

Amendment 5 to CB 120978 Code of Ethics

Sponsor: Councilmember Hollingsworth

Clarifying and enhancing the role of the SEEC and CAO in advising Councilmembers regarding the application of relevant legal and ethics standards to legislative matters.

Effect: This amendment concerns the legal and ethical advisory support needed for elected officials in the performance of their legislative duties. The amendment would clarify and enhance the role that the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) and City Attorney's Office play to advise elected officials regarding the application of relevant legal and ethics standards to legislative matters.

2. Amend CB 120978 to include an additional WHEREAS Clause as follows:

WHEREAS, the Executive Director relayed two findings in support of amending the Code of Ethics to allow elected officials to participate in legislative matters after disclosure of a financial interest: (1) the public nature of the legislative process; and (2) the ability of voters to act upon the voting record of their elected officials; and

WHEREAS, Seattle Municipal Code Section 4.16.085 authorizes the Executive Director and Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) to offer advisory opinions but only concerns the effect of an advisory opinion on enforcement of the ethics code. Clarifying and enhancing the role of the SEEC and City Attorney's Office in advising elected officials of the legal and ethical standards will strengthen public trust in elected officials and ensure that ethical standards are followed for legislative matters; and

WHEREAS, this bill does not permit elected officials to participate in quasi-judicial proceedings in which they have a financial interest or participate in an executive function in which they have a financial interest; NOW, THEREFORE,

3. Amend CB 120978 to include a new section as follows, renumbering subsequent sections:

Section 3. Elected officials are encouraged to seek informal opinions regarding the application of relevant legal and ethics standards to their participation in legislative matters. When an elected official seeks an informal written opinion of the Executive Director of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC), such an opinion shall be provided within five business days of the request. The elected official may also solicit collective feedback of the SEEC regarding an ethical standard's application to a legislative matter and the SEEC shall provide an opportunity for the elected official to attend a special meeting called for this purpose. Thereafter, the SEEC shall provide its written feedback within five business days of the special meeting. The City Attorney's Office shall be available to elected officials to discuss the legal and ethical standards for elected officials in their consideration of legislative matters and shall provide timely written legal advice on request.