



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 10, 2019

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ETHICS REFORMS

Package includes campaign contribution limits from parties with matters before City Council

City Council today approved a portion of the package of ethics reforms introduced by Mayor Rahm Emanuel to increase government transparency and accountability. The reforms strengthen conflicts of interest disclosures and limit campaign contributions from parties with matters before City Council.

"This package builds on nearly eight years of ethics reforms that began in my first hours of office," said Mayor Emanuel. "We are bringing transparency to programs and processes that were previously opaque, but no rule replaces a strong moral compass and no law takes the place of the judgment to recognize right from wrong. Every public official must follow the north star of public service, not private gain."

The ethics package includes changes related to Rule 14, a City Council Rule that may be invoked by Aldermen to abstain from voting on matters in which they have a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest. The conflicts of interest provision will be expanded to provide that a Committee Chairman may not recuse themselves from matters before the committee because of a conflict of interest more than three times per calendar year, after which they must either eliminate the conflict or resign the chairmanship. The change would also enhance conflict of interest disclosure provisions; the Board of Ethics would review disclosures for sufficient detail, request further detail when necessary and assess penalties under the Ethics Ordinance for matters of noncompliance. The proposed changes also prohibit an Alderman from presiding over proceedings related to a matter that will include a conflict of interest recusal.

The proposal will also require aldermen to file an addendum to their annual Statements of Financial Interest within 30 days of any changes relating to outside employment, board service or business interests. Additionally, the ordinance requires that aldermen that wish to object to the issuance of a building or driveway permit must submit those objections in writing.

The ordinance would also limit campaign contributions from parties with matters before City Council. Currently, campaign contributions from a person who had a matter in front of the council or committee were barred for six months following the matter's consideration. Under the proposed change, these persons would also not be able to contribute for six months prior to the matter's consideration by a committee or council.

In January, the City Council passed a measure introduced by the Mayor to transfer the jurisdiction over the workers' compensation program to the City Comptroller; most major cities also house workers' compensation in the department that handles employee benefits. The jurisdictional move means that, for the first time, the City Inspector General will be able to investigate the program just like a program within any other city department.

The package of ethics reforms follow significant reforms enacted by Mayor Emanuel since his election in 2011. Under the Mayor's leadership, the City of Chicago was dismissed from the Shakman lawsuit, ending decades of federal oversight into the city's hiring practices; the Office of the Inspector General has been expanded and, for the first time, every city agency and department is under oversight by an Inspector General; stricter limits on lobbying activities have been enacted and an online lobbying database was launched; the entire Board of Ethics was replaced; and the conflict of interest and financial interest language was strengthened in the Ethics Ordinance.

###