



New Ethics Ordinance Updates Include Recommendations from Chicago Board of Ethics and Better Government Association

Description

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Ordinance planned for introduction at Wednesdayâ??s City Council by 43rd Ward Ald. Michele Smith, the chair of the Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight, expands on Chicagoâ??s ethics ordinance for city employees, elected officials, and candidates for elected office.

If adopted, the ordinance would make substantial additions to the cityâ??s ethics laws, including a number of changes supported and recommended by the Better Government Association. The Better Government Associationâ??s policy team, which operates independently of its investigative newsroom, recommends passage of the bill as a step forward in the effort to enhance ethics in city government.

Major planks of the ordinance include:

- Expanding and strengthening â??conflict of interestâ?• provisions to prohibit the exercise of a city employeeâ??s official powers on behalf of a relative, spouse, or domestic partner
- Prohibiting lobbying on the floor of City Council, including by prior members of Council
- Requiring full and specific on-the-record disclosure of the conflict of interest in cases where members of City Council recuse themselves from a vote due to conflict of interest, and expanding conflict of interest provisions to cover all city officers.

- Requiring independent contractors who work for City Council or its committees to complete required ethics trainings and file annual financial interest statements, including a record of which committees or other bodies they contract with.
- Expanding campaign finance limits to include limits on contributions from persons doing business with city or sister agencies, including city contractors and their subcontractors on contracts worth \$10,000 or more.
- Strengthening fines for ethics violations, including granting the Board of Ethics the ability to levy fines equal to the value of any monetary gain from wrongdoing.

The BGA's policy team provided recommendations and commented on the ordinance in its draft stages. The ordinance as proposed would advance the BGA's mission of transparency, equity and accountability in government.

â??This is an important step forward for accountability and transparency,â?• said Bryan Zarou, BGA's Director of Policy. â??At a time when multiple sitting members of City Council are under indictment, Ald. Smith deserves credit for moving the ball forward on reform. We look forward to this ordinance receiving a hearing in the Committee on Ethics, and we hope members of City Council will see the benefit of these much-needed reforms and advance a robust bill to City Council for passage.â?•

The Better Government Association is a 99-year old civic watchdog that seeks better government through investigative journalism, civic engagement and policy reforms that lead to more open, equitable and accountable government. The policy team and investigative unit operate independently of one another, while both seek to advance the cause of better government in Chicago and across Illinois.
