

SUNSHINE LAW MEETING
MINUTES OF THE HAWAI'I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

STATE OF HAWAI'I

Date: January 21, 2026

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Hybrid meeting held via Zoom video and audio conference

Recorded video available at

https://ethics.hawaii.gov/category/commissionmeetings/comm_videos/

Public Meeting Location

Hawai'i State Ethics Commission Conference Room
1001 Bishop Street
American Savings Bank Tower, Suite 970
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Attendance: State Ethics Commission Members

Wesley F. Fong, Chair (in person)
Robert Hong, Commissioner (in person)
Cynthia Thielen, Commissioner (via Zoom)
Roderick Becker, Commissioner (in person)
Moya Gray, Commissioner (via Zoom)

State Ethics Commission Staff

Robert D. Harris, Executive Director (in person)
Bonita Y.M. Chang, Compliance Director (via Zoom)
Kee Campbell, Enforcement Director (via Zoom)
Jodi L. K. Yi, Staff Attorney (via Zoom)
Jared Elster, Investigator (via Zoom)
Barbara Gash, Investigatory Analyst (via Zoom)
Patrick Lui, Computer Specialist (via Zoom)
Melissa Vomvoris, Administrative Assistant (in person)

Guests and Members of the Public

Candace Park, Deputy Attorney General (via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER (0:05)

Chair Fong called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Chair Fong, Commissioners Hong and Becker attended in person. Commissioners Thielen and Gray participated via Zoom. All Commissioners participating remotely confirmed that no one else was present at their respective locations. Executive Director Harris reminded participants that the meeting was being recorded for the official record and would be posted online.

Executive Director Harris noted that Deputy Attorney Candace Park was present via Zoom and that there were no members of the public present or on Zoom.

Agenda Item No. I: Introduction of Commissioner Moya T. D. Gray (2:56)

Chair Fong congratulated and welcomed new commissioner, Moya Gray. Commissioner Gray introduced herself and gave a brief background of her history with government employment. Each Commissioner shared a brief background of themselves to Commissioner Gray.

Agenda Item No. II: Election of Officers for 2026 (6:59)

Chair Fong opened the floor for nominations for Officer positions. The Commission's administrative rules provide for the annual election of a Chair and Vice-Chair with terms commencing on January 1 of each year. However, the Commission had elected to defer elections until a new commissioner had been appointed.

Election of Chair

Commissioner Hong nominated Commissioner Fong for the position of Chair. As no further nominations were offered, the nominations were closed. Chair Fong then turned the gavel over to Commissioner Hong to conduct the roll-call vote. All Commissioners present (Fong, Thielen, Hong, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative, electing Commissioner Fong as Chair of the Hawai'i State Ethics Commission.

Election of Vice-Chair

Chair Fong opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair and nominated Commissioner Hong. As no further nominations were offered, the nominations were closed. All Commissioners present (Fong, Thielen, Hong, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative, electing Commissioner Hong as Vice-Chair of the Hawai'i State Ethics Commission.

Agenda Item No. III: Consideration and Approval of the Minutes of the November 19, 2025 Meeting (12:06)

Upon a motion by Commissioner Thielen, seconded by Commissioner Hong, the Commission approved the minutes of the November 19, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Gray was recused, and all other Commissioners present (Fong, Thielen, Hong, Becker,) voted in the affirmative.

Agenda Item No. IV: Consideration and Approval of the Sunshine Executive Session Minutes of the November 19, 2025 Meeting (12:48)

Upon a motion by Commissioner Thielen, seconded by Commissioner Becker, the Commission approved the executive session minutes of the November 19th meeting. Commissioner Gray was recused, and all other Commissioners present (Fong, Thielen, Hong, Becker,) voted in the affirmative.

Agenda Item No. V: Directors' Report (13:40)

1. Education & Disclosures – Report/Updates (13:56)

Compliance Director Bonita Chang provided an update on the ethics training statistics for 2025:

- Overall compliance – 97%
- Public board and commission members – 99% (as of December 31, 2025)
- State agencies – 93% of approximately 57,000 employees (based on aggregated agency data reported in December 2025)

The priority for 2026 is to update the self-guided training and the Commission's website to comply with the new federal ADA requirements. The deadline for compliance is April 2026.

Financial disclosure statements for legislators are due on February 2, 2026. Staff and attorneys have been responding to inquiries and assisting filers with reporting requirements.

Chair Fong congratulated staff on reaching such high percentages for ethics training compliance.

2. Guidance and Assignment Statistics – November and December 2025 (18:34)

Enforcement Director Kee Campbell presented the following year-end statistics:

- Complaints: 394 complaints were received and 392 were closed in 2025.

- Gift/Travel Requests: 445 requests were received with 447 advisory letters issued to inform requestors whether their trips were permissible or required reporting as a gift.
- System Enhancements: Ongoing improvements are being implemented to enhance statistical reporting capabilities.

3. Miscellaneous Office Projects/Updates (19:57)

Executive Director Harris reported that the Commission is currently operating under budget.

Harris also noted that the office recently experienced significant flooding caused by a broken water line, which affected most of the office, the adjacent offices, and two floors below. Building management responded promptly with remediation efforts to prevent mold growth. Staff worked closely with Risk Management throughout the recovery process.

Agenda Item No. VI: Discussion of Media Reports Concerning Ethics or the Ethics Commission Since the Last Meeting (27:01)

Executive Director Harris reported on several media articles:

- November 20, 2025, Citizens Portal article titled " [Committee reports reappointment of Sheldon Jim Ahn to the Ethics Commission out for adoption](#) ”
- November 24, 2025, Hawai‘i Free Press article titled “[Ethics: DeCoite, HECO busted](#)”
- November 27, 2025, Hawai‘i Free Press article titled “[Governor appoints Moya Gray to the Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission](#)”
- November 30, 2025, Civil Beat appointment of Moya Gray in article titled “[The Sunshine Blog: Reinforcements Are On The Way For Honolulu Police Commission](#)”
- December 5, 2025, KITV article titled “[Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission fines Sen. Awa for using government resources in a campaign video](#)”
- December 5, 2025, Honolulu Star-Advertiser “[Hawai‘i Ethics Commission fines state Sen. Brenton Awa](#)”
- December 7, 2025, Hawai‘i News Now article titled “[State senator decries fine for video violating campaign law](#)”
- December 24, 2025, Civil Beat article titled “[Who Are Hawai‘i’s Biggest Tax Delinquents? Search Here](#)”
- December 25, 2025, HBR article titled “[Meet these new faces on some of the state's prominent boards, commissions](#)”
- January 4, 2026, Civil Beat article titled “[For Cynthia Thielen, Decades Of Public Service Are 'Just The Right Thing To Do'](#)”
- January 4, 2026, Civil Beat article titled “[Hawai‘i’s Transparency Problem Isn’t Just About Secrecy](#)”
- January 4, 2026, Civil Beat article titled “ [The Sunshine Blog: An Ethics Complaint Against An Ethics Board](#)”

- January 16, 2026, Hawai‘i Free Press article titled "Applicants Wanted for State Ethics Commission"
- January 16, 2026, Civil Beat article by Michael Lilly titled " [The Maui County Board Of Ethics Has Been Transformed](#)"

Agenda Item No. VII: Summary and Discussion of the 2025 Council on Governmental Ethics Laws Conference (30:12)

Executive Director Harris notes that Hawai‘i is a founding member of the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL), an International Association of State and local agencies focused on promoting good governance.

Chair Fong described the conference as a rewarding opportunity to engage with other ethics commissions.

Commission Becker agreed, stating it highlighted Hawai‘i’s strong ethics code and rules and cited a session on procurement ethics as particularly valuable.

Enforcement Director Campbell emphasized COGEL’s usefulness for staying current with trends. He attended a panel on enforcement procedures and investigative planning and intends to explore ideas mentioned at the conference. He learned that other jurisdictions have adopted pre-employment restrictions.

Compliance Director Chang found the conference insightful, particularly a session titled “Staying the Course,” which addressed uncertainty surrounding democratic institutions.

Executive Director Harris echoed these comments, noting COGEL provides practical strategies from other organizations. He highlighted a session on enforcing fair treatment laws on social media and referenced a recent U.S. Supreme Court case requiring broader transparency for legislators’ private social media posts. Harris suggested developing a best practices document on this issue in the future.

Agenda Item No. VIII: Discussion of Possible Legislative Proposals within the Commission’s Jurisdiction (41:30)

Executive Director Harris informed the Commissioners that the House has not yet introduced the State Ethics Commission’s legislative package. However, the Senate has introduced the bills, which are identified as follows:

1. [SB2244 RELATING TO NEPOTISM](#)
2. [SB2245 RELATING TO REVOLVING DOOR RESTRICTIONS FOR STATE EMPLOYEES](#)
3. [SB2246 RELATING TO FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES](#)

4. [SB2247 RELATING TO POLITICAL FUNDRAISING BY EXECUTIVE BRANCH EMPLOYEES](#)
5. [SB2248 RELATING TO FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES](#)

Agenda Item IX: Consideration and Adoption of Legislative Delegation Policy (43:14)

Executive Director Harris presented a draft written policy to formalize staff authority to submit testimony on legislation that aligns with the Commission's existing policy. Based on the Commissioners' discussion at the November 19 meeting, the draft was amended to reflect the requested changes.

The Commissioners agreed with the amendments and expressed appreciation for clarifying the scope of authority while still allowing the Executive Director to advocate for bills the Commission supports.

Commissioner Hong moved to adopt the Legislative Delegation Policy. Seconded by Commissioner Gray. All Commissioners present (Fong, Thielen, Hong, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative.

Agenda Item No. X: Adjournment (47:03)

At approximately 9:49 a.m., Commissioner Hong moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Becker. All Commissioners present (Fong, Thielen, Hong, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 a.m.

Minutes approved on February 18, 2026.