



Nevada Commission on Ethics

Ethics Link NV Newsletter

January 28, 2025

As a public servant, you are legally required to comply with the NRS 281A Ethics in Government Laws. This listserv will help ensure you are connected to educational resources to learn how to maintain your compliance and update you about recently published opinions on Ethics Complaints and Advisory Opinions.

4 Steps to Ethics Compliance

Step 1: Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(twitter\)](#), share one of our recent posts, and invite your team to do the same.

Step 2: Visit our website www.ethics.nv.gov/ to peruse [educational resources](#) and [prior opinions](#) relevant to your role in government service.

Step 3: Explore [live](#) or [on-demand](#) training for you and your agency.

Step 4: Watch this [10-minute video](#) to learn how to file an ethics complaint.

Recent Commission Opinions

Safe Harbor Provisions/Gifts:

[*In re Kevin Watson, Comm'n Op. No. 24-024C \(2024\)*](#)

Watson, Director of the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District accepted a gift, a Super Bowl ticket, from the National Football League Foundation. The Commission entered into a stipulated agreement with Watson, which if followed, will ultimately lead to the dismissal of his case. Important to the decision to pursue a stipulated deferral agreement rather than a violation was the fact that Watson sought and followed advice from the District's legal counsel prior to accepting the gift, triggering the safe-harbor provisions found in the Ethics Law.

Disclosure and Abstention:

[*In re Nathaniel Waugh, Comm'n Op. No. 24-139A \(2024\)*](#)

The Commission advised Waugh, the chair of the Board of Trustees for the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District and an employee of the Clark County School District, that he must disclose and abstain if his employer's matters

come before the board.

In re Public Employee, Comm'n Op. No. 24-103A (2024)

The Commission concluded that a public employee serving as an admin for a public board who also volunteers for a nonprofit must publicly disclose this conflict of interest and abstain from any involvement in matters of this nonprofit before the board.

In re Gates, Comm'n Op. No. 23-160A (2024)

The Commission advised Gates, in her role with the Purchasing Division, to disclose her private commitment to her spouse to her supervisor if her spouse's company submits a request for surplus items and to recuse herself from any involvement with the request.

Contracting:

In re Public Employee, Comm'n Op. No. 24-011A (2024)

The Commission granted an exemption from the strict prohibition against contracting between a public employee's private business and government agencies because all of the exemption requirements were met, and the public employee requested the exemption through the appropriate advisory opinion process.

Leaving Public Service (Cooling Off):

In Re Public Officer, Comm'n Op. No. 24-043A (2024)

The Commission advised against a former public officer contracting with their former agency for one year after leaving public service.

In re Hess, Comm'n Op. No. 24-062A (2024)

The Commission advised Hess that the transition from Superintendent to contractor with the Storey County School District is not restricted by the 1 year cooling off period because he is staying within the public sector.

In re Patel, Comm'n Op. No. 24-102A (2024)

The Commission advised Patel that he could transition from his role as administrator at the Office of Cyber Defense Coordination to consulting through his newly formed company. The cooling-off provisions of the ethics law do not apply to transitioning to a different role serving public agencies. Additionally, the restriction on contracting applies only if a prior contract was awarded within 12 months before leaving public service.

New Commissioner

Brianna Smith, Esq.

Term: 12/19/2024 - 12/18/2028

The Legislative Commission has appointed Brianna Smith, Esq. to the Nevada Commission on Ethics to fill the seat left by Commissioner Yen.



Commissioner Smith has been an attorney in Nevada since 2010. She currently practices complex civil litigation with the law firm Pisanelli Bice PLLC. Before returning to private practice, she served as an Assistant United States Attorney and was the section chief overseeing the civil defense division at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Nevada.

[Click here to see the full list of Commissioners.](#)

Hiring Associate Counsel



Apply [here](#)

Manual Moment

The Nevada Commission on Ethics published a new and improved [Ethics Manual](#) last summer. Here is a quick overview of the conditions that must be met to allow a public servant to use a government resource to benefit themselves.

Limited Use Exception (Property, Equipment, Facility) NRS 281A.400(7)(a)

Properly authorized by policy allowing the use or if use is result of an emergency

Use does not interfere with performance of public officer/employee's public duties

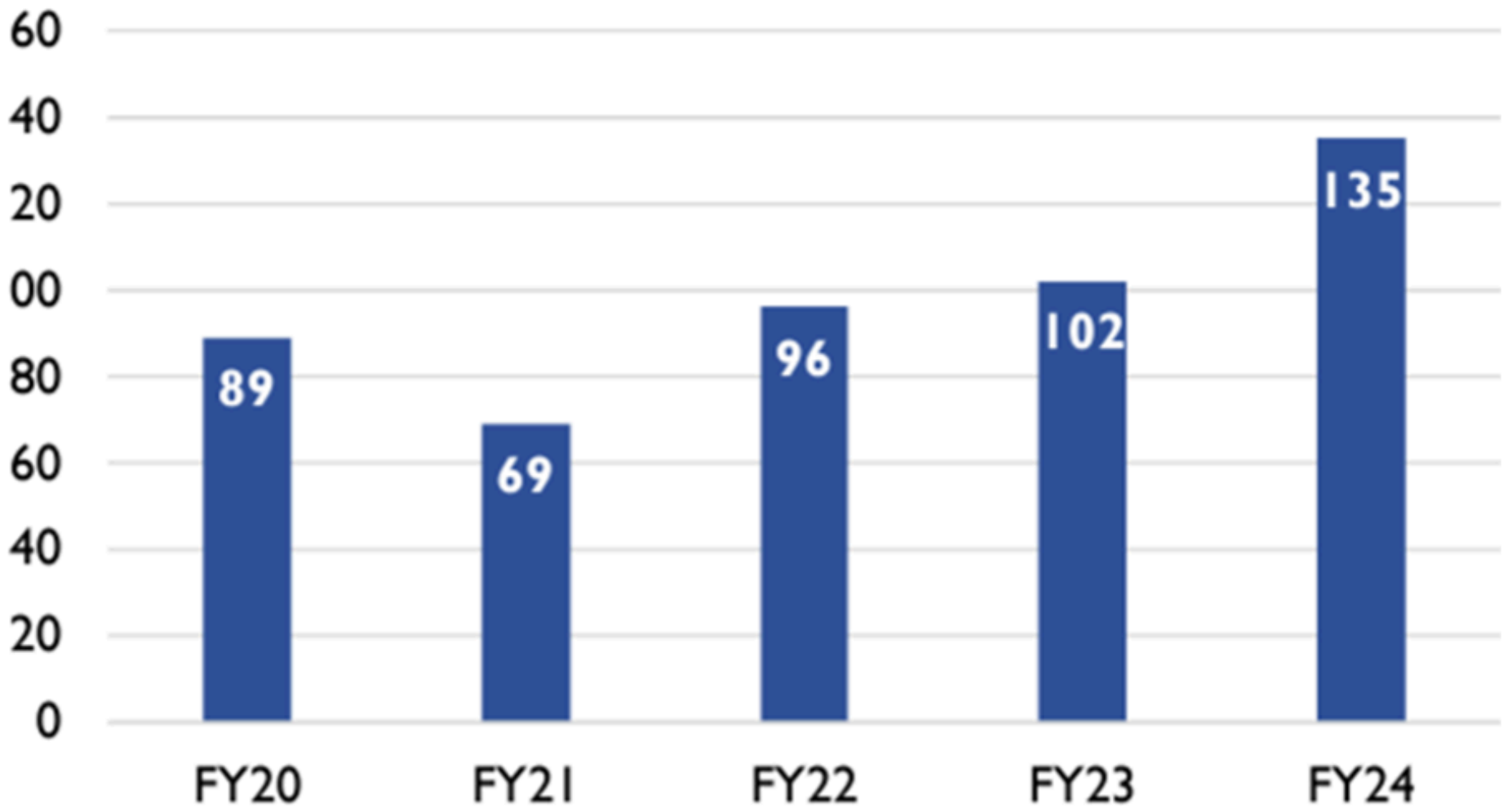
Cost of value related to the use is nominal

Does not create the appearance of impropriety

**All 4 conditions must
be met together**

More Ethics Complaints than Ever Before

Ethics Complaints Received



Next Commission Meeting

Wednesday, February 19th
[Meeting Materials](#)

Quick Links

[File a Complaint](#) | [Request an Advisory Opinion](#) | [File an Acknowledgment Form](#)

[Request Live Training](#) | [Register for Online Training](#) | [See the New Ethics Manual](#)

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704 W. Nye Lane, Suite 204 Carson City, NV 89703
(775) 687-5469 | ncoe@ethics.nv.gov | www.ethics.nv.gov

