

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

STATE OF HAWAI'I

Date: March 25, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Hybrid meeting held via Zoom video and audio conference

Recorded video available at

[https://ethics.hawaii.gov/category/commissionmeetings/comm\\_videos/](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, Vice Chair (via Zoom)  
Cynthia Thielen, Commissioner (via Zoom)  
Roderick Becker, Commissioner (in person)  
Moya Gray, Commissioner (in person)

State Ethics Commission Staff

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

Guests and Members of the Public

Chad Blair, Civil Beat reporter (via Zoom)  
Judith Mills Wong, League of Women Voters (via Zoom)  
Candace Park, Deputy Attorney General (via Zoom)  
Jason Barnhill, UH (via Zoom)  
Ann, UH (via Zoom)

**CALL TO ORDER (0:06)**

Chair Fong called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Chair Fong, Commissioners Becker and Gray, attended in person; Vice Chair Hong and Commissioner Thielen were present via Zoom, alone. Executive Director Harris noted the presence of staff on Zoom and reminded participants that the meeting was being recorded for the official record and would be posted online.

Executive Director Harris asked if any members of the public attending the meeting would like to identify themselves. Judith Mills-Wong, representing the League of Women Voters, identified herself as present on Zoom.

Deputy Attorney General Candace Park joined the meeting via Zoom at 10:15 a.m.

**Agenda Item No. I: Consideration and Approval of the Minutes of the February 18, 2026, Meeting (2:41)**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Thielen, seconded by Commissioner Gray, the Commission approved the minutes of the February 18, 2026, meeting. All Commissioners present (Fong, Hong, Thielen, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative.

**Agenda Item No. II: Directors' Report (3:35)**

**1. Education & Disclosures – Report/Updates (3:44)**

Compliance Director Bonita Chang provided the following update:

- **Financial Disclosure Season**  
Requests have been sent to agencies to obtain updates on employees and board members who are required to file. Ongoing support is being provided to assist filers with completing their financial disclosures. The annual filing deadline for continuing filers is Monday, June 1, 2026.
  
- **Lobbying Disclosures**  
The upcoming filing deadline for lobbying disclosures is Tuesday, April 2, 2026. Staff will also coordinate with our developer to implement the new procurement lobbying requirements in the lobbying reporting system, as well as make additional updates to the lobbying e-filing system and related components.

- **Website updates**

Staff is updating online forms and website content to meet new federal ADA requirements. The updated online complaint form will officially launch on April 1, along with a new landing page and FAQs. Work is also underway to convert existing PDF quick guides and flyers into ADA-compliant formats. Although these redesigns require significant time and resources, the goal is to improve the user experience and make information and services easier to access.

## **2. Guidance and Assignment Statistics – February 2026 (6:10)**

Enforcement Director Kee Campbell reported that a total of 41 complaints were opened for the month of February and 36 were closed.

Next month we will be providing an enhanced statistical report for the first quarter of 2026.

### **New Assignments:**

- 41 Complaints received
- 41 Gift/Travel requests for guidance
- 73 Attorney of the Day inquiries

### **Closed Assignments:**

- 36 Complaints closed
- 39 Gift/Travel guidance letters sent
- 62 Attorney of the Day inquiries

## **3. Miscellaneous Office Projects/Updates (7:17)**

Executive Director Harris reported that he, Enforcement Director Campbell, and Compliance Director Chang are actively involved with COGEL, the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws, by participating in training initiatives and preparing proposals for next year's conference. The goal is to shift from general ethics updates to more tailored training sessions for both new and advanced participants. The ideas have been well received, though this may also result in being asked to help implement some of the recommended changes. The next conference is scheduled for early December in Denver, Colorado.

### **Agenda Item No. III: Discussion of Media Reports Concerning Ethics or the Ethics Commission Since the Last Meeting (9:44)**

Executive Director Harris reported on several media articles:

- Feb. 20, 2026, Hoodline - Ethics rulings shift the ground beneath the debate - <https://hoodline.com/2026/02/capitol-showdown-as-hawaii-senators-spar-with-principals-over-school-power-shakeup/>

- Feb. 22, 2026, Star Advertiser - Editorial: Push opportunity to halt corruption <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2026/02/22/editorial/our-view/editorial-push-opportunity-to-halt-corruption/>
- Feb. 22, 2026, Civil Beat - The Sunshine Blog: Getting Serious About The Silly Season <https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/02/the-sunshine-blog-getting-serious-about-the-silly-season/>
- Feb. 23, 2026, Gov Press Release – Governor Green appoints Daniel Gluck as Associate Judge for Intermediate Court of Appeals. <https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/office-of-the-governor-news-release-governor-green-appoints-daniel-gluck-to-intermediate-court-of-appeals/>
- Feb. 25, 2026, Hawaii Free Press – Ethics in Hawaii: Hire your Family and Keep Their Frequent Flyer Miles. <https://www.hawaiifreepress.com/Articles-Main/ID/46807/Ethics-in-Hawaii-Hire-your-Family-and-Keep-Their-Frequent-Flyer-Miles>
- Mar. 8, 2026, Civil Beat - The Most Influential People At The State Capitol Are Out In The Hallway. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/03/the-most-influential-people-at-the-state-capitol-are-out-in-the-hallway/>
- Mar. 13, 2026, Maui Now - House Judiciary Committee’s ‘Good Government’ bills cross over to the Senate <https://mauinow.com/2026/03/13/house-judiciary-committees-good-government-bills-cross-over-to-the-senate/>
- Mar. 15, 2026, Civil Beat - The Sun Is Still Shining For Key Reform Bills Halfway Through Session <https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/03/the-sun-is-still-shining-for-key-reform-bills-halfway-through-session/>
- Mar. 22, 2026, Civil Beat - That Dark Cloud Over The Legislature? This Bill Would Make It Even Darker <https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/03/that-dark-cloud-over-the-legislature-this-bill-would-make-it-even-darker/>

**Agenda Item No. IV: 2026 Legislative Matters (12:29)**

Executive Director Harris provided an overview of the ethics-related bills currently being heard or scheduled for hearings at the legislature, noting HB2240, which appropriates funds for the Ethics Commission, has been signed by the Governor as Act 1.

Director Harris provided an update on HB1873, noting the recent media attention and his op-ed regarding the bill. The bill would remove the UH Board of Regents from public financial disclosure requirements and alter the Sunshine Law’s application to the Board. The Commission has taken a strong position against, emphasizing that more than 40 states

require public financial disclosures and that many major universities, such as the University of California, the University of Michigan, and the University of Washington, have similar requirements. Director Harris stressed that these disclosures are a standard ethics safeguard and should be maintained.

Commissioners briefly discussed the history and background of the policy decision of the legislature's requirement for certain boards and commissions to file publicly.

**Agenda Item No. V: Evaluation of Executive Director & General Counsel Robert D. Harris (21:27)**

Executive Director Harris discussed the annual evaluation process, noting it follows the same approach as last year. Any discussion about evaluation questions or procedures would occur publicly, while discussions involving legal rights, responsibilities, or privileges may be held in executive session with counsel. Deputy Attorney General Candace Park and Compliance Director Bonita Chang were present to provide legal guidance. Director Harris noted he, along with other nonessential participants, would be excused if the Commission chooses to enter executive session.

**RECESS OF SUNSHINE LAW MEETING AND CONVENING OF EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At approximately 10:26 a.m. Chair Fong requested a motion to recess the public meeting and convene in executive session pursuant to Haw. Rev. Stat. ("HRS") § 92-5(a)(2) to discuss matters relating to the evaluation of an employee where consideration of matters affecting privacy will be involved, and/or HRS § 92-5(a)(4) to consult with the Commission's attorneys and/or the Department of Attorney General on questions and issues pertaining to the board's powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities regarding the process for the Evaluation of Executive Director & General Counsel Robert D. Harris. Moved by Commissioner Gray and seconded by Vice Chair Hong. All Commissioners present (Fong, Hong, Thielen, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative.

Executive Director Harris, staff, and all members of the public left the conference room or were excused to the Zoom waiting room. The Commission met in executive session with Deputy Attorney General Candace Park and Compliance Director Bonita Chang to obtain legal advice regarding the process for the Evaluation of the Executive Director.

**ADJOURNMENT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION AND RECONVENING OF SUNSHINE LAW MEETING**

At approximately 11:37 a.m., the Commission reconvened the Sunshine Law Meeting.

The Commission reconvened in open session after a productive executive session with counsel to review the status of litigation and legal obligations under the Sunshine Law related to the Executive Director's annual evaluation. The discussion focused on Sunshine

Law requirements and applicable exceptions under HRS 92-5(a)(2). The Commission agreed to proceed with the evaluation of Executive Director Robert Harris.

Compliance Director Bonita Chang outlined the proposed evaluation process, which includes reviewing the annual report, the Executive Director's self-evaluation, a commissioner survey, and a potential staff survey. The proposed timeline includes distributing the self-evaluation and commissioner survey on March 30, with responses due April 6, and compiling results for Commission discussion on April 15.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Becker, seconded by Commissioner Gray, the Commission approved the process and timeline as outlined by Compliance Director Chang. All Commissioners present (Fong, Hong, Thielen, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative.

**Agenda Item No. VI: Adjournment (28:58)**

At approximately 11:38 a.m., Commission Becker moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Thielen. All Commissioners present (Fong, Hong, Thielen, Becker, and Gray) voted in the affirmative.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

Minutes approved on April 15, 2026.