

RENSSELAER COUNTY BOARD OF ETHICS
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LOCAL LAW NUMBER 2 OF THE YEAR 1989, AS AMENDED BY LOCAL LAW NUMBER 2 OF THE YEAR 1992, AS AMENDED BY LOCAL LAW NUMBER 4 OF THE YEAR 1994, AS AMENDED BY LOCAL LAW NUMBER 2 OF THE YEAR 2000, AS AMENDED BY LOCAL LAW NUMBER 4 OF THE YEAR 2011

A local law relative to the filing of financial disclosure statements by certain county officials and employees and providing for a local code of ethics.

Section 1. Legislative Purpose

The purpose of this act is to establish minimum standards of ethical conduct for municipal officers and employees to help ensure that the business of government is free from improper influence that may result in opportunities for private gain. At the same time, it is recognized that public service cannot require a complete divesting of all proprietary interests, nor impose overly burdensome disclosure requirements, if local governments are to attract and hold competent administrators. Although the assurance of ethical conduct will continue to reset primarily on the personal integrity of the officers and employees themselves, on the commitment of elected and appointed officials, and on the vigilance of their communities, the establishments of the standards and guidelines set forth in this act is an additional step toward providing the highest caliber of public administration for Rensselaer County and increased confidence in its public officials. By requiring public disclosure of interests that may influence or be perceived to influence the actions of its public officials, this act is intended to facilitate consideration of potential problems before they arise, to minimize unwarranted suspicion, and to enhance the accountability of government to the people.

Section 2. Definitions

When used in this act and unless otherwise expressly stated:

1. "Business dealing" means (a) having or providing any contract, service, or work to Rensselaer County; (b) buying, selling, renting, leasing, or otherwise acquiring from or dispensing to Rensselaer County any goods,

services, or property; or (c) applying for, petitioning, requesting, or obtaining any approval, grant, loan, license, permit, or other privilege from Rensselaer County.

2. "Discretionary act" means any action involving the exercise of judgement or discretion by a Rensselaer County Officer or employee, either individually or as a member of any governing body, and includes, but is not limited to, negotiation, approval, advise, recommendation, authorized or audit.
3. "Family member" means a spouse, child, step-child, brother, sister, parent, or dependent of a Rensselaer County officer, employee, public officials and party officers.
4. "Governing body" means the Rensselaer County Legislature.
5. "Ministerial act" means an action performed in a prescribed manner without the exercise of judgement or discretion as to the propriety of the act.
6. "Rensselaer County officer or employee" means any officer or employee of the Rensselaer County, whether paid or unpaid, including public officials and all other members of any agency of a municipality, but does not include a judge, justice, officer, or employee of the unified court system.
7. "Paid Rensselaer County officer or employee" and "paid public official" means any officer or employee or public official who receives a salary from Rensselaer County or who is compensated by Rensselaer County on a per diem or hourly basis, but does not include an officer or employee or public official who is solely reimbursed by Rensselaer County for expenses incurred in the course of his or her duties or a Special District Attorney appointed pursuant to Section 701 of the County Law.
8. "Particular matter" means any business dealing with Rensselaer County, or any application therefore, or any case, proceeding, determination, investigation, charge, accusation or arrest or any other matter involving a discretionary act of the Rensselaer County officer or employee, but does not include the proposal, consideration or enactment of local laws, ordinances or regulations of general application.

9. "Person" means an individual, corporation, partnership, unincorporated association, and all other entities.
10. "Public official" means any official who has the authority, either alone or as a member of an agency, to perform discretionary acts on behalf of Rensselaer County with respect to any business dealing, and shall include but not be limited to: The Rensselaer County Executive, Rensselaer County Legislator, Chief Fiscal Officer of Rensselaer County; Medical Examiner, District Attorney; Rensselaer County Sheriff; Rensselaer County Clerk. Public official shall not include: a judge, justice, officer, or employee of the unified court system, or any municipal employee who performs only ministerial acts.
11. "Spouse" means a husband or wife from whom the Rensselaer County officer or employee is not legally separated.
12. "Party officer" means the Chairmen, secretaries, Vice Chairmen, 1st Vice Chairmen and Treasurer, or the equivalent officers by whatever name known, of any party, as that term is defined by Sec 1-104(3) of the Election Law.
13. "Rensselaer County" shall include the Rensselaer County government and shall its boards, agencies, commissions, authorities and districts.

Section 3 Conflicts of Officers, Employees, Public Officials, Party Officers and Family Members Thereof

1. No Rensselaer County officer or employee shall:
 - a. act as attorney, agent, broker, employee, consultant, or representative for any person in connection with any business dealings that person has with Rensselaer County.
 - b. directly or indirectly solicit, accept, or agree to accept any gift of financial benefit from any person, other than a family member, who the municipal officer or employee knows is considering, has, or within the previous twelve months has had, any business dealing with Rensselaer County that involves any discretionary act by the Rensselaer County officer or employee. A Rensselaer County officer or employee may accept from such person a gift or gifts which are customary on family, social, holiday or civic occasions, provided they do not total more than

seventy-five dollars from any person within any calendar year, and further provided that they were not received under circumstances in which it reasonably might be inferred that such gift or gifts were intended to influence the officer or employee in the performance of his or her official duties or reward him or her for any official action.

A gift or financial benefit shall include money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing, or promise thereof, or any other gratuity or promise thereof, including any financial transaction on terms not available to the general public, but shall not include a campaign contribution. Provided however, travel, room and board expenses incurred in the performance of official duties providing a legitimate public purpose shall be excluded from the provisions of this section.

c. take or refrain from taking any action, or agree to take or refrain from taking any action, or induce or attempt to induce any other officer or employee to take or refrain from taking any action, on any matter before Rensselaer County in order to obtain a pecuniary or material benefit for: (1) himself or herself; (2) a family member; (3) any partnership or unincorporated association of which the municipal officer or employee is a member or employee or in which he or she has a proprietary interest; (4) any corporation of which the officer or employee is an officer or director or of which he or she legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock; (5) any person with whom the officer or employee or his or her family member has an employment, professional, business or financial relationship; or (6) any person from whom the officer or employee, or his or her spouse, has received within any twelve month period during the previous twenty-four months, a pecuniary or material benefit having an aggregate value greater than two thousand dollars.

d. appear before the agency served by or which employs such officer or employee except on behalf of Rensselaer County or on his or her own behalf.

e. appear before Rensselaer County its boards, agencies, commissions, authorities or districts except on behalf of Rensselaer County or on his or her own behalf.

f. appear as attorney or counsel against the interests of Rensselaer County in any matter in which Rensselaer County is a party or a complainant.

g. solicit any non-elected officer or employee of Rensselaer County to participate in an election campaign. This paragraph shall not prohibit an elected officer from soliciting such participation from officers and employees who are appointed by, and directly subordinate to, such elected officer and who serve in positions which are in the exempt classification or the unclassified service under the civil service law.

h. directly or through a person, campaign committee, or other organization authorized to act on his or her behalf, solicit any non-elected officer or employee of Rensselaer County to pay or promise to pay any assessment, subscription, or contribution to a political party organization or election campaign. This paragraph shall not prohibit a general solicitation of a class of persons, other than those expressly prohibited, of which such solicited officer or employee happens to be a member.

i. directly or through a person, or campaign committee, or other organization authorized to act on his or her behalf, solicit participation in an election campaign or payment or promise of payment of any assessment, subscription, or contribution to a political party organization, or election campaign from any person who, to the knowledge of the officer or employee has, or within the previous twelve months has had, any business dealing with Rensselaer County. This paragraph shall not prohibit a general solicitation of a class of persons, other than those expressly prohibited, of which such solicited person happens to be a member.

j. except where such disclosure is authorized by law, disclose any confidential information acquired in the course of his or her official duties, or use any such information to advance the financial or other private interest of himself or herself or any other person

k. after termination of his or her term of office or employment with Rensselaer County, appear before Rensselaer County, or receive compensation for any services rendered on behalf of any person other than the municipality, in relation to any particular matter upon which he or she took

any discretionary act during his or her term of office or employment with Rensselaer County.

1. During his or her term of office or employment with Rensselaer County, solicit, negotiate for, or accept any employment from which he or she would be disqualified under paragraph (k) of this subdivision.
2. No partnership or unincorporated association of which a public official is a member or employee or in which he or she has a proprietary interest, nor any business or professional corporation of which he or she is an officer or director of which he or she or legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock, shall appear before the agency served by or which employs such public official on behalf of any person other than Rensselaer County or itself.
3. No partnership or unincorporated association of which a public official who is elected or paid by Rensselaer County is a member or employee or in which he or she has a proprietary interest, nor any business or professional corporation of which he or she is an officer or director or legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock, shall appear before Rensselaer County on behalf of any person other than Rensselaer County or itself.
4. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit an officer or employee or any other person from receiving a service or benefit from Rensselaer County or using a Rensselaer County facility, which is generally available to residents or a class of residents in the municipality.
5. Nothing in this section shall be constructed to prohibit any officer or employee listed in section eleven of the domestic relations law from accepting any gift or benefit having a value of one hundred dollars or less for the solemnization of a marriage by that officer or employee at a place of business or at a time other than the officer's or employee's normal hours of business.
6. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a Rensselaer County officer or employee from performing any ministerial act.

7. Any contract entered into by or with Rensselaer County which results in or from a violation of any provision of this section shall be null and void and unenforceable, unless the municipality has obtained a waiver of that provision pursuant to the provisions of this act.
8. A person who knowingly violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.
9. No public official shall act as or serve as or perform the duties of a party officer, nor shall any public official performing a discretionary act on behalf of Rensselaer County employ, appoint to any position, or have any business dealing with a party officer or family member of a party officer or any partnership, unincorporated association in which a party officer is a member or employee or in which a party officer has proprietary interest, or any business or professional corporation of which a party officer is an officer, director, or legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock.
10. No elected public official or family member hereof, nor any partnership unincorporated association in which he or she is a member or employee or in which he or she has a proprietary interest, nor any business or professional corporation of which he or she is an officer, director or legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock, shall have business dealings with Rensselaer County or any of its boards, agencies, commissions, authorities and districts. For purposes of this subdivision, business dealings shall include contracts with Rensselaer County, its boards, agencies, commissions, authorities and districts, gained through competitive bidding.

Section 4. Transactional Disclosure and Recusal

1. Whenever a Rensselaer County officer or employee is requested or required to take action on a matter before Rensselaer County and, to his or her knowledge, either the performance or nonperformance of that action would provide a pecuniary or material benefit to himself or herself or to any related person different from that which would be derived from action be reason of its general application to a broad class of persons deriving such benefit, the officer or employee shall not participate in that matter. The

officer or employee also shall file promptly with his or her immediate superior, if any and with the municipal clerk, a signed statement disclosing the nature and extent of that interest.

2. For purposes of this section, "relate person" means:
 - a. a family member;
 - b. any corporation of which a Rensselaer County officer or employee is an officer or director or of which he or she legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock;
 - c. any person with whom a Rensselaer County officer or employee or his or her family member has an employment, professional, business or financial relationship; and
 - d. any person from whom a Rensselaer County officer or employee, or his or her spouse, has received within any twelve month period during the previous twenty-four months, a pecuniary or material benefit having any aggregate value greater than two thousand dollars.
3. Whenever a vote is required from which a Rensselaer County officer or employee must recuse himself or herself under paragraph one of this section, such recusal shall not be counted for the purpose of determining whether a majority or other ratio required by state to pass a measure has been reached, provided, however, that no action may be taken by a body, or if the board has weighted votes, a majority of the total voting strength, votes on the matter. If a body is reduced below such majority by reason of a recusal required pursuant to this section, any member of such body may apply to the Rensselaer County ethics board for a waiver of the recusal requirements of this section. If the body is the Rensselaer County ethics board, any member of such board may apply to the state ethics commission for a waiver of the recusal requirements of this section.
4. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a Rensselaer County officer or employee from performing any ministerial act or to require an officer or file a disclosure statement pursuant to paragraph one of this section prior to performing any ministerial act.

5. A person who knowingly violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

Section 5. Annual Disclosure

1. All public officials who are elected or paid shall file with the Rensselaer County Clerk a signed annual disclosure statement: (a) within one hundred twenty days of the effective date of this act; (b) within thirty days of taking office; and (c) no later than April 30 of each year thereafter.
2. Matters to be disclosed by all public officials who are elected or paid shall include:
 - a. the location of any real property excluding the primary residence of the public official, within Rensselaer County, or within five miles of Rensselaer County, in which he or she, or his or her spouse or other family member of his or her household, has an ownership of other financial interest;
 - b. the name of any partnership, unincorporated association, or other unincorporated business, of which he or she, or his or her spouse is a member, officer or employee, or in which he or she, or his or her spouse, has a proprietary interest, and his or her position, and his or her spouse's position, if any, with the partnership, association, or business;
 - c. the name of any corporation of which he or she, or his or her spouse, is an officer, director, or employee, or of which he or she, or his or her spouse, legally or beneficially owns or controls more than five percent of the outstanding stock, and his or her position, and his or her spouse's position, if any, with the corporation; and
 - d. self-employment from which he or she, or his or her spouse, has derived, during the previous calendar year, gross income in excess of two thousand dollars.
3. If a public official who is elected or paid is not able, after reasonable efforts, to obtain some or all of the information required by paragraph two of this section which relates to his or her spouse or household member, he or she shall so state, as part of the annual disclosure statement.

4. If a public official who is elected or paid practices law, is licensed by the Department of State as a real estate broker or agent or practices a profession licensed by the department of education, his or her annual disclosure statement shall include a general description of the principal subject areas if matters undertaken by such firm or corporation, including the nature of the firm's client's businesses.
5. A person who knowingly violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

Section 6. Maintenance of Disclosure Statements

Transactional disclosure statements filed pursuant to section four of this act and annual disclosure statements filed pursuant to Section 5 of this act shall be public records and shall be indexed and maintained on file in an appropriate manner by the Rensselaer County Clerk. The clerk promptly shall transmit a copy of all disclosure statements to the Rensselaer County ethics board. The clerk shall retain disclosure statements for not less than seven years form the date of filing.

Section 7. Lists of Public Officials; Notice of Filing Requirements; Verification of Filing

1. Within ninety days of the effective date of this act, and before April 10 of the year thereafter, the Rensselaer County Executive, Chairman of the Rensselaer County Legislature, Rensselaer County Sheriff, Rensselaer County Clerk and Rensselaer County District Attorney shall (a) cause to be filed with the Rensselaer County Clerk and with the Rensselaer County ethics board a list of the names and offices or positions of public officials employed by them and shall designate which public officials are elected and (b) notify all public officials who are elected or paid of the annual disclosure requirements of Section 5 of this act.
2. Within one hundred fifty days of the effective date of this act, and before May 15 of each year thereafter, the Rensselaer County Executive, Chairman of the Rensselaer County Legislature, Rensselaer County Sheriff, Rensselaer County Clerk and Rensselaer County District Attorney shall verify that every public official employed by them has filed his or her disclosure statement.

3. Failure of the above officials to comply with this section shall not relieve any public official from his or her duty to file an annual disclosure statement, pursuant to this section.

Section 8 Inducement of Violations

Any person, whether or not a Rensselaer County municipal officer or employee, who intentionally induces any officer or employee to take any action or to refrain from taking any action, which action or inaction violates any provision of this act, and who knows or should have known that such action or inaction violates this act, shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

Section 9. Debarment

1. Any person convicted of a misdemeanor under this act shall be prohibited, for a period of three years after the date of the conviction, from entering into any contract with the County or employment with the County.
2. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit any person from receiving a service or benefit, or from using a facility, which is generally available to the public.
3. A person who knowingly violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

Section 10. Civil and Administrative Penalties

1. Any Rensselaer County officer or employee convicted of a misdemeanor under this act shall forfeit his or her municipal office or employment in the manner provided by law.
2. Any Rensselaer County officer or employee who engages in any action that violates any provision of this act, although not convicted of a misdemeanor under this act, may be warned or reprimanded or suspended or removed from office or employment or be subject to any other sanction authorized by law to impose such sanctions. A warning, reprimand, suspension, removal or other authorized sanction may be imposed in addition to any other penalty contained in this act or in any other provision of law.

3. Any Rensselaer County officer or employee who violates any provision of this act may be subject to a civil fine of up to one thousand five hundred dollars for each violation, as may be determined by the Rensselaer County ethics board. A civil fine may be imposed in addition to any other penalty contained in any other provision of law or in this act, other than a civil forfeiture pursuant to subdivision five this section.
4. Any Rensselaer County officer or employee who violates any provision of this act shall be liable in damages to Rensselaer County for any losses or increased costs incurred by Rensselaer County as a result of the violation. Such damages may be imposed in addition to any other penalty contained in any other provision of law in this act, other than a civil forfeiture pursuant to subdivision five of this section.
5. Any Rensselaer County officer or employee who has knowingly and intentionally violated any provision of this act may be subject to a civil forfeiture to Rensselaer County of a sum equal to three times the value of any financial benefit he or she received as a result of the conduct that constituted the violation. A civil forfeiture may be imposed in addition to any other penalty contained in any other provision of law or in this act, other than a civil fine pursuant to subdivision 3 or damages pursuant to subdivision 4 this section.

Section 11. Establishment of the Rensselaer County Ethics Board

The County Legislature hereby establishes an ethics board consisting of four members.

Section 12. Qualifications of Rensselaer County Ethics Board Members

1. No ethics board members shall hold office in any political party or be employed as a lobbyist. A board member may make campaign contributions, but may not participate in any election campaign.
2. No more than two members of any ethics board may be members of the same political party. For purposes of this section, political party shall mean the two major political parties.

3. Ethics board members shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses. The County Legislature may authorize, by local law, per diem compensation for ethics board members.
4. All ethics board members shall reside in Rensselaer County.

Section 13. Appointment of Rensselaer County Ethics Board Members

1. The members of the Rensselaer County ethics board shall be appointed within sixty days of the establishment of the board and no later than January 20 of each year thereafter.
2. If an appointment to such board is not made within sixty days of the establishment of such board, or by March 1 of each year thereafter, the state ethics commission may make the appointment.
3. Each member of the Rensselaer County ethics board shall be appointed as follows:

The Rensselaer County Executive shall appoint 2 ethics board members and the County Legislature shall appoint 2 ethics board members.

4. The term of office of ethics board members shall be five years. Each member shall serve until his or her successor has been appointed, except that the four members first appointed shall serve for terms of office which shall expire on December 31 of the year in which the board is established and the first, second, and third years thereafter. No member shall serve for more than two full five year terms.

Section 14. Rensselaer County Ethics Boards Vacancies

1. When a vacancy occurs in the membership of the ethics board, it shall be filled for the unexpired portion of the term in the same manner as the original appointment no later than thirty days after the vacancy occurs.
2. If an ethics board vacancy is not filled within thirty days after it occurs, the state ethics commission may fill the vacancy.

Section 15. Removal of Ethics Board Members

1. An ethics board member may be removed by the Rensselaer County Executive with the advice and consent of the County Legislature or by the State Board of Ethics if requested by a majority vote of the County Legislature.
2. Grounds for removal of ethics board members will be substantial neglect of duty, gross misconduct in office, inability to discharge the powers of duties of office, or violation of this act, after written notice and opportunity for reply.

Section 16. Rensselaer County Ethics Board Meetings and Quorum Requirements

1. At its first meeting each year, the ethics board shall elect a chair from among its membership. Three members of the board shall constitute a quorum. A vote of at least three board members shall be required for the board to take any action. The chair or any three members may call a meeting of the board.
2. The board shall hold a meeting before April 30 of each year, at which the board shall review the list of public officials, and shall hold a meeting before May 30 of each year, at which the board shall review the annual disclosure statements. The ethics board shall meet within one hundred fifty days of the effective date of this local law to review such lists and within one hundred eighty days to review such statements. The board may hold as many additional meetings per year as it shall deem necessary or as shall be called by the chair or any three members, provided that a meeting of the board shall be held 3 days after the filing of a complaint alleging a violation of this act, at which meeting such complaint shall be considered by the board, as well as any other matters before it.

Section 17. Powers and Duties of the Rensselaer County Ethics Board

1. The ethics board may act only with respect to officers and employees of Rensselaer County.
2. The termination of a Rensselaer County officer's or employee's term of office or employment with Rensselaer County shall not affect the jurisdiction of the ethics

board with respect to the requirements imposed by this section.

3. The ethics board shall have the following powers and duties:
 - a. to prescribe and promulgate rules and regulations governing its own internal organization and procedures in a manner consistent with this act;
 - b. to appoint an executive director, if necessary, and such staff as are necessary to carry out its duties under this act, and to delegate authority to the executive director, if any, to act in the name of the board between meetings of the board, provided that the delegation is in writing and the specific powers to be delegated are enumerated and further provided that the board shall not delegate the power to conduct hearings, determine violations, recommend disciplinary action, impose any civil fine, refer any matter to a prosecutor, or render any advisory opinion. An executive director or person serving in that role shall meet the qualifications of an ethics board member.
 - c. to cause to be filed with the state ethics commission a copy of the form for any disclosure statements required to be filed under this local ethics act, if any;
 - d. to review lists of public officials and disclosure statements.
 - e. to conduct investigations
 - f. to conduct hearings, recommend disciplinary action, assess penalties, and initiate appropriate actions and proceedings.
 - g. to grant waivers.
 - h. to render advisory opinions.
 - i. to provide training and education.
 - j. to prepare an annual report and recommend changes to the ethics act.

4. The County Legislature may prescribe additional powers and duties for the ethics board, by local law, provided that such additional powers and duties do not conflict with this act.
5. The ethics board may request technical assistance from the state ethics commission.

Section 18. Review of Lists and Disclosure Statements

1. The ethics board shall review the lists of public officials to determine whether the lists are complete and accurate. The board shall add to the appropriate list the name of any other municipal officer or employee whom the board determines to be a public official, and shall designate any elected or paid official as to whom such designation has not been made.
2. The ethics board shall review all annual disclosure statements to determine whether any person required to file such a statement has failed to file it, has filed a deficient statement, or has filed a statement that reveals a possible or potential violation of this act.
3. The ethics board shall promptly review all transactional disclosure statements. If the board or commission determines that a statement is deficient or reveals a possible or potential violation of this act, it shall notify the person in writing of the deficiency or possible or potential violation, and of the penalties for failure to comply with the act.

Section 19. Investigations of Alleged Violations

1. Upon receipt of a sworn complaint of any person alleging any violation of this act, or upon determining on its own initiative that a violation of this act may exist the board shall have the power and duty to conduct any investigation necessary to carry out the provisions of this act. In conducting any such investigation, the board may administer oaths or affirmations, subpoena witness, compel their attendance, and require the production of any books or records which it may deem relevant and material. Any hearings conducted by the board shall be open to the public upon the request of the individual or individuals being investigated or upon majority vote of the board.

2. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit the ethics board to conduct an investigation of itself or any of its members or staff. If the ethics board that receives a sworn complaint alleging that the board or any of its members or staff has violated any provision of this act or any other law, it promptly shall transmit a copy of the complaint to the state ethics commission.
3. The ethics board shall state in writing the disposition of every sworn complaint it receives and of every investigation it conducts and shall set fourth the reasons for the disposition. All such statements and all sworn complaints shall be public records and shall be indexed and maintained on file by the board.

Section 20. Recommendation of Disciplinary Action; Assessment of Penalties; Injunctions; Damages

1. In its discretion, and after a hearing held in accordance with article three of the state administrative procedure act, and subject to any applicable provisions of state law and collective bargaining agreements, the ethics board may recommend appropriate disciplinary action to the appointing authority or conduct and complete the hearings with reasonable promptness, unless in its discretion the board refers the matter to the authority or person or body authorized by law to impose disciplinary sanctions or to the appropriate prosecutor. If such a referral is made, the board may adjourn its hearing pending determination by such authority, person, body or prosecutor.
2. In its discretion and after a hearing in accordance with article three of the state administrative procedure act, the board may assess a civil fine not to exceed one thousand five hundred dollars for each violation, upon any municipal officer or employee found by the ethics board to have violated this act. The ethics board shall conduct and complete the hearing with reasonable promptness. The civil fine shall be payable to Rensselaer County.
3. The ethics board may sue in the Supreme Court of the State of New York for injunctive relief to enjoin a violation or to compel compliance with the provisions of this act.
4. The ethics board may initiate a proceeding in the Supreme Court of the State of New York to obtain a civil

forfeiture, pursuant to the provisions of this act. The civil forfeiture shall be payable to Rensselaer County.

5. The ethics board may initiate an action in the Supreme Court of the State of New York to obtain damages, as provided in this act.
6. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit an ethics board to take any action with respect to any alleged violation of this act, or of any other law, by the board or any member thereof.
7. The ethics board may refer to the appropriate prosecutor possible violations of this act.
8. Nothing in this act shall be construed to restrict the authority of any prosecutor to prosecute any violation of this act or of any other law.

Section 21. Advisory Opinions

1. Upon written request the Rensselaer County ethics board may render written advisory opinions with respect to the interpretation or application of this ethics act.

Section 22. Appeals

1. The state ethics commission may hear and decide appeals from any decision or determination made by the ethics board. An appeal may be taken by any person aggrieved by the decision or determination, within the time prescribed by the commission by general rule.
2. Any person aggrieved by a decision of the state ethics commission pursuant to subdivision one of this section may seek judicial review and relief pursuant to article seventy-eight of the civil proactive laws and rules.

Section 23. Training and Education by Ethics Board

1. The ethics board may develop educational materials and an educational program on the provisions of this act. The ethics board shall: (a) assist Rensselaer County in conducting training programs on compliance with this act; and (b) make information concerning this act known and available to all municipal officers and employees, to the

public, and to any person who is interested in doing business with Rensselaer County.

2. If the ethics board develops such educational materials, it shall file a copy of all such educational materials with the state ethics commission.

Section 24. Annual Reports; Recommendations

The ethics board shall prepare and submit an annual report to the chief Rensselaer County Executive and the County Legislature, reflecting the activities of the board. The report may also recommend changes to the text of administration of the ethics act.

Section 25. Applicability; Other Remedies; Severability

1. No existing right or remedy shall be lost, impaired or affected by reason of this act; provided, however, the provisions of this local law shall impair and affect existing rights and remedies.
2. Nothing in this act shall be deemed to bar or prevent the timely filing by a present or former officer or employee of any claim, account, demand, or suit against the municipality on behalf of himself or herself or any member of his or her family arising out of personal injury or property damage or for any lawful benefit authorized or permitted by law.
3. If any provision of this act is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, that decision shall not affect the validity and effectiveness of the remaining provisions of the act.

Section 26. Distribution and Posting

1. Within sixty days after the effective date of this act, the County Executive shall cause a copy of this act to be distributed to every county officer and employee, shall make it readily available to the public, and shall post notice of this act conspicuously in each Rensselaer County building. Every officer and employee elected or appointed thereafter shall be furnished a copy of this act within ten days after entering upon the duties of his or her position.

2. Every officer or employee shall file with the municipal clerk a signed receipt acknowledging that he or she has received and read the act. Such receipts shall be maintained by the municipal clerk.
3. Failure to distribute a copy, failure of any municipal officer or employee to receive a copy, failure to file a signed receipt, or failure to keep posted a copy of the act shall have no effect on the duty of compliance with this act nor the enforcement provisions hereof.
4. If any provision of this act is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, that decision shall not affect the validity and effectiveness of the remaining provisions of the act.

Section 27. Effective Date

This local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

Section 28. Repealed

Local Law No. 5 for the year 1970 is hereby repealed effective December 31, 1989.

This local law was adopted September 13, 1989
Approved by the County Executive September 28, 1989
Amended May 28, 1992
Approved by the County Executive June 11, 1992
Amended August 29, 1994
Approved by the County Executive September 16, 1994
Amended March 14, 2000
Approved by the County Executive March 28, 2000
Amended August 9, 2011
Approved by the County Executive August 19, 2011

Revised: 8-19-11