

ETHICS COMMISSION  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**CITY ETHICS COMMISSION PUSHES BILLS FOR GOVERNMENT  
ACCOUNTABILITY – YOU CAN TOO**

The Honolulu Ethics Commission urges everyone who is interested in improving the integrity of government officials to support two Bills before the City Council on Tuesday May 1.

Bill 40 requires ethics training for all City employees. Bill 39 strengthens the annual financial disclosure requirements for city officials.

“Ethics training for all City employees is the biggest step the Council can take to prevent unethical conduct from occurring,” explained Charles W. Totto, the Commission’s Executive Director and Legal Counsel.

“It is far better to prevent unethical conduct from occurring than to punish it after it occurs. Once the ethics violation occurs, the damage is already done and the public loses that much more confidence in the integrity of government,” added Totto. The current program requires mandatory ethics training for each elected official, supervisor, manager, and board and commission member. That is about 2,000 officials that are trained every 2 years. The expanded program would encompass nearly 10,000 workers total. Totto noted, “Over the course of my 12 years with the City, I have found that the vast majority of City employees are honest and want to do the right thing. For them, ethics training gives them the guidelines so they can maintain the public trust. But, in any large group of government employees, there are a few who try to take advantage of taxpayers. For this group, ethics training puts them on notice that unlawful conduct will be investigated and violators disciplined.”

The financial disclosure bill shuts loopholes in the reporting law. “This bill will put the burden on the official to file complete, accurate disclosures by the deadline or face financial penalties,” said Totto. The need to strengthen this law was

prompted when the Commission investigated Rod Tam's financial disclosures and found 39 reporting violations, but could not impose civil fines for these violations. That was because, under the current law, there is no penalty for a filer to file a complete disclosure unless the Commission first advises the filer that the disclosure is incorrect or incomplete. The Commission can only fine the official if he or she fails to file a corrected disclosure. In addition, the bill clarifies the type of financial information that must be disclosed and expands disclosure of financial interests from an employee's spouse and dependents to include the employee's domestic partner and household members to reflect contemporary living arrangements.

Each year, the Commission conducts ethics training for about 1,000 to 2,000 city personnel; responds to about 350 requests for advice; and, investigates nearly 80 misconduct cases. Approximately 600 city officers and employees are required to file financial disclosure statements.

The link to the bills and to submit testimony is:  
<http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-124753/050112AGENDA.htm>.

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