

# STATUS OF LOCAL ETHICS POLICIES IN CONNECTICUT

*Presented by:*

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**THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government – your partners in governing Connecticut.

*Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population.*

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# **CCM Efforts: Ethics Education**

- 33 workshops in the last 8 years
- 995 workshop attendees
- Dedicated “ethics” section on CCM’s website, with a searchable database [E](#)
- Information kit for municipalities - *Ethics and Conflicts of Interest*

# **CCM Efforts: Ethics Education**

- “Ethical Dilemmas” article each issue of our association publication *Connecticut Towns and Cities*
- Compiled and published a book on ethical dilemmas
- Upon request, conduct dedicated ethics forums in individual communities

# Survey of Municipalities

CCM began surveying *all* municipalities  
in June 2008

- Intent of Survey
  - Whether municipalities did or did not have an ethics policy in place
  - The content of such policy
  - Existence of any complaints
  - Update our searchable database of local ethics policies

# **Results of 2008 Survey**

## **Of those with an ethics policy in place:**

- **71%**, include a Conflict of Interest policy
- **Half** have had no ethics complaints filed in the last 12 months
- **75%** have a formal process for individuals to obtain guidance or opinions on ethics issues

# Comparison to 2005 Survey

## **Municipalities with:**

- Ethics policies **↑35%**
- Conflict of Interest policy **↑58%**
- Disclosure of Conflict of Interest **↑27%**
- Process for addressing complaints **↑14%**
- Ethics Commission or Board **↑38%**

# Comparison to 2002 Survey

## **Municipalities with:**

- Ethics policies **↑97%**
- Conflict of Interest policy **↑186%**
- Ethics Commission or Board **↑112%**

*\* Disclosure of conflict of interest and process for addressing complaints were not questions included in the 2002 survey.*



# CCM – Past Advocacy

CCM has continually advocated that we can support requiring municipalities to:

- Adopt an ethics policy
- Establish a mechanism for addressing allegations of unethical behavior
- Report to the State, by a date certain, on what they implemented in response - or already had in place

# CCM – Cannot Support

CCM has also always been clear that we *cannot support*:

- One-size-fits-all approach to local ethics policies
- A blanket requirement for local officials and/or volunteers to disclose their financial interests.
- A mandated mechanism that provides the Office of State Ethics with investigative and hearing authority over local ethics issues

# Local Accountability

Municipal officials are the *most accessible* officials in our federal, state, and local systems of government – **They are always local.**

- Shop at the local grocery stores
- Work-out at the local gym
- Bring their kids to the local schools
- Utilize the same local services

*Local officials are always in the community!*

# Considerations

- Unfunded mandates are having a significant impact on local property-tax dollars
  - Cost factors of creating and implementing an ethics code:
    - Attorney Fees
    - Public Notice
    - Referendum and/or town meeting

# Considerations

- One-size-fits all approach does not work
  - Municipalities vary greatly in size, with populations ranging from 693 to 140,000
  - Local governments vary in their structure
  - Constituencies of local governments vary in their priorities
  - Size and scope of communities varies greatly
  - What works in one community may not be as effective, or appropriate, in another

# Considerations

- Municipalities rely on volunteerism
  - Local boards and commissions
  - AND*
  - Elected officials

Mandating such things as *financial interest disclosure* - or - disallowing local officials/volunteers/employees from conducting their own business before or with the town government, *could put a chilling effect on residents wanting to serve.*

# Closing

- The initial thrust behind proposed ethics mandates were overreactions to a few isolated incidents, *all of which were already governed by local ethics codes and commissions* – **just as strong as the state code.**
  - These incidents were criminal in nature and were dealt with as such.

# Closing

- At the same time, the state had similar incidents – *all of which were governed by the state code of ethics.*
  - Again, these incidents were criminal in nature and were dealt with as such.



# Closing

The results of the survey, shows steady increases in the numbers of municipalities implementing local ethics policies...

→ Clearly indicates that no mandate is needed.

# CCM - CONNECTICUT'S STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS AND CITIES



The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of cities and towns. CCM represents municipalities at the General Assembly, before the state executive branch and regulatory agencies, and in the courts. CCM provides member cities and towns with a wide array of other services, including management assistance, individualized inquiry service, assistance in municipal labor relations, technical assistance and training, policy development, research and analysis, publications, information programs, and service programs such as workers' compensation, liability-automobile-property insurance, risk management, and energy cost-containment. Federal representation is provided by CCM in conjunction with the National League of Cities. CCM was founded in 1966.

CCM is governed by a Board of Directors, elected by the member municipalities, with due consideration given to geographical representation, municipalities of different sizes, and a balance of political parties. Numerous committees of municipal officials participate in the development of CCM policy and programs. CCM has offices in New Haven (the headquarters) and in Hartford.

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