

Board Bylaw

Conflict Of Interest

BB 9270 Board Bylaws

Note: The determination as to whether a conflict of interest exists must be analyzed under two separate sets of statutes: (1) the conflict of interest provisions of the Political Reform Act (PRA) (Government Code 87100-87505), detailed in the section below entitled "Conflict of Interest under the Political Reform Act," and (2) Government Code 1090-1098, detailed in the section below entitled "Conflict of Interest under Government Code 1090 - Financial Interest in a Contract." Even when a conflict does not exist pursuant to those statutes, a violation might still occur under the common law doctrine against conflict of interest; see the section below entitled "Common Law Doctrine Against Conflict of Interest."

Note: Because the law and definitions are quite complex, it is strongly recommended that districts consult with legal counsel and staff from the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) as soon as a potential conflict is presented.

The Governing Board desires to maintain the highest ethical standards and help ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the district and the public. Accordingly, no Board member, district employee, or other person in a designated position shall participate in the making of any decision for the district when the decision will or may be affected by his/her financial, family, or other personal interest or consideration.

(cf. 9005 - Governance Standards)

Even if a prohibited conflict of interest does not exist, a Board member shall abstain from voting on personnel matters that uniquely affect his/her relatives. However, a Board member may vote on collective bargaining agreements and personnel matters that affect a class of employees to which his/her relative belongs. Relative means an adult who is related to the Board member by blood or affinity within the third degree, as determined by the common law, or an individual in an adoptive relationship within the third degree. (Education Code 35107)

Note: The following paragraph reflects the common law definition of "relative within the third degree."

A relationship within the third degree includes an individual's parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and the similar family of the individual's spouse/registered domestic partner unless the individual is widowed or divorced.

Note: The Governing Board is required to adopt a conflict of interest code in compliance with Government Code 87300-87313. Board members and employees designated in the district's conflict of interest code are required by Government Code 87500 to annually file a Statement of Economic Interest/Form 700 to disclose any assets and income which may be materially affected by official actions. Under the PRA, there are two separate categories of Form 700 disclosure requirements. For the first category pursuant to Government Code 87302, which is applicable to most school districts, the disclosure requirements are determined by the district and set forth in the district's conflict of interest code. The second category, pursuant to Government Code 87200, is only applicable to Board members and designated employees who "manage public investments"; see section below entitled "Additional Requirements for Boards that Manage Public Investments." Those Board members and designated employees, referred to by the FPPC as Government Code 87200/Article 2 filers, must file broader disclosure statements pursuant to the disclosure requirements specified in law and FPPC regulation.

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 87303, the district's conflict of interest code must be approved by the appropriate code reviewing body. For districts located entirely in one county, the code reviewing body is the board of supervisors of the county in which the district is located. The FPPC is the code reviewing body for those school districts located in more than one county.

Note: Pursuant to 2 CCR 18730, the requirements of the Government Code are satisfied if a district adopts a conflict of interest code that incorporates 2 CCR 18730 by reference, along with a list of designated positions and disclosure categories. The accompanying exhibit (E 9270) contains a sample resolution that includes an appendix with designated positions and disclosure categories which, once adopted by the Board, will comprise the terms of the district's conflict of interest code that should be submitted to the code reviewing body.

The Board shall adopt for the district a conflict of interest code that incorporates the provisions of 2 CCR 18730 by reference, specifies the district's designated positions, and provides the disclosure categories required for each position. The conflict of interest code shall be submitted to the district's code reviewing body for approval, in accordance with Government Code 87303 and within the deadline for submission established by the code reviewing body. (Government Code 87303)

Upon direction by the code reviewing body, the Board shall review the district's conflict of interest code and submit any changes to the code reviewing body or, if no change is required, the Board shall submit a written statement to that effect. (Government Code 87306.5)

When a change in the district's conflict of interest code is necessitated due to changed circumstances, such as the creation of new designated positions, changes to the duties assigned to existing positions, amendments, or revisions, the amended code shall be submitted to the code reviewing body within 90 days after the changed circumstances necessitating the amendments have become apparent. (Government Code 87306)

When reviewing and preparing the district's conflict of interest code, the Superintendent or designee shall provide officers, employees, consultants, and members of the community adequate notice and a fair opportunity to present their views. (Government Code 87311)

(cf. 9320 - Meetings and Notices)

Board members and designated employees shall annually file a Statement of Economic Interest/Form 700 in accordance with the disclosure categories specified in the district's conflict of interest code. A Board member who leaves office or a designated employee who leaves district employment shall, within 30 days, file a revised statement covering the period of time between the closing date of the last required statement and the date of leaving office or district employment. (Government Code 87302, 87302.6)

(cf. 4117.2/4217.2/4317.2 - Resignation)

(cf. 9222 - Resignation)

Conflict of Interest under the Political Reform Act

Note: The FPPC has adopted an eight-step analysis, detailed in Government Code 87100-87500, 2 CCR 18700-18755, and interpretive opinions, to determine whether a conflict of interest exists under the PRA. When such a conflict exists, the affected Board member must disclose the interest and disqualify himself/herself from participating in the decision, as specified below. Because Family Code 297.5 grants a registered domestic partner the same rights, protections, and benefits as a spouse under state law, analysis of a conflict of interest with regards to a Board member's spouse is also applicable to a registered domestic partner.

A Board member, designated employee, or other person in a designated position shall not make, participate in making, or in any way use or attempt to use his/her official position to influence a governmental decision in which he/she knows or has reason to know that he/she has a disqualifying conflict of interest. A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if the decision will have a "reasonably foreseeable material financial effect," which is distinguishable from the effect on the public generally, on the Board member, designated employee, or other person in a designated position, his/her immediate family, or any financial interest described in 2 CCR 18700. (Government Code 87100, 87101, 87103; 2 CCR 18700-18709)

A Board member, designated employee, or other person in a designated position makes a governmental decision when he/she, acting within the authority of his/her office or position, authorizes or directs any action on a matter, votes or provides information or opinion on it, contacts or appears before a district official for the purpose of affecting the decision, or takes any other action specified in 2 CCR 18704.

Note: 2 CCR 18705 permits a Board member who is financially interested in a contract to participate in making a decision on the contract if (1) he/she discloses the existence of the conflict and describes with particularity the nature of his/her economic interest in the contract; (2) gives a summary description of the circumstances under which he/she believes the conflict may arise; and (3) either he/she, another Board member, or a district employee discloses the legal basis for concluding that no alternative source of decision exists for the district. In general, this rule will permit a district to acquire an essential supply or service. CSBA strongly recommends that legal counsel be consulted when situations arise involving the rule of necessity, as strict compliance is required.

However, a Board member shall participate in the making of a contract in which he/she has a financial interest if his/her participation is required by the rule of necessity or legally required participation pursuant to Government Code 87101 and 2 CCR 18705.

Conflict of Interest under Government Code 1090 - Financial Interest in a Contract

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 1090, if a Board member has a financial interest in a contract, it is an absolute bar for that district to enter into the contract. The Attorney General has opined in 69 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 255 (1986) that, unlike the PRA, the prohibitions in Government Code 1090 cannot be resolved by having the financially interested Board member abstain from participating in the matter. However, there are two categories of exceptions. If a financial interest meets the definition of a "noninterest" as specified in Government Code 1091.5, then the restrictions in Government Code 1090 do not apply and the district can enter into the contract. Secondly, if a Board member's interest is deemed a "remote interest" pursuant Government Code 1091, then the district can enter into the contract as long as certain conditions are satisfied, as specified below.

Note: While the prohibitions in the PRA only apply to designated employees, the prohibitions in Government Code 1090 apply to all district employees and consultants. California appellate courts have ruled in McGee v. Balfour Beatty Construction LLC and Davis v. Fresno Unified School District that Government Code 1090 applies to consultants, including corporate consultants, who fill the roles and positions of officers, employees, and agents of the district. However, the Attorney General has opined in 63 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 868 (1980) that an employee's financial interest would not prohibit the district from entering into a contract as long as the employee has not participated in the making of the contract, such as in discussions and planning, as detailed below.

Note: Government Code 1090 does not define financial interest, but courts have held that, for the purposes of this statute, the definition of "financial interest" is not the same as the definition in the PRA which requires a "material financial effect" in order for a conflict to exist. Because the determination of whether a financial interest exists involves a review of statutes, court decisions, and Attorney General opinions as they apply to the particular facts at issue, the analysis can be complex and legal counsel should be consulted as appropriate.

Board members, employees, or district consultants shall not be financially interested in any contract made by the Board on behalf of the district, including in the development, preliminary discussions, negotiations, compromises, planning, reasoning, and specifications and solicitations for bids. If a Board member has such a financial interest in a contract made by the Board, the contract is void. (Government Code 1090)

Note: The district may enter into a contract when a Board member's interest is a "remote interest" as defined in Government Code 1091. Generally, this issue arises when the district wishes to enter into a contract with the Board member's employer. When the conditions specified in Government Code 1091 are satisfied (e.g., Board member is an employee of a nonprofit organization, the employer has at least 10 employees, and the Board member has been employed more than three years), then the district may enter into the contract as long as the affected Board member discloses the remote interest and abstains from the matter.

Note: Board members who willfully fail to disclose a remote interest in a contract may be subject to a fine or imprisonment pursuant to Government Code 1097.

A Board member shall not be considered to be financially interested in a contract in which he/she has only a "remote interest," as specified in Government Code 1091, if the interest is disclosed during a Board meeting and noted in the official Board minutes. The affected Board member shall not vote or debate on the matter or attempt to influence any other Board member or district

official to enter into the contract. (Government Code 1091)

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 1091.5, certain financial interests are defined as "noninterests," meaning a conflict of interest does not exist and the district can enter into the contract. One of the noninterests listed in Government Code 1091.5 is when a Board member's spouse has been employed by the district for at least one year prior to the Board member's election or appointment. If the spouse has not been employed by the district for at least one year prior to the Board member's election or appointment, the exception does not apply and Government Code 1090 prohibits the district from entering into a new contract to hire the spouse. (80 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 320 (1997))

Note: Attorney General opinions and case law have further clarified the application of this noninterest exception when a previously employed spouse changes to a different position during the Board member's term. Generally, these opinions have held that a lateral transfer or change of classification that does not require Board approval (e.g., second year probationary teacher automatically achieving permanent status, step increase) is the same employment not requiring a new contract and thus constitutes a noninterest. (92 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 26 (2009), 87 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 23 (2004)) However, when a new contract is involved (e.g., promotion from classroom teacher to principal, substitute employee becoming a probationary employee), the exception in Government Code 1091.5 does not apply and the action would be prohibited under Government Code 1090 because Board approval of the contract is required. (Thorpe v. Long Beach Community College District, 69 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 255 (1986))

Note: Because this area of law is complex, it is strongly recommended that district legal counsel be consulted if a Board member's spouse is an employee of the district or when analyzing whether an interest is a noninterest or remote interest.

In addition, a Board member shall not be considered to be financially interested in a contract in which his/her interest is a "noninterest" as defined in Government Code 1091.5. Noninterest includes a Board member's interest in being reimbursed for his/her actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of his/her official duties, in the employment of his/her spouse/registered domestic partner who has been a district employee for at least one year prior to the Board member's election or appointment, or in any other applicable circumstance specified in Government Code 1091.5.

Common Law Doctrine Against Conflict of Interest

Note: Even when there is not a conflict pursuant to the PRA (Government Code 87100-87505) or Government Code 1090, the Attorney General has found that special situations may still exist under the common law doctrine against conflict of interest which, unlike the statutes, extends to noneconomic interests. In 92 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 19 (2009), the Attorney General opined that a redevelopment board member should abstain from voting on a loan agreement where the recipient of the loan was a corporation owned by the board member's adult son. Although the board member was not financially interested in the contract under the PRA or Government Code 1090, the Attorney General determined that abstention was necessary in order to avoid a conflict between the member's official and personal interests and to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

Note: Districts are encouraged to consult legal counsel if situations arise that raise the question as to whether such a conflict exists.

A Board member shall abstain from any official action in which his/her private or personal interest may conflict with his/her official duties.

Incompatible Offices and Activities

Note: Government Code 1099 and 1126 prohibit Board members and employees from engaging in any employment or activity which is inconsistent, incompatible, in conflict with, or inimical to their duties with the district. Government Code 1126 mandates the district to adopt procedures regarding this prohibition. See BP 4136/4236/4336 - Nonschool Employment for language implementing this mandate relative to employees.

Note: Attorney General opinions have indicated that it would be incompatible for Board members to serve on other elected or appointed boards, councils, or commissions that have interests which may conflict with the interests of the district (85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 60 (2002); 68 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 171 (1985); 65 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 606 (1982)). If a Board member is sworn into an incompatible office, then his/her position in the prior office is automatically terminated.

Note: Pursuant to Education Code 35107, an employee of a school district may not be sworn into office as an elected or appointed member of that district's Board unless he/she resigns as an employee. If the employee does not resign, the employment automatically terminates when he/she is sworn into office. See BB 9220 - Governing Board Elections.

Note: The determination as to whether an activity or office is incompatible is complex and requires a case-by-case analysis of the particular activities or duties of the office; therefore, it is recommended that district legal counsel be consulted as appropriate.

Board members shall not engage in any employment or activity or hold any office which is inconsistent with, incompatible with, in conflict with, or inimical to the Board member's duties as an officer of the district. (Government Code 1099, 1126)

(cf. 4136/4236/4336 - Nonschool Employment)

Gifts

Note: Pursuant to 2 CCR 18730, the gift limitation is currently \$460. This amount is adjusted in odd-numbered years by the FPPC. Pursuant to Government Code 89503, Board members and candidates are subject to gift limitation for gifts from all sources except when exempted by law or regulation. For those Board members who file a Form 700 based on the disclosure categories specified in the district's conflict of interest code pursuant to Government Code 87302 (see the accompanying exhibit), the gift limit is only applicable as to those individuals and entities that are disclosed on the Form 700.

Note: Several exceptions exist within the Government Code's definitions of gifts, income, interest in real property, and investment; see Government Code 82028, 82030, 82033, and 82034. If questions arise as to such exceptions, the district may seek clarification from the FPPC through email to advice@fppc.ca.gov or consult legal counsel.

Board members and designated employees may accept gifts only under the conditions and limitations specified in Government Code 89503 and 2 CCR 18730.

The limitation on gifts does not apply to wedding gifts and gifts exchanged between individuals on birthdays, holidays, and other similar occasions, provided that the gifts exchanged are not substantially disproportionate in value. (Government Code 89503)

In addition, the limitation on gifts does not apply to informational materials such as books, reports, pamphlets, calendars, and periodicals. (Government Code 82028)

Note: Board members and designated employees may, in the circumstances described in Government Code 89506, receive payments, advances, or reimbursements for travel and related lodging and subsistence, which will not be subject to the gift limit set in Government Code 89503.

Gifts of travel and related lodging and subsistence shall be subject to the current gift limitation, except when: (Government Code 89506)

1. The travel is in connection with a speech given by a Board member or designated employee, provided the lodging and subsistence expenses are limited to the day immediately preceding, the day of, and the day immediately following the speech and the travel is within the United States.
2. The travel is provided by a person or agency specified in Government Code 89506, including a government, governmental agency or authority, bona fide public or private educational institution, as defined in Revenue and Taxation Code 203, or nonprofit organization exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Gifts of travel exempted from the gift limitation, as described in items #1 and 2 above, shall nevertheless be reportable on the recipient's Statement of Economic Interest/Form 700 as required by law.

A gift of travel does not include travel provided by the district for Board members and designated employees. (Government Code 89506)

Honoraria

Board members and designated employees shall not accept any honorarium, which is defined as any payment made in consideration for any speech given, article published, or attendance at any public or private conference, convention, meeting, social event, meal, or like gathering. (Government Code 89501, 89502)

The term honorarium does not include: (Government Code 89501)

1. Earned income for personal services customarily provided in connection with a bona fide business, trade, or profession, unless the sole or predominant activity of the business, trade, or profession is making speeches
2. Any honorarium which is not used and, within 30 days after receipt, is either returned to the donor or delivered to the district for donation into the general fund without being claimed as a deduction from income for tax purposes

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

- 1006 Qualifications for holding office
- 35107 School district employees
- 35230-35240 Corrupt practices, especially:
- 35233 Prohibitions applicable to members of governing boards
- 41000-41003 Moneys received by school districts
- 41015 Investments

FAMILY CODE

- 297.5 Rights, protections, and benefits of registered domestic partners

GOVERNMENT CODE

- 1090-1099 Prohibitions applicable to specified officers
- 1125-1129 Incompatible activities
- 81000-91014 Political Reform Act of 1974, especially:
- 82011 Code reviewing body
- 82019 Definition, designated employee
- 82028 Definition, gift
- 82030 Definition, income
- 82033 Definition, interest in real property
- 82034 Definition, investment
- 87100-87103.6 General prohibitions
- 87200-87210 Disclosure
- 87300-87313 Conflict of interest code
- 87500 Statements of economic interests
- 89501-89503 Honoraria and gifts
- 89506 Ethics; travel
- 91000-91014 Enforcement

PENAL CODE

- 85-88 Bribes

REVENUE AND TAXATION CODE

- 203 Taxable and exempt property - colleges

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 2

- 18110-18997 Regulations of the Fair Political Practices Commission, especially:
- 18700-18707 General prohibitions
- 18722-18740 Disclosure of interests
- 18750.1-18756 Conflict of interest codes

COURT DECISIONS

- McGee v. Balfour Beatty Construction, LLC, et al. (4/12/16, No. B262850)
- Davis v. Fresno Unified School District (2015) 237 Cal.App.4th 261
- Klistoff v. Superior Court, (2007) 157 Cal.App.4th 469
- Thorpe v. Long Beach Community College District, (2000) 83 Cal.App.4th 655
- Kunec v. Brea Redevelopment Agency, (1997) 55 Cal.App.4th 511

ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINIONS

- 92 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 26 (2009)
- 92 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 19 (2009)
- 89 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 217 (2006)

86 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 138(2003)
85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 60 (2002)
82 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 83 (1999)
81 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 327 (1998)
80 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 320 (1997)
69 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 255 (1986)
68 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 171 (1985)
65 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 606 (1982)
63 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 868 (1980)

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Conflict of Interest: Overview of Key Issues for Governing Board Members, Fact Sheet, July 2010

FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS

Can I Vote? A Basic Overview of Public Officials' Obligations Under the Conflict-of-Interest Rules, 2005

INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Understanding the Basics of Public Service Ethics: Personal Financial Gain Laws, 2009

Understanding the Basics of Public Service Ethics: Transparency Laws, 2009

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

Fair Political Practices Commission: <http://www.fppc.ca.gov>

Institute of Local Government: <http://www.ca-ilg.org>

Adopted: 11-9-16

GRAVENSTEIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Sebastopol, California