



Executive Law §94

Joint commission on public ethics; functions, powers and duties; review of financial disclosure statements; advisory opinions; investigation and enforcement.

1. There is established within the department of state a joint commission on public ethics which shall consist of fourteen members and shall have and exercise the powers and duties set forth in this section with respect to statewide elected officials, members of the legislature and employees of the legislature, and state officers and employees, as defined in sections seventy-three and seventy-three-a of the public officers law, candidates for statewide elected office and for the senate or assembly, and the political party chairman as that term is defined in section seventy-three-a of the public officers law, lobbyists and the clients of lobbyists as such terms are defined in article one-A of the legislative law, and individuals who have formerly held such positions, were lobbyists or clients of lobbyists, as such terms are defined in article one-A of the legislative law, or who have formerly been such candidates. This section shall not be deemed to have revoked or rescinded any regulations or advisory opinions issued by the legislative ethics commission, the commission on public integrity, the state ethics commission and the temporary lobbying commission in effect upon the effective date of chapter fourteen of the laws of two thousand seven which amended this section to the extent that such regulations or opinions are not inconsistent with any law of the state of New York, but such regulations and opinions shall apply only to matters over which such commissions had jurisdiction at the time such regulations and opinions were promulgated or issued. The commission shall undertake a comprehensive review of all such regulations and opinions, which will address the consistency of such regulations and opinions among each other and with the new statutory language, and of the effectiveness of the existing laws, regulations, guidance and ethics enforcement structure to address the ethics of covered public officials and related parties. Such review shall be conducted with the legislative ethics commission and, to the extent possible, the report's findings shall reflect the full input and deliberations of both commissions after joint consultation. The commission shall, before February first, two thousand fifteen, report to the governor and legislature regarding such review and shall propose any regulatory or statutory changes and issue any advisory opinions necessitated by such review.
2. The members of the commission shall be appointed as follows: three members shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate, three members shall be appointed by the speaker of the assembly, one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the senate, one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the assembly, and six members shall be appointed by the governor and the lieutenant governor. In the event that a vacancy arises with respect to a member of the commission first appointed pursuant to the chapter of the laws of two thousand eleven which amended this subdivision by a legislative leader, the legislative leaders of the same political party in the same house shall appoint a member to fill such vacancy irrespective of whether that legislative leader's political party is in the majority or minority. Of the members appointed by the governor

and the lieutenant governor, at least three members shall be and shall have been for at least three years enrolled members of the major political party in which the governor is not enrolled. In the event of a vacancy in a position previously appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor, the governor and lieutenant governor shall appoint a member of the same political party as the member that vacated that position. Prior to making their respective appointments, the governor and the lieutenant governor and the legislative leaders shall solicit and receive recommendations for appointees from the attorney general and the comptroller of the state of New York, which recommendations shall be fully and properly considered but shall not be binding.

No individual shall be eligible for appointment as a member of the commission who currently or within the last three years:

- (i) is or has been registered as a lobbyist in New York state;
- (ii) is or has been a member of the New York state legislature or a statewide elected official or a commissioner of an executive agency appointed by the governor; or
- (iii) is or has been a political party chairman, as defined in paragraph (k) of subdivision one of section seventy-three of this article.

No individual shall be eligible for appointment as a member of the commission who currently or within the last year is or has been a state officer or employee or legislative employee as defined in section seventy-three of the public officers law.

3. Members of the commission shall serve for terms of five years; provided, however, that of the members first appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor, one shall serve for one year, one shall serve for two years, one shall serve for three years, and one shall serve for four years, as designated by the governor; the members first appointed by the temporary president of the senate and by the speaker of the assembly shall serve for four years and the members first appointed by the minority leaders of the senate and the assembly shall serve for two years.
4. The governor shall designate the chairman of the commission from among the members thereof, who shall serve as chairman at the pleasure of the governor. The chairman or any eight members of the commission may call a meeting.
5. Any vacancy occurring on the commission shall be filled within thirty days of its occurrence in the same manner as the member whose vacancy is being filled was appointed. A person appointed to fill a vacancy occurring other than by expiration of a term of office shall be appointed for the unexpired term of the member he or she succeeds.
6. Eight members of the commission shall constitute a quorum, and the commission shall have power to act by majority vote of the total number of members of the commission without vacancy except where the commission acts pursuant to subdivision thirteen, subdivision fourteen-a or subdivision fourteen-b of this section.

7. Members of the commission may be removed by the appointing authority solely for substantial neglect of duty, gross misconduct in office, violation of the confidentiality restrictions in subdivision nine-a of this section, inability to discharge the powers or duties of office or violation of this section, after written notice and opportunity for a reply.
8. The members of the joint commission shall receive a per diem allowance in the sum of three hundred dollars for each day actually spent in the performance of his or her duties under this article, and, in addition thereto, shall be reimbursed for all reasonable expenses actually and necessarily incurred by him or her in the performance of his or her duties under this article.
9. The commission shall:
 - (a) Appoint an executive director who shall act in accordance with the policies of the commission. The appointment and removal of the executive director shall be made solely by a vote of a majority of the commission, which majority shall include at least one member appointed by the governor from each of the two major political parties, and one member appointed by a legislative leader from each of the two major political parties. The commission may delegate authority to the executive director to act in the name of the commission between meetings of the commission provided such delegation is in writing, the specific powers to be delegated are enumerated, and the commission shall not delegate any decisions specified in this section that require a vote of the commission. The executive director shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation and solely on the basis of fitness to perform the duties assigned by this article, and shall be a qualified, independent professional. The commission may remove the executive director for neglect of duty, misconduct in office, violation of the confidentiality restrictions in subdivision nine-a of this section, or inability or failure to discharge the powers or duties of office, including the failure to follow the lawful instructions of the commission;
 - (b) Appoint such other staff as are necessary to carry out its duties under this section;
 - (b-1) Review and approve a staffing plan provided and prepared by the executive director which shall contain, at a minimum, a list of the various units and divisions as well as the number of positions in each unit, titles and their duties, and salaries, as well as the various qualifications for each position including, but not limited to, education and prior experience for each position.
 - (c) Adopt, amend, and rescind rules and regulations to govern procedures of the commission, which shall include, but not be limited to, the procedure whereby a person who is required to file an annual financial disclosure statement with the commission may request an additional period of time within which to file such statement, other than members of the legislature, candidates for members of the legislature and legislative employees, due to justifiable cause or undue hardship; such rules or regulations shall provide for a date beyond which in all cases of justifiable cause or undue hardship no further extension of time will be granted;

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- (d) Adopt, amend, and rescind rules and regulations to assist appointing authorities in determining which persons hold policy-making positions for purposes of section seventy-three-a of the public officers law;
- (d-1) Adopt, amend and rescind rules and regulations defining the permissible use of and promoting the proper use of public service announcements;
- (e) Make available forms for annual statements of financial disclosure required to be filed pursuant to section seventy-three-a of the public officers law;
- (f) Review financial disclosure statements in accordance with the provisions of this section, provided however, that the commission may delegate all or part of this review function to the executive director who shall be responsible for completing staff review of such statements in a manner consistent with the terms of the commission's delegation;
- (g) Receive complaints and referrals alleging violations of section seventy-three, seventy-three-a or seventy-four of the public officers law, article one-A of the legislative law or section one hundred seven of the civil service law;
- (h) Permit any person who is required to file a financial disclosure statement with the joint commission on public ethics to request that the commission delete from the copy thereof made available for public inspection and copying one or more items of information which may be deleted by the commission upon a finding by the commission that the information which would otherwise be required to be made available for public inspection and copying will have no material bearing on the discharge of the reporting person's official duties. If such request for deletion is denied, the commission, in its notification of denial, shall inform the person of his or her right to appeal the commission's determination pursuant to its rules governing adjudicatory proceedings and appeals adopted pursuant to subdivision fourteen of this section;
- (i) Permit any person who is required to file a financial disclosure statement with the joint commission on public ethics to request an exemption from any requirement to report one or more items of information which pertain to such person's spouse or unemancipated children which item or items may be exempted by the commission upon a finding by the commission that the reporting individual's spouse, on his or her own behalf or on behalf of an unemancipated child, objects to providing the information necessary to make such disclosure and that the information which would otherwise be required to be reported will have no material bearing on the discharge of the reporting person's official duties. If such request for exemption is denied, the commission, in its notification of denial, shall inform the person of his or her right to appeal the commission's determination pursuant to its rules governing adjudicatory proceedings and appeals adopted pursuant to subdivision fourteen of this section;

- (i-1) Permit any person required to file a financial disclosure statement to request an exemption from any requirement to report the identity of a client pursuant to question 8(b) in such statement based upon an exemption set forth in that question. The reporting individual need not seek an exemption to refrain from disclosing the identity of any client with respect to any matter he or she or his or her firm provided legal representation to the client in connection with an investigation or prosecution by law enforcement authorities, bankruptcy, or domestic relations matters; in addition, clients or customers receiving medical or dental services, mental health services, residential real estate brokering services, or insurance brokering services need not be disclosed.

- (j) Advise and assist any state agency in establishing rules and regulations relating to possible conflicts between private interests and official duties of present or former statewide elected officials and state officers and employees;

- (k) Permit any person who has not been determined by his or her appointing authority to hold a policy-making position but who is otherwise required to file a financial disclosure statement to request an exemption from such requirement in accordance with rules and regulations governing such exemptions. Such rules and regulations shall provide for exemptions to be granted either on the application of an individual or on behalf of persons who share the same job title or employment classification which the commission deems to be comparable for purposes of this section. Such rules and regulations may permit the granting of an exemption where, in the discretion of the commission, the public interest does not require disclosure and the applicant's duties do not involve the negotiation, authorization or approval of:
 - (i) contracts, leases, franchises, revocable consents, concessions, variances, special permits, or licenses as defined in section seventy-three of the public officers law;
 - (ii) the purchase, sale, rental or lease of real property, goods or services, or a contract therefor;
 - (iii) the obtaining of grants of money or loans; or
 - (iv) the adoption or repeal of any rule or regulation having the force and effect of law;

- (l) Prepare an annual report to the governor and legislature summarizing the activities of the commission during the previous year and recommending any changes in the laws governing the conduct of persons subject to the jurisdiction of the commission, or the rules, regulations and procedures governing the commission's conduct. Such report shall include: (i) a listing by assigned number of each complaint and referral received which alleged a possible violation within its jurisdiction, including the current status of each complaint, and (ii) where a matter has been resolved, the date and nature of the disposition and any sanction imposed, subject to the confidentiality requirements of this section, provided, however, that such annual report shall not contain any information for which disclosure is not permitted pursuant to subdivision nineteen of this section;

- (m) Determine a question common to a class or defined category of persons or items of information required to be disclosed, where determination of the question will prevent undue repetition of requests for exemption or deletion or prevent undue complication in complying with the requirements of such section; and
- (n) Promulgate guidelines for the commission to conduct a program of random reviews, to be carried out in the following manner: (i) annual statements of financial disclosure shall be selected for review in a manner pursuant to which the identity of any particular person whose statement is selected is unknown to the commission and its staff prior to its selection; (ii) such review shall include a preliminary examination of the selected statement for internal consistency, a comparison with other records maintained by the commission, including previously filed statements and requests for advisory opinions, and examination of relevant public information; (iii) upon completion of the preliminary examination, the commission shall determine whether further inquiry is warranted, whereupon it shall notify the reporting individual in writing that the statement is under review, advise the reporting individual of the specific areas of inquiry, and provide the reporting individual with the opportunity to provide any relevant information related to the specific areas of inquiry, and the opportunity to file amendments to the selected statement on forms provided by the commission; and (iv) if thereafter sufficient cause exists, the commission shall take additional actions, as appropriate and consistent with law.

9-a. (a) When an individual becomes a commissioner or staff of the commission, that individual shall be required to sign a non-disclosure statement.

(b) Except as otherwise required or provided by law, testimony received or any other information obtained by a commissioner or staff of the commission shall not be disclosed by any such individual to any person or entity outside the commission during the pendency of any matter. Any confidential communication to any person or entity outside the commission related to the matters before the commission may occur only as authorized by the commission.

(c) The commission shall establish procedures necessary to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of any information received by any member of the commission or staff of the commission. Any breaches of confidentiality shall be investigated by the inspector general and appropriate action shall be taken. Any commissioner or person employed by the commission who intentionally and without authorization releases confidential information received by the commission shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

9-b. During the period of his or her service as a commissioner of the commission, each commissioner shall refrain from making, or soliciting from other persons, any contributions to candidates for election to the offices of governor, lieutenant governor, member of the assembly or the senate, attorney general or state comptroller.

10. The commission shall prepare materials and design and administer an ethics training program for individuals subject to the financial disclosure requirements of section seventy-three-a of the public officers law with respect to the provisions of sections seventy-three, seventy-three-a, and seventy-four of the public officers law and any other law, administrative regulation, or internal policy that is of relevance to the ethical conduct of such individuals in public service, as follows:
- (a) The commission shall develop and administer a comprehensive ethics training course and shall designate and train instructors to conduct such training. Such course shall be designed as a two-hour program and shall include practical application of the material covered and a question-and-answer participatory segment. Unless the commission grants an extension or waiver for good cause shown, all individuals subject to the financial disclosure requirements of section seventy-three-a of the public officers law shall complete such course within two years of the effective date of the chapter of the laws of two thousand eleven which amended this section, or for those individuals elected or appointed after the effective date of the chapter of the laws of two thousand eleven which amended this section, within two years of becoming subject to the financial disclosure requirements of section seventy-three-a of the public officers law.
 - (b) The commission shall develop and administer an online ethics orientation course and shall notify all individuals newly subject to the financial disclosure requirements of section seventy-three-a of the public officers law of such course, which shall be completed by such individuals within three months of becoming subject to such requirements, unless the commission grants an extension or waiver for good cause shown. Individuals who have completed the comprehensive ethics training course shall not be required to complete the online ethics orientation course.
 - (c) The commission shall develop and administer an ethics seminar or ethics seminars for individuals who have previously completed the comprehensive ethics training course. Such seminars shall be designed as ninety-minute programs and shall include any changes in law, regulation, or policy or in the interpretation thereof, practical application of the material covered, and a question-and-answer segment. Unless the commission grants an extension or waiver for good cause shown, such individuals shall be scheduled to attend a seminar at least once every three years after having completed the comprehensive ethics training course. In lieu of attending an ethics seminar, such individuals may complete a subsequent comprehensive ethics training program.
 - (d) The provisions of this subdivision shall be applicable to the legislature except to the extent that an ethics training program is otherwise established by the assembly or senate for their respective members and employees and such program meets or exceeds each of the requirements set forth in this section.
 - (e) On an annual basis, the joint commission in coordination with the legislative ethics commission shall determine the status of compliance with these training requirements by each state agency and by the senate and the assembly. Such determination shall include aggregate statistics

regarding participation in such training, and shall be reported to the governor and the legislature in writing.

11. The commission, or the executive director and staff of the commission if responsibility therefor has been delegated, shall inspect all financial disclosure statements filed with the commission to ascertain whether any person subject to the reporting requirements of section seventy-three-a of the public officers law has failed to file such a statement, has filed a deficient statement or has filed a statement which reveals a possible violation of section seventy-three, seventy-three-a or seventy-four of the public officers law.
12. If a person required to file a financial disclosure statement with the commission has failed to file a disclosure statement or has filed a deficient statement, the commission shall notify the reporting person in writing, state the failure to file or detail the deficiency, provide the person with a fifteen day period to cure the deficiency, and advise the person of the penalties for failure to comply with the reporting requirements. Such notice shall be confidential. If the person fails to make such filing or fails to cure the deficiency within the specified time period, the commission shall send a notice of delinquency: (a) to the reporting person; (b) in the case of a statewide elected official, member of the legislature, or a legislative employee, to the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly; and (c) in the case of a state officer or employee, to the appointing authority for such person. Such notice of delinquency may be sent at any time during the reporting person's service as a statewide elected official, state officer or employee, member of the assembly or the senate, or a legislative employee or a political party chair or while a candidate for statewide office, or within one year after termination of such service or candidacy. The jurisdiction of the commission, when acting pursuant to subdivision fourteen of this section with respect to financial disclosure, shall continue notwithstanding that the reporting person separates from state service, or ceases to hold public or political party office, or ceases to be a candidate, provided the commission notifies such person of the alleged failure to file or deficient filing pursuant to this subdivision.
13. (a) Investigations. If the commission receives a sworn complaint alleging a violation of section seventy-three, seventy-three-a, or seventy-four of the public officers law, section one hundred seven of the civil service law or article one-A of the legislative law by a person or entity subject to the jurisdiction of the commission including members of the legislature and legislative employees and candidates for member of the legislature, or if a reporting individual has filed a statement which reveals a possible violation of these provisions, or if the commission determines on its own initiative to investigate a possible violation, the commission shall notify the individual in writing, describe the possible or alleged violation of such laws, provide a description of the allegations against him or her and the evidence, if any, supporting such allegations, provided however that the joint commission shall redact any information that might, in the judgment of the commission, be prejudicial to either the complainant or the investigation; the letter also shall set forth the sections of law alleged to have been violated and provide the person with a fifteen day period in which to submit a written response, including any evidence, statements, and proposed witnesses, setting forth information relating to the activities cited as a possible or alleged violation of law. The commission shall, within

sixty calendar days after a complaint or a referral is received or an investigation is initiated on the commission's own initiative, vote on whether to commence a full investigation of the matter under consideration to determine whether a substantial basis exists to conclude that a violation of law has occurred. The staff of the joint commission shall provide to the members prior to such vote information regarding the likely scope and content of the investigation, and a subpoena plan, to the extent such information is available. Such investigation shall be conducted if at least eight members of the commission vote to authorize it. Where the subject of such investigation is a member of the legislature or a legislative employee or a candidate for member of the legislature, at least two of the eight or more members who so vote to authorize such an investigation must have been appointed by a legislative leader or leaders from the major political party in which the subject of the proposed investigation is enrolled if such person is enrolled in a major political party. Where the subject of such investigation is a state officer or state employee, at least two of the eight or more members who so vote to authorize such an investigation must have been appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor. Where the subject of such investigation is a statewide elected official or a direct appointee of such an official, at least two of the eight or more members who so vote to authorize such an investigation must have been appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor and be enrolled in the major political party in which the subject of the proposed investigation is enrolled, if such person is enrolled in a major political party.

(b) Substantial basis investigation. Upon the affirmative vote of not less than eight commission members to commence a substantial basis investigation, written notice of the commission's decision shall be provided to the individual who is the subject of such substantial basis investigation. Such written notice shall include a copy of the commission's rules and procedures and shall also include notification of such individual's right to be heard within thirty calendar days of the date of the commission's written notice. If the commission votes to commence a substantial basis investigation, the commission shall provide to the individual a notice setting forth the alleged violations of law and the factual basis for those allegations. The commission shall provide to the individual any additional evidence supporting the allegations not set forth in the letter sent pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subdivision in sufficient detail to enable the individual to respond, at least seven days before the hearing. Such hearing shall afford the individual with a reasonable opportunity to appear in person, and by attorney, give sworn testimony and present evidence. Such hearing shall occur before the commission votes on whether or not to issue a substantial basis report. The commission shall also inform the individual of its rules regarding the conduct of adjudicatory proceedings and appeals and the other due process procedural mechanisms available to such individual. If the commission determines at any stage that there is no violation, that any potential violation has been rectified, or if the investigation is closed for any other reason, it shall so advise the individual and the complainant, if any in writing within fifteen days of such decision. All of the foregoing proceedings shall be confidential.

(c) The jurisdiction of the commission when acting pursuant to this section shall continue notwithstanding that a statewide elected official or a state officer or employee or member of

the legislature or legislative employee separates from state service, or a political party chair ceases to hold such office, or a candidate ceases to be a candidate, or a lobbyist or client of a lobbyist ceases to act as such, provided that the commission notifies such individual or entity of the alleged violation of law pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subdivision within one year from his or her separation from state service or his or her termination of party service or candidacy, or from his, her or its last report filed pursuant to article one-A of the legislative law. Nothing in this section shall serve to limit the jurisdiction of the commission in enforcement of subdivision eight of section seventy-three of the public officers law.

14. An individual subject to the jurisdiction of the commission who knowingly and intentionally violates the provisions of subdivisions two through five-a, seven, eight, twelve or fourteen through seventeen of section seventy-three of the public officers law, section one hundred seven of the civil service law, or a reporting individual who knowingly and willfully fails to file an annual statement of financial disclosure or who knowingly and willfully with intent to deceive makes a false statement or fraudulent omission or gives information which such individual knows to be false on such statement of financial disclosure filed pursuant to section seventy-three-a of the public officers law shall be subject to a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed forty thousand dollars and the value of any gift, compensation or benefit received as a result of such violation. An individual who knowingly and intentionally violates the provisions of paragraph a, b, c, d, e, g, or i of subdivision three of section seventy-four of the public officers law shall be subject to a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed ten thousand dollars and the value of any gift, compensation or benefit received as a result of such violation. An individual subject to the jurisdiction of the commission who knowingly and willfully violates article one-A of the legislative law shall be subject to civil penalty as provided for in that article. Except with respect to members of the legislature and legislative employees, assessment of a civil penalty hereunder shall be made by the commission with respect to persons subject to its jurisdiction. With respect to a violation of any law other than sections seventy-three, seventy-three-a, and seventy-four of the public officers law, where the commission finds sufficient cause by a vote held in the same manner as set forth in paragraph (b) of subdivision thirteen of this section, it shall refer such matter to the appropriate prosecutor for further investigation. In assessing the amount of the civil penalties to be imposed, the commission shall consider the seriousness of the violation, the amount of gain to the individual and whether the individual previously had any civil or criminal penalties imposed pursuant to this section, and any other factors the commission deems appropriate. Except with respect to members of the legislature and legislative employees, for a violation of this subdivision, other than for conduct which constitutes a violation of section one hundred seven of the civil service law, subdivisions twelve or fourteen through seventeen of section seventy-three or section seventy-four of the public officers law or article one-A of the legislative law, the commission may, in lieu of or in addition to a civil penalty, refer a violation to the appropriate prosecutor and upon such conviction, such violation shall be punishable as a class A misdemeanor. A civil penalty for false filing may not be imposed hereunder in the event a category of "value" or "amount" reported hereunder is incorrect unless such reported information is falsely understated. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, no other penalty, civil or criminal may be imposed for a failure to file, or for a false filing, of such statement, or a violation of subdivision six

of section seventy-three of the public officers law, except that the appointing authority may impose disciplinary action as otherwise provided by law. The commission may refer violations of this subdivision to the appointing authority for disciplinary action as otherwise provided by law. The commission shall be deemed to be an agency within the meaning of article three of the state administrative procedure act and shall adopt rules governing the conduct of adjudicatory proceedings and appeals taken pursuant to a proceeding commenced under article seventy-eight of the civil practice law and rules relating to the assessment of the civil penalties herein authorized and commission denials of requests for certain deletions or exemptions to be made from a financial disclosure statement as authorized in paragraph (h) or paragraph (i) of subdivision nine of this section. Such rules, which shall not be subject to the approval requirements of the state administrative procedure act, shall provide for due process procedural mechanisms substantially similar to those set forth in article three of the state administrative procedure act but such mechanisms need not be identical in terms or scope. Assessment of a civil penalty or commission denial of such a request shall be final unless modified, suspended or vacated within thirty days of imposition, with respect to the assessment of such penalty, or unless such denial of request is reversed within such time period, and upon becoming final shall be subject to review at the instance of the affected reporting individuals in a proceeding commenced against the commission, pursuant to article seventy-eight of the civil practice law and rules.

- 14-a. The joint commission on public ethics shall have jurisdiction to investigate, but shall have no jurisdiction to impose penalties upon members of or candidates for member of the legislature or legislative employees for any violation of the public officers law. If, after its substantial basis investigation, by a vote of at least eight members, two of whom are enrolled members of the investigated individual's political party if the individual is enrolled in a major political party and were appointed by a legislative leader of such political party, the joint commission on public ethics has found a substantial basis to conclude that a member of the legislature or a legislative employee or candidate for member of the legislature has violated any provisions of such laws, it shall present a written report to the legislative ethics commission, and deliver a copy of the report to the individual who is the subject of the report. Such written report shall include:
- (a) the commission's findings of fact and any evidence addressed in such findings; conclusions of law and citations to any relevant law, rule, opinion, regulation or standard of conduct upon which it relied; and
 - (b) a determination that a substantial basis exists to conclude that a violation has occurred, and the reasons and basis for such determination.

The joint commission shall also separately provide to the legislative ethics commission copies of additional documents or other evidence considered including evidence that may contradict the joint commission's findings, the names of and other information regarding any additional witnesses, and any other materials. With respect to a violation of any law other than sections seventy-three, seventy-three-a, and seventy-four of the public officers law, where the joint

commission finds sufficient cause by a vote held in the same manner as set forth in paragraph (b) of subdivision thirteen of this section, it shall refer such matter to the appropriate prosecutor.

- 14-b. With respect to the investigation of any individual who is not a member of the legislature or a legislative employee or candidate for member of the legislature, if after its investigation the joint commission has found a substantial basis to conclude that the individual has violated the public officers law or the legislative law, the joint commission shall send a substantial basis investigation report containing its findings of fact and conclusions of law to the individual. With respect to an individual who is a statewide elected official or a direct appointee of such an official, no violation may be found unless the majority voting in support of such a finding includes at least two members appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor and enrolled in the individual's major political party, if he or she is enrolled in a major political party. Where the subject of such investigation is a state officer or employee who is not a direct appointee of a statewide elected official, at least two of the eight or more members who vote to issue a substantial basis investigation report must have been appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor. The commission shall release such report publicly within forty-five days of its issuance.
- 14-c. With respect to an investigation of a lobbyist, if after its investigation the joint commission has found a substantial basis to conclude that the lobbyist has violated the legislative law, the joint commission shall issue a substantial basis investigation report containing its findings of fact and conclusions of law to the lobbyist and shall make public such report within forty-five days of its issuance.
15. A copy of any notice of delinquency or substantial basis investigation report shall be included in the reporting person's file and be available for public inspection and copying pursuant to the provisions of this section.
16. Upon written request from any person who is subject to the jurisdiction of the commission and the requirements of sections seventy-three, seventy-three-a or seventy-four of the public officers law, other than members of the legislature, candidates for member of the legislature and employees of the legislature, the commission shall render written advisory opinions on the requirements of said provisions. An opinion rendered by the commission, until and unless amended or revoked, shall be binding on the commission in any subsequent proceeding concerning the person who requested the opinion and who acted in good faith, unless material facts were omitted or misstated by the person in the request for an opinion. Such opinion may also be relied upon by such person, and may be introduced and shall be a defense, in any criminal or civil action. Such requests shall be confidential but the commission may publish such opinions provided that the name of the requesting person and other identifying details shall not be included in the publication.

17. In addition to any other powers and duties specified by law, the commission shall have the power and duty to:
- (a) Promulgate rules concerning restrictions on outside activities and limitations on the receipt of gifts and honoraria by persons subject to its jurisdiction, provided, however, a violation of such rules in and of itself shall not be punishable pursuant to subdivision fourteen of this section unless the conduct constituting the violation would otherwise constitute a violation of this section; and
 - (b) Administer and enforce all the provisions of this section; and
 - (c) Conduct any investigation necessary to carry out the provisions of this section. Pursuant to this power and duty, the commission may administer oaths or affirmations, subpoena witnesses, compel their attendance and require the production of any books or records which it may deem relevant or material;
18. Within one hundred twenty days of the effective date of this subdivision, the commission shall create and thereafter maintain a publicly accessible website which shall set forth the procedure for filing a complaint with the commission, and which shall contain the documents identified in subdivision nineteen of this section, other than financial disclosure statements filed by state officers or employees or legislative employees, and any other records or information which the commission determines to be appropriate.
19. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of article six of the public officers law, the only records of the commission which shall be available for public inspection and copying are:
- (1) the information set forth in an annual statement of financial disclosure filed pursuant to section seventy-three-a of the public officers law except information deleted pursuant to paragraph (h) of subdivision nine of this section;
 - (2) notices of delinquency sent under subdivision twelve of this section;
 - (3) notices of civil assessments imposed under this section which shall include a description of the nature of the alleged wrongdoing, the procedural history of the complaint, the findings and determinations made by the commission, and any sanction imposed;
 - (4) the terms of any settlement or compromise of a complaint or referral which includes a fine, penalty or other remedy;
 - (5) those required to be held or maintained publicly available pursuant to article one-A of the legislative law; and
 - (6) substantial basis investigation reports issued by the commission pursuant to subdivision fourteen-a or fourteen-b of this section. With respect to reports concerning members of the legislature or legislative employees or candidates for member of the legislature, the joint commission shall not publicly disclose or otherwise disseminate such reports except in conformance with the requirements of paragraph of subdivision nine of section eighty of the legislative law.
- (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of article seven of the public officers law, no meeting or proceeding, including any such proceeding contemplated under paragraph (h) or (i) of

subdivision nine of this section, of the commission shall be open to the public, except if expressly provided otherwise by the commission or as is required by article one-A of the legislative law.

(c) Pending any application for deletion or exemption to the commission, all information which is the subject or a part of the application shall remain confidential. Upon an adverse determination by the commission, the reporting individual may request, and upon such request the commission shall provide, that any information which is the subject or part of the application remain confidential for a period of thirty days following notice of such determination. In the event that the reporting individual resigns his office and holds no other office subject to the jurisdiction of the commission, the information shall not be made public and shall be expunged in its entirety.

20. If any part or provision of this section or the application thereof to any person or organization is adjudged by a court of competent jurisdiction to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, such judgment shall not affect or impair any other part or provision or the application thereof to any other person or organization, but shall be confined in its operation to such part or provision.