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OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION ISSUES ADVISORY OPINIONS

At its meeting today, the Ohio Ethics Commission issued four advisory opinions, including one to the former members of the Ohio Casino Control Commission.

In that opinion, the Commission concluded that the seven individuals appointed by former Governor Ted Strickland to the Ohio Casino Control Commission, whose appointments were not confirmed by the Ohio Senate, are nonetheless subject to the Revolving Door provision of the Ohio Ethics Law. Therefore, for two years after they left the Casino Control Commission, the former members are prohibited from:

- Representing a client before any public agency on any matter before or concerning the Casino Control Commission;
- Being employed or compensated by a person regulated by the Casino Control Commission on any matter before or concerning the Casino Control Commission; and
- Acting in a representative capacity for any person on any matter before or concerning the Casino Control Commission.

The Commission also issued two opinions related to public servants receiving compensation. According to the Commission, a school district employee is prohibited from accepting compensation from a college or university for serving as a mentor for a student teacher. Colleges and universities are likewise prohibited from providing such compensation. However, the Commission noted that colleges or universities are not prohibited from providing payments to the school district for allowing such mentoring, provided that the school has full discretion in how to use or distribute the financial payment to the district.

In a separate opinion, the Commission stated that a compensated member of a state board,

who is also an employee of a public university, is prohibited from accepting compensation from the board for any time while the board member is performing services for the board if she is also paid by the university for the same time.

The final opinion determined that a township trustee, who is also Assistant Director for the Department of Transportation (ODOT), can accept campaign contributions from people who work for engineering firms that are doing or want to do business with ODOT, provided there is no bribery, fraud or other wrongdoing in connection with the campaign contribution. (A 1986 amendment to the Ethics Law created an exception to the conflict of interest laws which allows the receipt of campaign contributions under these circumstances).

In other business, the Commission reviewed Financial Disclosure statistics and complaint reports and received an update on Commission public outreach and communication efforts. Finally, in executive session, the Commission heard a confidential report on complaints and pending investigations concerning alleged violations of the Ethics Law and related statutes and litigation.