



GOVERNMENTAL ETHICS COMMISSION

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Neutral Testimony Regarding HB 2561
Mark Skoglund, Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 2561.

The Commission is a proponent of legislation that addresses a specific legislative recommendation from its Annual Report and is neutral to most other initiatives. While this bill would address an item identified in the Annual Report, the Commission indicated that it "would not oppose" the creation of an exception for this highly-specific case and has no concerns regarding the legislation.

CURRENT LAW

Currently, no state employee may receive compensation for performance of official duties other than the salary to which they are entitled. There are multiple underlying rationales for the prohibition. Most notably, if a state employee is being paid by a third party for a task that is part of their state employment, there is a perception that their activity is being influenced by that third party.

Legislative assistants are state employees. Some assistants have been provided bonuses for work during the legislative session. It is the view of the Commission that these bonus payments are a violation of the statute but under these highly specific circumstances do not raise significant concerns about corruption or improper favor.

ENFORCEMENT

The Commission has chosen to not act against prior instances of legislative assistants receiving bonuses, awaiting the Legislature's input regarding whether these instances should be treated as violations of the statute. Any future instances of legislative assistant bonuses will be handled in accordance with the statute as it stands at the end of the 2020 Session.