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MAYOR EMANUEL INTRODUCES MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN ETHICS ORDINANCE

Proposed Amendments Will Incorporate Ethics Reform Task Force's Initial Recommendations With a Focus on Strengthening the Gift Ban and Enhancing Regulation

Mayor Emanuel introduced a measure to strengthen the City of Chicago's ethics ordinance by implementing the first set of recommendations from the Ethics Reform Task Force. Four months ago, Mayor Emanuel charged the members of the Ethics Reform Task Force to review the current ordinance, study best practices nationally, engage local experts and recommend reforms to ensure that City officials and employees are held to the highest ethical standards.

The proposed amendments would strengthen the gift ban and rules for financial disclosures, eliminate honoraria, add a "reverse revolving door" restriction, add a whistleblower protection for reporting misconduct, penalize Political Action Committees (PACs) for knowingly accepting improper campaign contributions and increase penalties for violations of the ethics ordinance.

In addition, for the first time, the ordinance will include a code of conduct, which will create a culture of ethical conduct by outlining the behavior expected of all City employees and officials. The code of conduct emphasizes that all City employees must serve the taxpayers of the City as their first priority.

"Since my first hour in office, we have been enhancing the City's ethics rules to ensure that every government employee is acting in the best interest of taxpayers, not for their own personal gain," said Mayor Emanuel. "The amendments introduced today adopt all of the recommendations made by the Ethics Reform Task Force and will help create a culture of ethics and accountability throughout City government."



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The Ethics Reform Task Force was formed by Mayor Emanuel in December 2011 to review the City's ethics ordinance and recommend actions to strengthen the ordinance and increase accountability, oversight and transparency throughout City government. The Task Force is chaired by Cynthia Canary and includes Sergio Acosta, Alderman Will Burns and Dawn Clark Netsch.

"The Task Force researched best ethics practices of cities and states," said Alderman Will Burns, a member of the Ethics Reform Task Force and sponsor of the ordinance. "We spent hours talking to experts, practitioners, and Chicago residents. The ordinance creates clear bright lines for ethical behavior for city employees and officials."

"The Task Force believes that true change will come from creating a positive ethical culture and impacting public perceptions about Chicago," said Cynthia Canary, Chair, Ethics Reform Task Force. "The first step is the ordinance being introduced today, which addresses training and education, as well as prohibited gifts and financial conflicts of interest. We believe that it will lead to a clearer and stronger set of standards and rules to guide the behavior of City employees and affiliates. We look forward to continuing our ambitious agenda in the second part of report, to be issued later this summer."

The Task Force submitted Part I recommendations on April 30. The Task Force's Part II recommendations, which will be released in late July, will center on the relationship between, and the key responsibilities of, Chicago's ethics institutions in an effort to clarify and streamline the ethics process. Part II will include a comprehensive look at the organization, process and powers of these institutions, as well as recommendations regarding lobbying.

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