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CITY COUNCIL APPROVES NEW ETHICS REFORMS PACKAGE

Ethics reform package to bring increased transparency to the policy making process

CHICAGO—The City Council today approved a package of reforms to bring greater transparency to the city's legislative and policymaking processes. These reforms include new restrictions to outside Aldermanic employment, expanded City Council oversight by the Office of the Inspector General and increased fines for ethics violations.

"The reforms passed today will standardize ethics requirements for all members of City government and ensure decision-making is done with the utmost transparency and in the best interest of taxpayers," said Mayor Lightfoot. "As public servants, each of us has a responsibility to represent Chicago's residents with the highest level of ethical standards."

The ethics reforms amend the City's Ethics Code to ensure all city employees including elected officials and employees of the City Council operate under the same oversight. The changes include:

- **Restricted outside employment:** Aldermen and City employees will be banned from certain outside employment that poses a potential conflict of interest with the City of Chicago. For example, city employees and officials may no longer appeal property taxes on behalf of someone else in the City of Chicago.
- **Expanded Inspector General oversight:** To ensure consistency across city government, Aldermen would be subject to the same oversight as city employees. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) would also have the authority to audit council administrative procedures.
- **Increased fines for ethics violations:** The reforms would raise fines for Ethics Ordinance violations from \$500 to \$1,000 for low-level violations, and \$2,000 to \$5,000 for high-level violations.
- **Broadened definition of lobbyists:** This proposal expands the definition of lobbyists to include non-profits that lobby the city. Non-profit lobbyists would be required to register and provide quarterly reports, but their registration fees would be waived. This proposal does not pertain to unpaid volunteers.

“The Ethics Reforms introduced today will increase transparency and oversight of all programs, committees, and members of the City Council in order to ensure the same ethical standards for elected officials and city employment,” said Chair of the Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight and 43rd Ward Alderman Michele Smith. “I am proud to join Mayor Lightfoot in championing these reforms that will make our government more open and accessible for the residents of Chicago.”

The reforms passed today include input and ideas from the City Council, as well as from proposals that have been made in recent years. The ethics reform package approved today is the latest in a series of reforms announced by Mayor Lightfoot designed to strengthen transparency and accountability throughout our city government, with earlier reforms including those made to the city’s workers’ compensation program.

The ethics reform measures will go into effect 90 days after publication, with the lobbying changes to be effectuated on January 1, 2020 to align with the Board of Ethics' registration calendar

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