



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION
1102 Q Street • Suite 3050 • Sacramento, CA 95811

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 14, 2024

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CONTACT: Jay Wierenga, FPPC
(916) 322-7761

FPPC 2023 Annual Report highlights actions to improve outreach, enhance enforcement and increase transparency

The Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), California’s governmental ethics and campaign disclosure agency, released its 2023 Annual Report, detailing numerous steps taken to increase outreach, strengthen the enforcement process, and improve and modernize service to those under the FPPC’s jurisdiction.

A new law brought a significant change to what is commonly referred to as the “pay to play” statute. Senate Bill 1439 (2022) expanded the restrictions within Section 84308 of the Political Reform Act (PRA) to local elected officials and extended the period in which contributions over \$250 are prohibited following a final decision from three months to twelve months. After taking significant public input, the Commission updated regulations and offered numerous, comprehensive trainings on Section 84308 to government agencies and officials.

2023 also saw further development of the Political Reform Education Program (PREP), authorized by the Commission in late 2021. This educational program allows individuals who commit minor violations of the PRA and have little to no experience with the Act to take an educational course in lieu of monetary penalties. After providing guidance to more than 50 individuals in its first year, 2023 saw almost double the participants, with 92 people successfully completing the program. And steps began to expand the program for 2024 to meet the FPPC’s goal through PREP of improving compliance with the law and freeing Enforcement Division resources to focus on the most serious violations of the Act.

The FPPC received national attention when the Campaign Legal Center included the PREP program in its report “Top Ten Training Upgrades for Ethics Commissions”. FPPC’s PREP program garnered national recognition, ranking #2 in training upgrades for state ethics commissions

Policy directives provided by the Commission at the beginning of 2023 to assist the Enforcement Division in improving the timeliness and efficiency of its work showed significant results by the end of the year. Enforcement reduced its pre-2023 outstanding workload by 56%, and closed nearly two thirds of the cases it opened in 2023 during that same year. The report also contains a list of some of the most significant enforcement actions taken by the Commission in 2023.

Despite 2023 being a non-election year, the FPPC Enforcement Division received more than 2,600 complaints and referrals. During the year, the Enforcement Division resolved 1,295 cases, approving 98 settlements with \$376,531 dollars in penalties.

“The ever-changing, fast-moving nature of the political landscape always presents a challenge, but this report shows the Commission and staff is meeting the challenge with forward-thinking and innovative solutions,” said FPPC Chair Richard C. Miadich. “The public can be assured we’re making changes to our

rules and processes when needed, we're continuing to expand our public outreach efforts to enhance compliance, while also holding accountable those who violated the law."

The FPPC provided both in person workshops and digital webinars, with the virtual trainings helping to increase participation statewide. The FPPC offered 59 workshops for various jurisdictions and agencies to provide training and enhance understanding of the law. The Education unit also answered more than 5,000 phone calls for technical advice and its online tutorials saw 6,627 views over the course of the year.

In addition, the FPPC Legal Division answered 7,186 emails requesting advice, answered 5,213 phone calls providing technical assistance, while researching and issuing 186 Advice Letters in 2023, 77 of which related to Section 1090 of Government Code.

And the FPPC's newest division, Audits and Assistance, issued 16 audit reports in 2023, including reports for candidates and committees controlled by candidates for San Bernardino County, CalPERS, and Statewide offices with \$5,086,604 in total combined funds received and \$4,827,549 in total combined expenditures made.

"I thank our staff for the outstanding job done to help people understand and comply with the law," said Chair Miadich. "Our goal in 2024 is to continue the efforts to expand our educational services, to provide public officials the resources they need, to hold people accountable, and to provide the public with increased transparency."

A link to the full report can be found here: <https://fppc.ca.gov/content/dam/fppc/NS-Documents/Annual-Report/2023-Annual-Report.pdf>

X X X