

ATLANTA ETHICS

In Action



2021 FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE:

Atlanta E-File System Revamp

The Ethics Division is committed to improving the financial disclosure process and experience, and we contracted with EasyVote Solutions, a software-based technology company, to develop and update the Ethics electronic filing system.

Our goal was to develop a simplified and efficient process for city officials and employees who are required to file the annual City Financial Disclosure Statement. However, we were met with different challenges along the way, some we anticipated with the deployment of a new system, and others we did not.

As to be expected, navigating the new EasyVote system came with a few challenges such as teaching filers how to use the new system. Other issues we faced surrounded the new technology, where we faced some difficulties with setting up filer accounts along with other minor troubleshooting issues.

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We also faced challenges assisting filers who routinely received in person assistance. We were unable to provide in person assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the majority of city employees working from home. Despite these challenges—some old, some new—at the end of this filing season, our efforts were met with positive results. The total number of filers for 2021 was 3,068 with 87% of those individuals filing on time.

During the financial disclosure season, our office received two common questions: “What is this?” and “Why do I have to file?” Common misconceptions are that the disclosure asks for personal financial or tax information, which, we assure is not the case. The statement does not require disclosure of the amount of outside income received or the value of any assets.

The City's Ethics Code identifies **24 categories of filers** who must file an annual city financial disclosure statement and publicly disclose potential conflicts of interest with their city position if the job description or actual duties present a significant risk of a potential conflict of interest under the Code of Ethics. It is important to us that we take the time to educate officials and employees on why they must file, and the importance of doing so correctly and timely.

Our partnerships with liaisons from city departments, boards and commissions continue to be a great success. The liaisons play a key role in assisting us, ensuring that officials and employees are filing on time and communicating with our office as needed.

Notably, we cannot forget all the hard work of the Ethics staff during a tough filing season, operating through a pandemic for the second year in a row. As the saying goes, “Teamwork makes the dream work!” In the face of challenges, our team worked tirelessly throughout this period to quickly and efficiently assist filers, and ensure all statements were completely and timely filed.

Our assistance included using Microsoft Teams, Zoom meetings, FaceTime calls, and even answering late, after-hour email requests from filers seeking help in filing their statements.

We were available to offer timely assistance for each request received, ensuring every person felt fully supported during the filing process.

Visit the links below for more information about the financial disclosure process and the e-file system.

<https://www.atlantaethics.org/financial-disclosure-7/who-is-required-to-file>
<https://www.atlantaethics.org/financial-disclosure-7/e-filing-faq>

ETHICAL CHALLENGES WITH EXTRA JOBS IN A REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

We made it through the first year of remote working during the pandemic, and not without our share of challenges. Historically, government employees have not worked remotely and we all had to quickly adjust to this new virtual world and days filled with virtual meetings. The virtual workspace has also raised some ethical concerns: remote employees with extra jobs.

Our Ethics Code does not prohibit employees from taking extra jobs as long as they do not use “city property, vehicles, equipment, labor, or services” for their personal benefit or to benefit any other person. Sounds pretty simple right? Not necessarily so. Let’s look at a few examples.

Gary is a city engineer and works remotely on a regular, day shift. He decides to drive UBER during the pandemic to make extra

money and interact with people because he is bored being home all the time. However, he wants to drive for UBER in the morning and late afternoon and stagger his city work hours in between or work later that night.

Lisa is a city administrative analyst and works a day shift remotely, from 8:30 to 5pm.



A popular downtown hotel is short staffed due to COVID, and she applies for a security position that requires her to work overnight from 11pm to 6am. Lisa plans to sleep in the evenings in between both jobs.

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The municipal election year is in full swing and Marcus wants to work on a city campaign. Marcus is a firefighter and routinely works a 24-hour shift with two off-days, depending on the week. He plans to work on the campaign on both of his off days.

Which of these scenarios could be problematic and why? From an ethics standpoint, Marcus' request appears to comply with our ethics rules. He works a 24-hour shift and wants to work on the campaign on his off days. On the other hand, the other two examples are not so simple.

Gary is required to work his city work hours and "staggering" his time to work for UBER is problematic.

He can drive for UBER but needs to do so after his city work shift ends.

Lisa's proposed extra job also raises a red flag as she will be essentially working two full-time jobs, to the potential detriment of her city job. When will she sleep or rest and how effective will she be after working overnight? Lisa will need to reduce her hours for the hotel or she cannot accept the job.

In summary, whether we are working remotely or not, extra jobs must be vetted carefully to ensure compliance with our ethics rules. When in doubt, contact the **Department of Human Resources** and the **Ethics Division**.



Reporting Misconduct in the City of Atlanta

Observing and reporting employee misconduct while working remotely may not seem as obvious as it is while working onsite. After all, if people are not in the office, they should not be doing anything unethical, right? Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Ethical misconduct and fraud can happen even in a remote workplace, and the opportunity to do so, rationalizing why it happens, as well as the pressure to behave improperly, remain present.

If you notice anyone engaging in ethical misconduct or fraud, misusing a city position or city funds or resources, it is important that you call the **Integrity Hotline** at **1-800-884-0911**. The complaints are sent directly to the **Office of the Inspector General** and thoroughly reviewed by the **Ethics and Compliance Divisions**. If you are not comfortable providing your name, you can file an anonymous complaint and your call will be confidential. You can also visit www.atlantaga.ethicspoint.com to file a complaint online. The site is confidential and secure. We want to hear from you, and we take all complaints seriously.



INTEGRITY HOTLINE

Special Announcements

NEW E-LEARNING COURSE COMING!!!

NEW STAFF MEMBER!!!

- Ray Robinson is a Program Manager with over 20 years of experience in the IT and technology field. We are extremely thrilled to have him on board as we continue to expand our program.

THE 2021 CITY OF ATLANTA MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE UPON US!

The City's Code of Ethics bans the use of city property for private advantage. To assist elected officials, employees, and candidates for municipal office, the Ethics Division has established guidelines which apply to the use of city property during campaigns.

Below are some key reminders to consider as the campaign season begins. We also strongly encourage you to review the **Elections Advisory** by [clicking here](#).

City officials and employees may not use city computers, phones, copiers, vehicles, or staff to promote a candidacy of any individual running for elective office.

City employees may not endorse candidates, participate in political advertisements, or engage in political activity while on city time, wearing an official uniform, or using a city vehicle.

City officials may not campaign, distribute, or post political campaign literature in a city building or on a city vehicle.

City property may be used for political forums (such as town halls or debates) when the forum is open to all candidates in a specific race and the general public is invited to attend the event.

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General.

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