

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

2015

ANNUAL REPORT



STATE ETHICS COMMISSION'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR & GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2015



STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
1324 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-1324

George L. Wainwright, Jr., Chair
Jane F. Finch, Vice Chair

Perry Y. Newson, Executive Director

February 13, 2016

The Honorable Patrick McCrory
Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

The Honorable Tim Moore
Speaker, North Carolina House of Representatives
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2304
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

The Honorable Phil Berger
President Pro Tempore, North Carolina State Senate
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2007
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

Re: Ethics Commission's 2015 Annual Report

Dear Governor McCrory, Speaker Moore, & President Pro Tem Berger:

Pursuant to section 138A-10(11) of Chapter 138A (the State Government Ethics Act), the State Ethics Commission hereby submits its 2015 annual report on the Commission's activities and generally on the subject of public disclosure, ethics, and conflicts of interest.

Sincerely,

Perry Y. Newson,
Executive Director

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PART I: THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

A. MISSION STATEMENT.

The State Ethics Commission's primary mission is to ensure that public officials covered by the State Government Ethics Act (Chapter 138A of the North Carolina General Statutes) "exercise their authority honestly and fairly, free from impropriety, threats, favoritism, and undue influence." The Commission is charged with ensuring that standards of ethical conduct and standards regarding conflicts of interest are adhered to by public officials. The Commission also ensures that lobbyists and lobbyist principals understand and comply with their duties and responsibilities under the Lobbying Law (Chapter 120C). The Commission accomplishes this mission through a combination of disclosure (transparency), education, advice, and enforcement.

B. AUTHORITY.

The State Government Ethics Act ("Ethics Act") and the Lobbying Law grant specific authority to the State Ethics Commission ("the Commission") for administering and enforcing those laws. Specifically, the Ethics Act designates the Commission as the "sole State agency with authority to determine compliance with or violations of [the Act] and to issue interpretations and advisory opinions under [the Act]." G.S. 138A-10(c). Those decisions and advisory opinions are binding on all other State agencies.

Id.

The Lobbying Law grants specific authority to both the Commission and the Secretary of State. The Commission has the sole authority for interpreting the meaning and application of the Lobbying Law, including issuing advice and advisory opinions to persons affected by the Lobbying Law, and adopting rules interpreting the law. The Commission also has sole authority over Article 3 (Prohibitions and Restrictions), Article

5 (Liaison Personnel), and Article 7 (Persons Exempted). The Secretary of State has the sole authority to adopt rules, orders, and forms necessary to administer the provisions of Article 2 (Registration), Article 4 (Reporting), and Article 8 (Miscellaneous Reporting).

The Ethics Act and the Lobbying Law establish a specific code of conduct for certain public officials and lobbyists and ensure transparency through various reporting requirements.

C. POWERS AND DUTIES.

The Commission's primary powers and duties are set out in G.S. 138A-10 and include:

- Administering the Statement of Economic Interest ("SEI") financial disclosure and evaluation process;
- Issuing advice and formal advisory opinions on the Ethics Act and the Lobbying Law;
- Adopting rules and advisory opinions interpreting the Lobbying Law and rules to administer the Ethics Act and Articles 3, 5, & 7 of the Lobbying Law;
- Educating public servants, legislators, and legislative employees on the ethics and lobbying laws, and educating lobbyists, lobbyist principals, and liaison personnel on the Lobbying Law; and,
- Investigating complaints.

The Commission is required to meet at least quarterly and at other times as called by the chair or four of its members. In 2015, the Commission held four meetings:

- February 13, 2015
- May 8, 2015
- August 14, 2015
- November 6, 2015.

The Commission's open session minutes for these meetings are available by contacting the State Ethics Commission at (919) 814-3600 or by e-mail at ethics.commission@doa.nc.gov.

D. ORGANIZATION.

MEMBERSHIP. The State Ethics Commission is made up of eight (8) members who serve in staggered four-year terms. Four members are appointed by the Governor, no more than two of whom may be of the same political party. Four members are appointed by the General Assembly: two upon recommendation of the Speaker of the House, neither of whom can be of the same political party; and two upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, neither of whom can be of the same political party.

Three new members were appointed in 2015. On May 21, 2015, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Phil Berger, made two appointments to the Commission: (1) he reappointed Dr. Clarence G. Newsome to another four-year term on the Commission, expiring December 31, 2018; and (2) he appointed Daniel J. Zeller to fill the remaining term of Francis De Luca, which expires December 31, 2016. Col. De Luca resigned his position on March 20, 2015.

The following chart reflects the current membership of the Commission:

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Start Date	End Date	Appointed By
Daniel	J.	Zeller	5/21/2015	12/31/2016	Senate
Robert	L.	Moseley, Jr.	1/1/2015	12/31/2016	House
William	P.	Farthing	1/1/2014	12/31/2017	Governor
George	L.	Wainwright	3/28/2014	12/31/2017	Governor
Clarence	G.	Newsome	5/21/2015	12/31/2018	Senate
Tommy	D.	McKnight	1/1/2015	12/31/2018	House
Jane	F.	Finch	1/19/2016	12/31/2019	Governor
Andy	Patrick	Roberts	1/28/2016	12/31/2019	Governor

The Governor appoints a sitting member of the Commission to serve as chair. Governor McCrory appointed George L. Wainwright, Jr. as chair of the Commission in

August 2014, and Justice Wainwright served as such during 2015. He continues to serve as chairman until his successor is appointed.

Commission members elect a vice-chair annually from its membership. On February 13, 2015, the Commission elected Jane F. Finch to serve as vice-chair. Ms. Finch has served as vice-chair for the Commission since it began in January 2007.

STAFF. The Commission is staffed by an Executive Director, an Assistant Director, four additional attorneys, three paralegals, and four administrative positions.

There were several staffing changes in 2015 including:

- MPO/RPO Paralegal, Dorothy Strickland, transferred to another Department, and Peggy Malpass was hired as the new MPO/RPO Paralegal in the SEI Unit.
- Administrative Assistant Anitra Hill resigned to take a position out of state, leaving a vacancy in the SEI Unit. At the end of 2015, the Commission had commenced the hiring process for this position.
- Administrative Assistant Sonya Zell resigned to take a position in the private sector, and at the end of 2015, the Commission had commenced the hiring process for this position as well.

E. BUDGET.

While the Commission operates on a fiscal year budget cycle, at the end of 2015, the Commission's certified budget was approximately \$1.2 million. The Commission's overall budget remained the same. In addition, the Commission received a non-recurring budget carry-forward in the amount of \$39,059 from the prior fiscal year. The carry-forward was provided to complete planned and ongoing technological upgrades to the Commission's website and SEI database, among other things. The Commission also received a non-recurring appropriation of \$50,000 for work performed by independent contractors, including investigative work.

In general, nearly 95% of the Commission's budget is for personnel costs (personal services), and non-negotiable information technology (ITS) charges account for over \$50,000 (approximately 50% of the remaining non-personnel costs).

PART II: 2015 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

For the ninth straight year, the Ethics Act was amended in the 2015 legislative session (the Act has been amended every legislative session since its passage in 2006). This year the General Assembly passed House Bill 584 which amended section 138A-31(b) to add letters of character reference to a list of exceptions for the nongovernmental advertising prohibition. In other words, covered persons may mention or authorize another person to mention their public position in character reference letters for certain delineated individuals.

Section 138A-9 of the Ethics Act was amended to clarify that the Department of Administration, where the Commission is housed “for administrative purposes only,” must provide “administrative support to the Commission free of charge.” This includes all fiscal and human resources support, which directly impacts the Commission’s budget.

House Bill 373 amended the 2016 candidate primary election filing period to run from December 1 to December 21, 2015. It also required candidates to file a Statement of Economic Interest on or before February 1, 2016, thus spanning two filing years. This resulted in changes to the Commission’s previous candidate SEI forms and filing procedures.

House Bill 892 made appointments to various covered boards, and numerous new boards were created that required standard coverage analysis under both the Ethics Act and the Commission’s coverage criteria.

The Commission proposed amendments to both the Ethics Act and Lobbying Law; however, those proposals failed to advance in the 2015 session. The Commission plans to pursue its proposed changes in the 2016 “Short Session.”

PART III: THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES

A. DESIGNATION OF ADDITIONAL COVERED BOARDS.

BACKGROUND. The Ethics Act covers State boards and commissions that are created by statute or executive order, non-advisory in nature, and designated as covered by the State Ethics Commission. G.S. 138A-3(1c). The Commission applies the criteria found in 30 NCAC 02 .0101, Non-Advisory Boards, to determine if a board is non-advisory.

Staff is authorized to apply the criteria to all new boards to develop a recommendation as to whether the board should be covered by the Ethics Act. This process is non-adversarial, and any board wishing to contest staff's recommendation may appear before the Commission. In addition, the General Assembly can mandate coverage for boards or other entities that would be deemed "advisory" and thus not covered under the Ethics Act.

2015 COVERED BOARDS. In 2015, the Commission reviewed eight (8) boards to determine if they met the stated coverage criteria. The Commission voted to designate the following two (2) boards as non-advisory thereby covering those boards and their members under the Ethics Act:

1. ABLE Board of Trustees
2. NC Industrial Hemp Commission.

The Commission determined the remaining six (6) boards were either advisory or non-state boards and therefore should not be covered by the Ethics Act:

1. Aviation Development Task Force
2. Maternal Mortality Review Commission
3. NC Food Manufacturing Task Force
4. Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council

5. Advisory Council on Rare Diseases

6. Statuary Hall Selection Committee.

In total, two new boards or commissions were covered in 2015, resulting in 11 newly covered individuals who are required to file statements of economic interest and take the mandatory ethics training course.

B. STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEREST (SEI) FILINGS.

BACKGROUND. The Ethics Act requires most “covered persons” (public servants¹, legislators, and judicial officers²), as well as candidates for any of these offices that are elected, to file a Statement of Economic Interest “(SEI)” disclosing certain financial, professional, familial, and personal information. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and their alternates are also required to file SEIs and a Real Estate Disclosure form (RED). The SEI must be filed prior to the covered person’s initial appointment, election, or employment and no later than April 15th of every year thereafter. Earlier dates apply to candidates. Certain public servants whose compensation from the State is less than \$60,000 per year and voting student members of community college and university boards of trustees do not have to file an SEI.³

The Commission must prepare an evaluation of public servants’ and MPO/RPO members’ and alternates’ SEIs in order to identify any actual or potential conflicts of interest between their private interests and their public duties. In most cases, the public servant’s initial SEI must be evaluated prior to the individual assuming his or her public position. However, university and community college officers and trustees may assume their public position prior to the SEI evaluation. Beginning July 1, 2013, the

¹ “Public servant” is defined in G.S. 138A-3(30).

² “Judicial officers” includes justices, judges, district attorneys, and clerks of court.

³ They are, however, subject to all other applicable provisions of the Ethics Act.

Commission established a biennial cycle for evaluating most SEIs. The Ethics Act does not require the Commission to prepare evaluations for legislators, judicial officers, and candidates.

Finally, the Commission may impose penalties for late or non-filing. Within 30 days after the due date, the Commission must notify persons who have either failed to file or filed an incomplete SEI. The person then has 30 days to complete the SEI or be subject to a \$250.00 fine. Failure to complete the SEI within 60 days of initial notice by the Commission is a violation of the Ethics Act, and the person may be removed from his or her public position. As the charts below indicate, more than 7000 SEIs were filed in 2015. Of those, 4800 were filed electronically through the Commission’s website.

SEI STATISTICS. The 2015 SEI filing statistics for covered persons are as follows:

Number of SEI Filers	Approximately 6400
Number receiving a 30 day letter for failure to file or incomplete filing	345
Number receiving a 60 day letter for failure to file or incomplete filing	43
Number assessed \$250 fine	20
Number of appeals from fine	2*
Number recommended for removal	0

*All appeals of SEI fines were dropped by the appellants.

The 2015 SEI filing statistics for MPO/RPO filers are as follows:

Number of SEI Filers	Approximately 650
Number receiving a 30 day letter for failure to file or incomplete filing	48
Number receiving a 60 day letter for failure to file or incomplete filing	9
Number assessed \$500 in fines	6
Number reported to the SBI	5
Number of appeals from fine	2*
Number recommended for removal	0

*All appeals of SEI fines were dropped by the appellants.

C. EDUCATION.

BACKGROUND. Both ethics and lobbying education are required by the ethics and lobbying laws. Public servants and ethics liaisons in the executive branch must attend ethics education within six months of election, appointment, employment, or notification that the individual's board has been designated as a covered board. They must also attend a refresher presentation at least every two years thereafter. The Commission also offers lobbying education and awareness programs to lobbyists and liaison personnel (State agency legislative liaisons and local government legislative liaisons); however, attendance at a lobbying education presentation is not mandatory. The Commission conducts at least one live lobbying education program per year, usually prior to commencement of the General Assembly's legislative session that year.

Legislators must attend within either two months of the convening of the General Assembly to which the legislator is elected or two months after the legislator's appointment, whichever is later. Legislative employees must attend a presentation within three months of employment and attend a refresher presentation at least every two years thereafter. Currently, over 7,300 individuals are required to attend ethics and lobbying education presentations.

Judicial officers are not required to attend an ethics education presentation unless they are also serving in a public servant position (e.g., are appointed to a covered board).

The Commission also provides education and training regarding the completion and filing of SEIs and Real Estate Disclosure forms (RED) to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs). This education and training has been provided by live presentations and webinars. In 2015 the Education Unit presented SEI and RED education and training to TAC members and TAC coordinators at the first quarter meetings of the North Carolina Association of RPOs and the North Carolina Association of MPOs. This training is encouraged but not mandatory.

2015 EDUCATION OPTIONS. Ethics and lobbying education presentations are conducted live, by video streaming via the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NC-REN), and online. Most live sessions originate in Raleigh. Some are stand-alone programs; others are broadcast live to sites across the State (primarily on university campuses) via NC-REN. The Commission tries to ensure geographic balance when scheduling presentations. The Commission also offers the mandatory ethics education online, via the Commission's website.

2015 ETHICS EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS.

Public Servants & Others in the Executive Branch.⁴

Live Programs Offered	Locations⁵	Total Attendees
21	54	661
Online Participants		2308
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS		2969

Legislators.

Programs Offered	Locations	Total Attendees
7	7	171

Legislative Employees.

Online Participants (1st, 2nd, and 3rd quarter numbers)	507
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Lobbyists & Lobbyist Principals.

Programs Offered	Locations	Total Attendees
1	1	60

⁴ Includes public servants and ethics liaisons whose attendance is mandatory, as well as other employees who are not covered by the Ethics Act but who attend voluntarily or at the direction of their supervisors.

⁵ Includes both Raleigh and distance locations served by the same program.

MPO and RPO TAC Members.

Programs Offered	Locations	Total Attendees
2	2	44

Others.⁶

Programs Offered	Locations	Total Attendees
6	7 Live and/or Video Streaming	220

NEWSLETTERS. The Ethics Act requires the Commission to publish newsletters periodically. In addition, the Lobbying Law requires the Commission to publish an annual lobbying newsletter containing summaries of advisory opinions.

In 2015, the Commission published six (6) newsletters on a variety of topics. The Commission's newsletters can be found on its website at:

<http://www.ethicscommission.nc.gov/News/newsArchive.aspx>.

EDUCATION COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT. In July of 2015, the Commission commenced an education compliance audit of public servants. The purpose of the audit was to determine which public servants are past due for their mandatory ethics education and to reach out to the past due persons through the ethics liaisons and agency heads with the goal of full education compliance through voluntary compliance. The initial effort was very successful, ultimately achieving 100% compliance in the target group.

⁶ Includes informational programs concerning the Ethics Commission or the ethics and lobbying laws but are not intended to satisfy the statutory education requirements (*e.g.*, continuing legal education presentations; college courses; international visitors groups).

If education compliance cannot be obtained voluntarily within a reasonable time, the Commission will consider commencing appropriate enforcement action pursuant to G.S. 138A-45, after taking current resources into consideration. In anticipation of that possibility, the Commission began drafting education compliance rules, policies, and procedures. Any necessary rules will be adopted pursuant to the procedures set out in the Ethics Act. The current schedule calls for finalization of the necessary rules and procedures by the end of calendar year 2016; however, final implementation of any enforcement plan will depend upon the Commission's determination that it has the necessary resources with which to do so in a timely and successful manner.

D. ADVICE & ADVISORY OPINIONS.

BACKGROUND. The Ethics Act and Lobbying Law authorize Commission staff to issue informal advice, both written and oral, and the Commission to issue formal written advisory opinions on specific issues regarding the meaning and applicability of the Ethics Act and the Lobbying Law. Advice and formal advisory opinions relate to an individual's duties and responsibilities under the Ethics Act in specific circumstances, including advice concerning the gift ban, conflict of interest standards, Statement of Economic Interest disclosure obligations, and other requirements of the Ethics Act.

Advice and formal advisory opinions interpreting the Lobbying Law address lobbyist and lobbyist principal registration, expenditure and payment reporting requirements, and the gift ban applicable to registered lobbyists, lobbyist principals, and liaison personnel. Advice and formal advisory opinions also address other restrictions including the six-month "cooling off" period applicable to legislators, the Governor's Cabinet, Council of State members, and former State employees, and the miscellaneous reporting requirements applicable to persons otherwise exempted from the Lobbying Law.

Individuals who may request advice concerning the Ethics Act include public servants, legislative employees, individuals responsible for supervising or appointing a public servant or legislative employee, legal counsel, and ethics liaisons. Legislators may also request advice concerning the Ethics Act and certain provisions of the Legislative Ethics Act. The Commission and its staff is also authorized to issue formal and informal advice to judicial officers, but only concerning the Statement of Economic Interest disclosure requirements. The Commission will, however, provide guidance to judicial officers regarding additional obligations imposed by the Ethics Act. Anyone affected by the Lobbying Law, including lobbyists, lobbyist principals, and liaison personnel, may also request advice. Finally, the State Auditor may request an advisory opinion on specific questions involving the meaning and application of the Ethics Act, certain provisions of the Legislative Ethics Act, or the Lobbying Law.

Requests for advice must relate to real or reasonably anticipated facts or circumstances. All requests for advice and advisory opinions, advice and advisory opinions given, and related information are confidential and may not be disclosed without the permission of the requester. However, formal advisory opinions concerning the Lobbying Law must be provided to the Secretary of State's office.

Generally, a formal written advisory opinion issued by the Commission gives the requester immunity from investigation by the Commission, adverse action by the requester's board or agency, and investigation by the Secretary of State. However, a formal advisory opinion from the Commission does not grant immunity for violations of the criminal law in the performance of the individual's official duties. Informal advice issued by Commission staff does not grant immunity. The Commission publishes redacted formal advisory opinions on its website within 30 days of issuance. These opinions can be found under "Advisory Opinions" on the Commission's website.

The Commission also issues recommended formal advisory opinions to legislators. However, those opinions are transmitted to the Legislative Ethics Committee (LEC), which has sole authority to issue formal advice to legislators. Until the LEC issues its opinion, a legislator who relies on a recommended formal advisory opinion is immune from investigation by the Commission or the LEC (unless it involves an alleged violation of criminal law in the performance of the legislator’s official duties), adverse action by the house of which the legislator is a member, and investigation by the Secretary of State.

ADVICE & FORMAL ADVISORY OPINION STATISTICS.

Formal Advisory Opinions

Lobbying	3
Ethics	4
2015 Total Formal Advisory Opinions Issued	7
2015 “Guidance” Letters Issued to Judicial Officers	2

Informal Advisory Opinions (Ethics & Lobbying)

2015 Total Informal Advisory Opinions Issued	566
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E. COMPLAINTS.

ETHICS COMPLAINTS. The Commission has a statutory mandate to investigate complaints alleging unethical conduct by covered persons and legislative employees. The Commission must conduct inquiries sufficient to either dismiss the complaint for a lack of probable cause or hold a hearing for public servants. For legislators, legislative employees, and some judicial officers, the complaint is referred to the appropriate

authority after a finding of probable cause. Allegations against judges that involve the Code of Judicial Conduct must be referred to the Judicial Standards Commission without investigation.

The Commission uses a panel system to expedite the resolution of ethics complaints. The panels consist of two Commission members, each from different political parties. The panel first determines, through a preliminary inquiry, whether the complaint *alleges* sufficient facts to conduct a further inquiry into the charges (PI Panel). If the complaint does not allege sufficient facts, it is dismissed or additional information is requested. If sufficient facts are alleged, staff conducts an investigation, and its findings are then presented to the same panel for a probable cause determination. If the PI Panel members cannot agree at the preliminary inquiry stage as to whether the complaint alleges facts sufficient to constitute a violation, then the matter proceeds to an investigation. Similarly, if the panel members disagree on the probable cause determination, then the complaint proceeds to the Commission for determination, with the panel members recusing themselves from voting.

If the Probable Cause Panel finds no probable cause, the complaint is dismissed and reported to the Commission at the next meeting. If the Panel finds probable cause, public servants are entitled to a public hearing before the Commission. The Commission also has the authority to settle complaints involving public servants.

Other than for SEI filing violations, the Commission cannot assess a civil penalty for Ethics Act violations. Also, other than providing false information or for failing to disclose information on an SEI, there are no criminal penalties for violations of the Ethics Act.

For legislators, if probable cause is found, the complaint is referred to the Legislative Ethics Committee. For judicial officers, if probable cause is found, the complaint is referred to the appropriate entity; however, allegations of violations of the

Code of Judicial Conduct *must* be referred to the Judicial Standards Commission without investigation. If probable cause is found involving a complaint against a legislative employee, the complaint is referred to the General Assembly. Ethics Act complaints and all records associated with them are generally confidential.

LOBBYING COMPLAINTS. The Commission shares enforcement responsibility for the Lobbying Law with the Secretary of State. Similar to the Ethics Act complaint process, a panel is used to screen complaints. Complaints and other records associated with them are confidential.

The Commission may assess a civil penalty for violations of the Lobbying Law. Violations of certain portions of the Lobbying Law, including the gift ban, also have a criminal penalty. Apparent criminal violations must be referred to the District Attorney for possible prosecution.

COMPLAINT AND INVESTIGATION STATISTICS.

2015 Ethics Complaints

Type of Matter	Explanation/Statute	Number
Carried forward from 2014		5
Complaints	Total complaints received	111
Inquiries	Contacted Commission but no complaint processed	145
Miscellaneous	Commission copied on complaints to other agencies or departments	43
Total		304
Of the Total Ethics Complaints:		
Filed/Accepted (Preliminary Inquiry Panel)	Those meeting all threshold statutory requirements for a preliminary inquiry to be conducted	24
Referred under 138A-12(b)	Referred from State Auditor	0
	Referred from other state agencies	0
	Referred to Judicial Standards Commission	14

Dismissed under 138A-12(c)(4)	Frivolous, bad faith, duplicative, or handled more appropriately by other agencies, or pending elsewhere	0
Dismissed under 138A-12(f)	After preliminary inquiry (insufficient facts alleged)	23
Dismissed under 138A-12(h)	Dismissed for lack of probable cause	4
Referred for criminal prosecution under 138A-12		0
Referred for appropriate action under 138A-12(h) or 138A-12(k)(3)	Referred after determination of probable cause; or violation established by clear & convincing evidence after a hearing	0
Referred to SBI under 136-200.2(j) or 136-211(j)		1
Complaints pending action by the Commission		2
Age of Complaints pending action by the Commission (As of 12/31/15)		30 days 1 day

2015 Lobbying Complaints

Complaint	Explanation/Statute	Number
Carried forward from 2014		0
Received Complaints	Total complaints received	1
Filed/Accepted	Those meeting all threshold statutory requirements/accepted for investigation	0
Dismissed		0
Settled		0
Referred for criminal prosecution		0
Complaints pending action by the Commission		0
Age of Complaints pending action by the Commission		N/A

F. OTHER MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Other than as noted in the individual sections above, the Commission's other major accomplishments were largely in the technology support area. For example, the Commission was given funding for, and was in the process of obtaining, a new, state-of-the-art telephone system and corresponding fiber optic cable at the end of 2015. With help from an outside contractor, the Commission's database system was modified to send automatic email education reminder notices, allow people to sign up online for education classes, and submit education certifications online after completing the online education program.