

# FPPC Overview for Los Angeles County Governance Reform Task Force Meeting October 8, 2025



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# Mission of the Fair Political Practices Commission

To promote the integrity of state and local government in  
California through fair, impartial interpretation and  
enforcement of political campaign, lobbying and conflict of  
interest laws

The mission of the Enforcement Division of the Fair Political Practices  
Commission is to fairly, effectively, and efficiently enforce the provisions of the  
Political Reform Act



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# Questions Presented

## Oversight & Enforcement:

- o How does the FPPC monitor, enforce, and manage oversight processes?
- Responsibility for Compliance:
  - o Who ultimately bears responsibility for ensuring compliance?
- Tools for Compliance:
  - o Most effective mechanisms (disclosure systems, audits, penalties, training, etc.).
- Balancing Enforcement & Education:
  - o How does the FPPC encourage compliance while also holding violators accountable?
- Staffing & Resources:
  - o What levels are necessary for effective monitoring and enforcement?



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# The Chair and Commissioners

Commissioner  
Elsa Ortiz



Commissioner  
E. Dotson Wilson



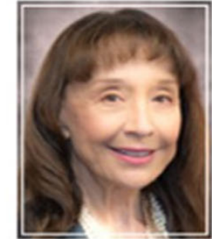
Chair  
Adam E. Silver



Commissioner  
Alf W. Brandt



Commissioner  
Charlene Zettel



- Five members appointed for staggered four-year terms
- Non-partisan - No more than 3 Commissioners may be from the same political party
- The Chair and one other are appointed by the Governor, then one each appointed by the State Controller, Secretary of State and the Attorney General
- The Chair is the only salaried, full-time member of the Commission



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# Commission Duties

- Approve settlements and administrative decisions for violations of the Act and potentially conduct administrative hearings
- Adopt, amend or rescind regulations to carry out the purposes of the Act
- Issue formal opinions interpreting the Act upon the request of concerned parties
- Approve forms for required reports, statements, notices and other documents
- Sponsor and take positions on legislation concerning the Act
- Provides oversight function



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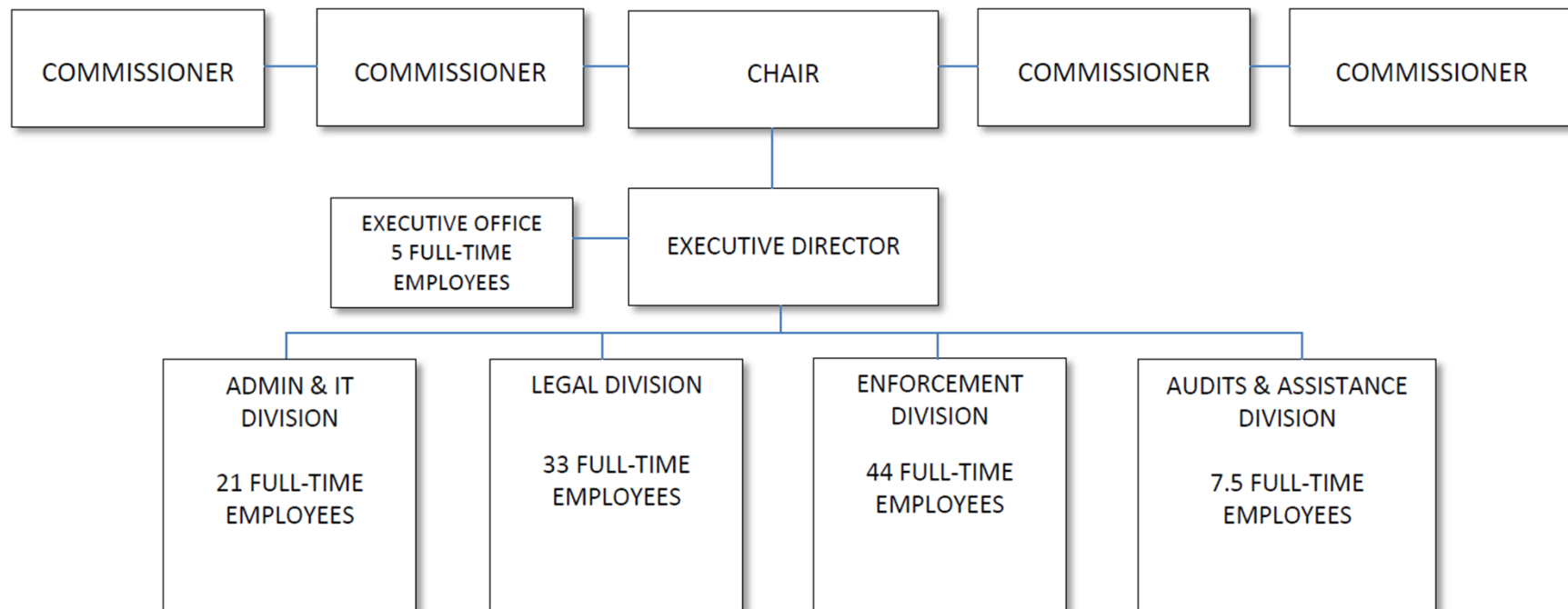
# FPPC Structure

- The FPPC is an independent executive branch agency that has approximately 100 staff members.
- 2025/26 Fiscal year budget is \$19,290,000, 86% is for salaries and benefits
- Under the joint leadership of the Chair and the Executive Director, the FPPC staff is organized into four divisions:
  - Legal
  - Enforcement
  - Administration and Technology
  - Audits and Assistance





## FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION



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# FPPC Legal Division Duties

- Advises the Commission and agency staff on legal matters
- Advises officials and others engaged in the political process on compliance with the Political Reform Act by letter, email, and telephone
- Drafts regulations interpreting the Act
- Assists Leg Counsel with drafting and analyzing legislation concerning the Act
- Reviews and advises on conflict-of-interest codes for other agencies
- Prepares informational material
- Provides trainings and public outreach.
- Established and maintains the PREP program





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# FPPC Educational Programs and Advice

- Extensive training and outreach through workshops, webinars, video tutorials, and other training materials to help individuals better understand their obligations under the Political Reform Act. In 2024, 52 webinars and 7 workshops conducted. 7,780 total views of FPPC video tutorials
- Develops the forms and manuals used for financial disclosures and provides telephone advice for filers, their staff, and filing officers throughout the state
- Provides advice to public officials. In 2024, 9,141 emails providing advice on compliance with the Act, 94 advice letters researched and authored, and 7,740 telephone calls providing technical assistance.



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# FPPC Audits and Assistance Division

## Duties

- Created as its own Division in 2021
- Performs mandatory audits where Franchise Tax Board is conflicted out including:
  - Candidates for state controller, state Board of Equalization, and the Board of Administration of the Public Employees' Retirement System
- Selects via draw mandatory audits
- FPPC also conducts discretionary audits



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# FPPC Administration and Information

## Technology Division Duties

- Statements of Economic Interests (SEI) - The SEI Unit manages the electronic filing of approximately 25,000 statements of economic interests received by the Commission each year. It also acts as both the filing officer and filing official for employees of the Senate and Assembly.
- Personnel, Recruitment, Budgeting, Employee Benefits, Grievances, Equal Employment Opportunity, Space Management, Contracts and Procurement, and travel.
- Information technology – Network maintenance and security, FPPC website design and maintenance, technical support, and PC hardware and software for agency employees. Integration of new technologies.



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# FPPC Enforcement Division Duties

- Investigates potential violations of the Act. Enforcement cases are initiated by:
  - Complaints (Sworn, Non-sworn or Anonymous)
  - FPPC and filing officer referrals
  - Audits and audit referrals
  - Media reports
  - Staff-initiated investigations
  - Tips
  - Referrals from law enforcement/other agencies
- Prosecutes violations of the Act through administrative and civil actions
- Provides expertise and training to law enforcement and other ethics agencies



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# FPPC Enforcement

- “In enacting the Political Reform Act, the people find and declare that previously laws regulating political practices have suffered from inadequate enforcement by state and local authorities.” (Gov’t Code § 81001(h))
- “Adequate enforcement mechanisms should be provided to public officials and private citizens in order that the Political Reform Act will be vigorously enforced.” (Gov’t Code § 81002(f))



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# FPPC Enforcement Duty to Investigate

- “Upon the sworn complaint of any person or on its own initiative, the Commission shall investigate possible violations of this title relating to any agency, official, election, lobbyist or legislative or administrative action.” (Gov’t Code § 83115)
- “...the Commission may make investigations and audits with respect to any reports or statements required by this title.” (Gov’t Code § 90003)



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# FPPC Administrative Prosecutions

- Gov't Code § 11180 authorizes investigations and prosecutions concerning “all matters relating to the business activities and subjects under the jurisdiction of the department” including “violations of any law.”
- Gov't Code § 11181 provides that in connection with investigations, the department head may “issue subpoenas for the . . . production of papers, books, accounts, documents . . . and testimony in an inquiry, investigation, hearing or proceeding pertinent or material thereto in any part of the state.”
- FPPC has administrative subpoena power through this section and from within the Act itself (Gov't Code § 83118)



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# What the FPPC Enforces

- Financial Reporting by Public Officials (SEIs)
- Conflicts-of-Interest for Public Officials (GC 87100 & 1090)
- Gifts and Honoraria
- Post-Governmental Employment (State & Local)
- Mass Mailings & Advertising Disclosure
- Campaign Finance and Reporting
- State Lobbying





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# FPPC Intake Process

- All complaints and referrals go through the intake process to determine whether the Enforcement Division should open a case
- The FPPC Intake Unit: analysts and FPPC attorneys supervised by one of two Assistant Chiefs of Enforcement
- In determining whether to open a case, intake staff review the complaint or referral, any additional information provided by the complainant, publicly available information, and any material submitted by the subject of a complaint.
- If the Intake staff determines sufficient evidence is present to suggest a violation may have occurred then a case is opened



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# FPPC Regulation § 18360

- Requirements for Complaints and Referrals Filed with the FPPC. A complaint or referral must:
    - (A) Be filed via the Electronic Complaint System available on the FPPC's website.
    - (B) Identify the person(s) who allegedly violated the Act (if known) and the specific provision(s) of the Act allegedly violated.
    - (C) Describe with as much particularity as possible the facts constituting each alleged violation.
    - (D) State the facts that support the complainant's belief that a person has violated the Act and include any documents or other evidence supporting this conclusion.
    - (E) Include or describe with as much particularity as possible evidence or means of obtaining evidence in support of the complaint.
    - (F) Include the name and current contact information of any potential witness (if known).
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# Prosecutions under the Political Reform Act

- Most violations of the Act can be prosecuted two ways:
  - Administrative
  - Civil
- Some violations can also be prosecuted criminally but the violation must knowingly or willfully violate Act (Gov't Code § 91000)
  - Violations are misdemeanors
  - Statute of Limitations – 4 years
  - If convicted, can't be candidate or lobbyist for four years (can be waived)



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# Types of Resolutions

- **No Action closure letter** – If there is insufficient evidence to prosecute, further information would not be helpful to move forward, the allegation has been disproven, the potential violations lack sufficient public harm to pursue, includes cases resolved through the FPPC's PREP program
- **Advisory letter**– If there is insufficient evidence to prosecute a case but the person complained about appears to need information about the Act to ensure future compliance
- **Warning letter**– If a violation of the Act is found but the seriousness of the offense is low, public harm is minimal, or other mitigation is found so a monetary penalty is not warranted
- **Stipulation** – negotiated settlement – Streamline or Mainline
- **Default judgment**– Respondent does not participate in settlement or administrative hearing process
- **Administrative Law Judge Decision**– The decision is issued after an administrative hearing conducted pursuant to the Admin Procedures Act. Commission approves final outcomes.
- **Civil action**– Judgment issued by a superior court



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# FPPC Administrative Prosecutions

- Most common type of FPPC action
- Can seek penalties of up to \$5,000 per violation
- More for certain advertising violations
- Statute of Limitations – 5 years
- Can be tolled with a PC Report, tolling agreement, or if intent to conceal
- Applicable to all violations of Act
- Faster and more efficient resolution than civil court



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# Mainline and Streamline Resolutions

- Mainline Stipulation
  - Admission of the violations
  - Agreement on relevant facts
  - Can require amendment/filing for disclosure
  - Public disclosure through a narrative
  - Monetary fine, typically higher penalties, full payment required prior to notice on agenda
  - Noticed and approved by the Commission
- Streamline Settlement
  - Admission of the violations
  - Respondents must sign a standardized form and staff applies standardized criteria
  - Full payment required prior to notice on agenda
  - Can require amendment/filing for disclosure



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# Political Reform Education Program (PREP)

- The purpose of PREP is to allow for the education of Respondents who have little or no experience with the Act and commit minor violations, in lieu of monetary penalties. Learners who complete PREP, which is similar to traffic school, have their Enforcement cases closed with No Action Letters, leaving no mark on their record.
- On June 6, 2022, we launched the first PREP course, the Statement of Economic Interests Course.
- 2022 – 43 SEI completions
- 2023 – 92 SEI completions
- In 2024, we expanded the program to other areas – Campaign and Advertisement Disclosure.  
2024 – 260 completions, including 245 SEI, 12 Campaign, and 3 Advertisement



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# Civil Prosecutions under the Political Reform Act

- Can be initiated by FPPC, private citizens, Attorney General or District Attorneys (Gov't Code § 91001)
- FPPC – State or any State agency, or local with written DA permission
- Attorney General – FPPC only
- District Attorneys – Any other agency
- Private Citizens – Must request action from DA, FPPC or AG first.
- 120 days to respond.





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# Case, Complaints and Referrals Last Year

**Year**

2024

**Complaints Received**

1,456

**Referrals Received**

1,393

**Total Complaint and Referrals Received**

2,849

**Cases Opened**

1,403

**Cases closed**

1,536

**Total fines imposed**

\$802,238



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# Revisiting the Questions Presented

## Oversight & Enforcement:

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# Questions?

