



Issue Spotlight: Strengthening Public Trust

The Florida House is committed to ensuring government is accountable and transparent, and government officials are held to the highest ethical standards.

The House started by reforming itself, adopting the boldest ethics rules in the body's history, including strengthened sexual harassment policies. Now the House is pursuing these types of reforms for all other levels of government in the state.

Below are brief descriptions of bills that offer opportunities to advance this mission. Please refer to bill texts and analyses for more complete and specific information on each bill.

Ethics Reform – CS/HB 7007, Rep. Sullivan

- Enacts reforms to conflict of interest laws so government employees and elected officials serve the public and not use their positions for private gain.
- Some of the reforms related to conflicts of interest in the bill include:
 - Prohibiting state and local officers or employees from soliciting a conflicting job.
 - Requiring disclosure and reporting on offers of conflicting employment.
 - Requiring state legislators and statewide elected officers to disclose changes in employment and pay raises immediately when the employer has interests in the legislative process.
 - Imposing a two-year ban on agency directors from lobbying any state agency.
- Some of the reforms related to sexual harassment in the bill include:
 - Prohibiting and preventing sexual harassment by establishing uniform policies and procedures as part of the code of ethics.
 - Making a single unwelcome sexual advance an actionable offense.
 - Protecting victims who are public employees, agency employees, public officers, lobbyists, and other third parties doing business with public agencies.
 - Requiring supervisors who observe or have direct knowledge of sexual harassment to respond promptly and initiate required actions.
 - Ensuring the confidentiality of witnesses and subjects of harassment which will be included in a public records bill.
 - Written findings of an investigator may omit information that discloses the identity of the complainant and witnesses or is unnecessarily embarrassing.
 - The written report, identities of complainant and witnesses, and all information in the record shall be confidential until probable cause is determined.
 - Requiring employees and public officer training.
 - Employees will be required to sign and acknowledge having received such training, which will then be included in the employee's personnel file.
 - Requiring suspected criminal conduct be promptly reported to law enforcement.
 - Prohibiting false reporting and retaliation.



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- Providing access to victim advocate services and reasonable employment accommodations.
- Requiring agencies to assess attitudes and behaviors at least every two years. Survey methods must include anonymous, and
 - Survey results are required to be distributed to employees and made publicly available.
- Establishing a task force to review policies and survey findings and make recommendations.
- **STATUS:** Passed Public Integrity & Ethics Committee on February 1.

Government Integrity – PCB PIE 18-04, Rep. Metz

- Enhancing government integrity by strengthening mechanisms to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse is a crucial step in building public trust.
- Some of the reforms this bill brings to ensure government integrity are:
 - Creating a permanent Florida Accountability Office within the Office of the Auditor General for the purpose of ensuring accountability and integrity in state and local government and identifying, investigating, and recommending the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement and related misconduct in government.
 - Requiring the Chief Inspector General and agency inspectors general to conduct periodic reasonable suspicion determinations when initiating investigations to uncover fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or misconduct in government and requires them to inform the Legislature and other specified entities when these abuses occur.
 - Requiring the Chief Financial Officer to provide copies of suggestions provided to Florida's 'Get Lean Hotline' to the Florida Accountability Office.
 - Broadening Florida's Whistle-Blower's Act to cover more government abuses while ensuring employees that report these abuses are protected from retaliatory action.
 - Ensuring state agencies reward employees when they report waste, fraud, abuse, etc., and their complaints and participation result in savings to the state.
 - Strengthening the state procurement law to provide greater protection to the public in connection with the expenditure of public money.
 - Broadening the competitive solicitation exemption for statewide broadcasting of public service announcements, currently benefiting one particularly described statewide non-profit organization.
 - Prohibiting a state employee who is registered to lobby the Legislature (other than an agency head) from also participating in the negotiation and awarding of any contract required or expressly funded under any specific legislative appropriation or proviso in an appropriation act.
- **STATUS:** Approved Committee Bill awaiting references