



## *Campaign Finance and Ethics Commission*

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### **AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

**MEETING DATE: January 13, 2025**

**Agenda Item: Four**

SUBJECT: Presentation of Final 2024 Annual Report

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Review and Approve Annual Report with updated statistics.

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#### Background:

The Campaign Reform Ordinance provides that the Chair of the Commission shall prepare an annual report of the Commission's activities and submit it to the Board of Supervisors.

Specifically, Orange County Codified Ordinance section 1-2-360(e) provides "[t]he Chair of the Commission shall prepare an annual report summarizing Commission activities. This report shall be reviewed and approved by a majority vote of the Commission and presented to Board of Supervisors as an agenda item at a regularly scheduled Board meeting."

Attached as Exhibit A is the 2024 Annual Report scheduled to be presented at the Board of Supervisors on February 25, 2025. This document is being presented to this Commission as some year-end statistics were updated per instructions from the October 2024 meeting.

# Campaign Finance and Ethics Commission

## Annual Report 2024



## **INTRODUCTION**

Since 2017, the Orange County Campaign Finance and Ethics Commission (Commission) has served as the oversight body for the County of Orange’s Campaign Reform Ordinance, Lobbyist Registration, Gift Ban and Code of Ethics. In 2024, the Commission did not act in an enforcement capacity but was pleased to handle administrative tasks such as overseeing the work of the Executive Director. We look forward to the next year as our work instills public trust in government.

## **COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS**

The work of the Commission has been historically limited to administrative actions such as approving documents for transmission to the Board and receiving updates from the Executive Director. This year saw the same Commission actions – setting schedules, reviewing minutes, approving quarterly reports, approving training/educational materials (including the updated Campaign Manual), and receiving reports from the Executive Director. One such report included the presentation of an office operations manual which is a comprehensive overview of daily work. The Commission once again did not need to hear any appeals. This year did mark the appointment of Mr. Judson Brown by Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento and the departure of Commissioner David Thompson.

It is my pleasure to report that the Commission once again fulfilled its purpose as the oversight authority to the County’s Campaign Reform Ordinance, Lobbyist Registration, Reporting Ordinance, the Gift Ban Ordinance, and Sections 6 and 9 of the County Code of Ethics and Commitment to Public Service. My first term as Chairman has been both interesting and educational. The statutory framework for Orange County Campaign Finance and Ethics works smoothly and provides a balanced approach to enforcement.

## **DIRECTOR HIGHLIGHTS**

This year saw an exciting update for the Office of Campaign Finance and Ethics (Office). A tracking system for AB1234 ethics trainees was created so that individual compliance dates



can now be easily managed. As a result, the Board of Supervisors updated the County AB1234 ethics training policy to align with state law. This new system allows the Office to provide specific compliance dates and offer clear training direction to members of Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

The Office also provided multiple education programs to both internal and external audiences. These groups included the County Procurement Office, the League of Women Voters, and a professional treasurer association. The Office also offered “live” AB1234 ethics training –in-person and online via Teams. This training continues to be well received and may become the only source of free training as the State’s training may be eliminated. The internal and external engagement has assisted with communicating the availability and scope of the Office’s jurisdiction.

**Other office accomplishments included:**

1. Recovery of \$27,342 from the State related to AB1234 mandated duties. (SB90 claim for Fiscal Year 2023-2024);
2. Lobbyists Fees for 2024 – Approximately \$4,450 in revenue collected with no late payments or fines imposed. The County had an average of 80 active lobbyists in 2024;
3. AB1234 ethics training – 99% compliance rate;
4. The semi-annual audits were completed in less than 14 days; this timeframe continues to improve due to voluntary compliance by all committees and decreasing errors occurring in the filings;
5. In 2024, the Office received and responded to over 22 requests for advice coming into the Office by email or telephone;
6. The Office budget remains less than 0.01% of the County budget year after year.



## LOOKING AHEAD

I look forward to serving the Commission in 2025. It is invigorating to see the important work being accomplished by this Commission and its Executive Director Attorney Denah Hoard. Also, I wish to acknowledging Senior Deputy County Counsel James Steinmann for providing needed legal counsel to the Commission.

Dr. Reza Karkia

Chair, Campaign Finance and Ethics Commission 2024

