt, amend, and rescind rules and regulations, to carry out the purposes and provisions of the Charter and ordinances of the County that the Commission enforces or administers, and to govern procedures of the Commission and the Office of Ethics Compliance. A rule or regulation adopted by the Commission shall have the force of law and may be enforced by the Commission as provided in this chapter.
- (b) Prior to the meeting at which a rule or regulation is adopted, the Commission shall hold a public hearing concerning the matter.
- (c) The Commission shall transmit to the Board of Supervisors rules and regulations adopted by the Commission within 3 days of their adoption. A rule or regulation adopted by the Commission shall become effective 60 days after the date of its adoption unless, before the expiration of this 60-day period, two-thirds of all members of the Board of Supervisors vote to veto the rule or regulation.

2.37.050. Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings.

The Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance shall conduct investigations of alleged violations of state law, the Charter, and County ordinances relating to campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, and other laws enforced by the Commission.

Any person who violates any provision of the Charter or of a County ordinance relating to campaign financing, lobbying, conflicts of interest, or governmental ethics, or any other law enforced by the Commission, or who causes any other person to violate any such provision, or who aids and abets any other person in such a violation, shall be liable under the provisions of this Section.

(a) Enforcement Authority. The Ethics Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance are authorized to:

- (1) Conduct investigations;
- (2) Conduct audits of compliance with disclosure requirements with the Commission;
- (3) Conduct administrative hearings as provided by the Commission's complaint procedures or other law;

(4) Issue subpoenas to compel the production of books, papers, records and documents and take testimony on any matter pending before the Commission. The Commission may seek a contempt order as provided by the general law of the state for a person's failure or refusal to appear, testify, or to produce required books, papers, records and documents;

(5) Administer oaths and affirmations;

(6) Impose penalties, remedies and fines for a violation of any law specified in Section 2.37.030(c)(1) through (7), or regulation adopted to implement such law, by a vote of the Commission. The Commission's decision to impose penalties, remedies, or fines for violation of any law or regulation over which the Commission has enforcement authority shall be appealable to the Los Angeles County Superior Court by filing a petition for writ of mandamus;

(7) Submit referrals to other enforcement authorities, including, but not limited to, the Los Angeles County District Attorney, California Fair Political Practices Commission, and California Attorney General;

(8) Seek remedial relief for violations and injunctive relief; and

(9) Perform other functions as authorized by law.

(b) **Final Enforcement Action.** Final enforcement action by the Commission on a matter, including, but not limited to, the imposition of fines, approval of a settlement, or dismissal of a case, shall be made by an affirmative vote of at least four (4) members.

(c) **Confidentiality.** Records and information obtained by the Commission during the preliminary review and investigation of a complaint shall be confidential and exempt from public disclosure, to the extent permitted by law, except as provided in its complaint procedures.

Nothing in this Section limits the ability of the Commission to disclose such records or information when charging, prosecuting, closing, or dismissing an investigation or complaint into alleged violations of the laws under its jurisdiction. This Section does not prevent the Commission from applying any other exemption from disclosure that may be available under County or state public records disclosure laws. Disclosure of records or information in the course of making a referral to other enforcement authorities, or divulging evidence of possible unlawful conduct by County officials or employees to a government agency with authority to discipline that unlawful conduct, shall not constitute a waiver of the confidentiality protections under this Section.

(d) **Complaint Procedures.** The Commission shall adopt procedures to establish the administrative process for the investigation and enforcement of violations of the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction to enforce. These procedures shall include, but are not limited to, the process for receiving, initiating, and reviewing complaints, conducting investigations or audits,

providing notice of an administrative hearing to the respondent, and resolving cases prior to an administrative hearing.

(e) **Penalty Guidelines and Enforcement Discretion.** The Commission shall develop a policy setting forth standards for imposing penalties and exercising enforcement discretion. Office of Ethics Compliance staff shall adhere to the policy when recommending penalties. The Penalty Guidelines shall establish a diversion program as an option to allow for education of respondents who commit minor violations, in lieu of monetary penalties, pursuant to criteria and considerations established by the Commission.

(f) **Administrative Hearings, Orders, and Penalties.** After an accusation is issued and served on a respondent, the Commission shall cause a public evidentiary hearing to be held to determine if a violation has occurred. When the Commission determines on the basis of substantial evidence presented at the hearing that a violation has occurred, it shall issue an order which may require the violator to:

(1) cease and desist the violation;

(2) file any reports, statements, or other documents or information required by law; and/or

(3) pay a monetary penalty to the General Fund of the County of up to fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) for each violation, adjusted annually by the Commission to reflect changes to the Consumer Price Index, or three times the amount which the person failed to report properly or unlawfully contributed, expended, gave, or received, whichever is greater. When the Commission determines that no violation has occurred, it shall publish a declaration so stating.

(g) **Represented Employees.** A represented County employee may, upon request, have a union representative present during a formal investigatory interview conducted by Office of Ethics Compliance enforcement staff when the employee reasonably believes the interview may result in disciplinary action.

(h) **Other County Enforcement Entities.** Nothing in this Chapter shall preclude other County officials, agencies, boards, or commissions from exercising enforcement authority heretofore or hereafter granted to them.

2.37.060. Protection Against Retaliation.

(a) No officer or employee of the County shall use or threaten to use any official authority or influence to effect any action as a reprisal against any person for acting in good faith to report or otherwise bring to the attention of the Commission, Office of Ethics Compliance, or other appropriate government agency, information regarding the violation of any law or regulation over which the Commission has authority.

(b) No officer or employee of the County shall use or threaten to use any official authority or influence to discourage, restrain or interfere with any other person for the purpose of preventing

such person from acting in good faith to report or otherwise bring to the attention of the Commission, Office of Ethics Compliance, or other appropriate government agency, information regarding the violation of any law or regulation over which the Commission has authority.

2.37.070. Legal Services.

The Office of Ethics Compliance shall employ a Chief Counsel, and may employ or retain other attorneys in the discretion of the Ethics Compliance Officer, to represent and provide legal assistance and services to the Office and Commission. In addition, the Office of County Counsel shall represent and provide legal assistance and services to the Office and Commission, to the extent such assistance and services do not constitute a conflict of interest.

2.37.080. Judicial Review.

Any interested person may seek judicial review of any action of the Commission or Office of Ethics Compliance.

2.37.090. Appropriation and Expenditures.

- (a) The Board of Supervisors, and the County Executive upon establishment of the office of County Executive, shall provide reasonable funding and staffing for the Commission.
- (b) Starting with the 2026-2027 fiscal year budget, the Board of Supervisors shall appropriate a minimum of _____ dollars for each fiscal year for the Commission's and Office of Ethics Compliance's annual operating budget. The appropriation amount shall be adjusted each fiscal year based on the change to County's revenues in the prior year. However, adjustment to the Commission's and Office of Ethics Compliance's annual budget based on the change to County's revenues in the prior year is not required if four-fifths (seven-ninths after January 1, 2032) of the Board of Supervisors finds that exigent circumstances exist such that an adjustment should not be made for that fiscal year.
- (c) The expenditures of the Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance shall not require prior approval of County offices or personnel where the expenditures are within the Commission's budget, unless the Board of Supervisors makes a finding of exigent circumstances per subsection (b) of this Section. The Commission shall comply with applicable requirements, procedures, and laws relating to the expenditures.
- (d) The Commission and Office of Ethics Compliance are not subject to hiring freezes when operating within their budget, unless the Board of Supervisors makes a finding of exigent circumstances per subsection (b) of this Section.

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