



ROBERT L. FARMER
CHAIRMAN

1324 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27699-1324
(919) 715-2071 FAX (919) 715-2059

PERRY Y. NEWSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Volume 13, Issue 3

Education: Local Officials & Public Servants

February 2010

ETHICS EDUCATION: PUBLIC SERVANTS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

In 2009, the North Carolina General Assembly passed House Bill 1452 (S.L. 2009-403), Local Government Code of Ethics. Included in this legislation is a requirement that all local governing board members attend ethics education covering laws and principles that govern conflicts of interest and ethics standards of conduct at the local government level. Education may be provided by the N. C. League of Municipalities, the N. C. Association of County Commissioners, the UNC School of Government, N.C. School Boards Association or other qualified sources of the board's choosing.

In some cases, local government officials may also be "public servants" covered by the State Government Ethics Act. For example, a county commissioner may also be a local community college board trustee. Therefore, as a county commissioner, he or she is subject to the local government ethics education requirement, and as a community college board of trustee member, he or she is also subject to the education requirements of the State Government Ethics Act.

1. Does attending a local government ethics education presentation count towards attending an ethics education presentation required by the State Government Ethics Act?

No. Attending a local government ethics education presentation does not count towards the mandatory State Government Ethics Act education requirement. All public servants are required to attend an ethics education presentation sponsored by the State Ethics Commission (i) within six (6) months of the person's appointment as a public servant and (ii) attend a refresher presentation at least every two (2) years thereafter.

2. Does attending a State Government Ethics Act education presentation count towards the local government ethics education requirement?

Probably not. While the State Ethics Commission does not make the determination of whether attending an ethics presentation sponsored by the Commission meets the requirements of another entity, presentations made by the State Ethics Commission are directed towards State officials, appointees, and employees who are subject to the State Government Ethics Act. Therefore, the Commission's presentations do not include information on conflicts of interest and ethical standards at the local government level.

3. Who should I contact if I have questions or need additional information?

For additional information regarding local government ethics, including ethics education, visit the School of Government's website at: <http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/ethics/index.php>.

For additional information regarding the State Government Ethics Act, including ethics education, visit the State Ethics Commission's website at: <http://www.ethicscommission.nc.gov/> or call (919) 715-2071.