

North Dakota Ethics Commission Regular Meeting

Minutes of December 17, 2025

600 E Boulevard Ave, Room 321, Bismarck, ND and MS Teams

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Cynthia Lindquist at 9:02 a.m. The following members of the Ethics Commission were also present: Commissioners Pamela Sharp, Mark Western, and Jared Huibregtse, as well as Executive Director Rebecca Binstock, General Counsel Logan Carpenter, and Operations Administrator Adilene Moos. Vice Chair Ron Goodman joined at approximately 10:25 a.m.
2. **Agenda Additions:** Executive Director asked for agenda item number 4 to be modified to include a welcome for the newest Commissioner, Jared Huibregtse, and a thank you to Murray Sagsveen.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** The Commission discussed regular meeting minutes from November 19, 2025.

**Motion:** Commissioner Sharp moved to approve the regular meeting minutes from November 19, 2025. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Western. Chair Lindquist called for a voice vote. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

4. **Welcome of Commissioners Mark Western and Jared Huibregtse:** The Commissioners welcomed each other and new Commissioners introduced themselves. Chair Lindquist thanked previous Commissioners for their contributions.
5. **Executive Director's Report:**
  - a. OA Moos provided a budget update for November 2025 for the 2025-27 biennium budget. She noted the following totals: current appropriation for the 2025-2027 biennium is \$1,368,016, expenditures in November were \$49, 512, bringing the total for the biennium to \$235,656, leaving a remaining appropriation for the 2025-2027 biennium of \$1,143,300. OA Moos projected expenditures through the end of the biennium to be at \$1,140,134, leaving an estimated ending balance for the biennium on June 30, 2027, at \$3,165. This number will fluctuate.

ED Binstock gave a brief overview on professional fees.

**b.** Executive Director Rebecca Binstock provided an update to the Commission on filings.

In November 2025, the Commission received the following filings:

- Complaints: 5
- Quasi-Judicial Forms: 0
- Conflict of Interest Forms: 3
- Meeting Notices: 4

The Commission currently has 47 pending complaints as of November 30, 2025.

**c.** ED Binstock provided a human resources update. ED Binstock worked with HRMS on a job posting of a temporary attorney to help with attorney complaint work. This job was posted in mid-October and closed on October 31, 2025. To expand the hiring pool, the job was then reposted again on December 3, 2025, and closed on December 12, 2025. Staff conducted interviews in the following weeks.

ED Binstock provided an update on the internship process. Seven individuals were interviewed by both ED Binstock and GC Carpenter in early December. Two job offers were extended. One offer was accepted and the second is pending on a response. The internships will begin in May.

ED Binstock provided an update on SAAG appointments. Attorneys Justin and Tiffany Vinje were retained to represent the Commission in the pending action in federal court along with GC Carpenter. The request for appointment was sent to the Office of Attorney General on December 2, 2025. As of December 15, 2025, the Office of Attorney General sent paperwork for their appointment.

Due to divergent positions of the executive branch and in an abundance of caution, ED Binstock is requesting the Commission repeat motions made or seconded by Commissioner Sagsveen at the Commission's November meeting in which the Commission authorized action by Commission staff. ED Binstock briefly went through GC Carpenter's salary increase, which was previously discussed in the November meeting.

**Motion:** Commissioner Sharp moved to authorize Executive Director Binstock to expend additional funds of \$15,652.82 during the 2025-2027 to cover an increase to General Counsel Carpenter's salary. The motion was seconded by Commissioner

Western. Commissioner Huibregtse recognized that he was not part of the original discussion, but reviewed the materials provided and supports the salary increase. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

- d. ED Binstock provided a COGEL Conference update. Commissioner Sharp, ED Binstock, GC Carpenter, and OA Moos attended the conference. The sessions were informative and sparked new ideas. ED Binstock is planning to compile the information that was gathered at the conference and present this to the Commission at the next meeting. Chair Lindquist encouraged new Commission members to attend next year's COGEL conference.
- e. ED Binstock provided an update on transcription services. ED Binstock has met with NDIT to discuss the Commission's need for transcription services. NDIT is testing several web-based subscription services for the Commission's consideration. ED Binstock anticipates this project will be concluded and a contract will be ready for the Commission's review in January.
- f. ED Binstock provided a very brief update on the case management system to let the Commission know staff began working with NDIT on this. The first meeting on this project with NDIT and procurement will be in early January.

6. **Ongoing Business:**

- a. ED Binstock provided a background on the proposed travel rules process thus far and changes that have been adopted. Several individuals provided feedback. ED Binstock and GC Carpenter met with Auditor Gallion to discuss his concerns. Based on this discussion, the language was updated on the proposed travel rules. GC Carpenter added that several comments were received and he is requesting more time for legal research purposes to provide the Commission with this information. The Commission discussed comments that were received on the proposed rules.
- b. GC Carpenter provided a brief on the proposed complaint rule amendments. GC Carpenter went through the most current draft of the proposed complaint rule amendments. The deadline for the complaint rulemaking process is February 19, 2026. Chair Lindquist requested for this item to be discussed in the January meeting to give time for review. GC Carpenter will provide legal research on penalties. Further discussion was had regarding the authority on assessing penalties.

Commissioner Western requested a special meeting for further discussion on the proposed complaint rule amendments. A special meeting will be held in early January.

- c. ED Binstock provided an overview of rules related to Ethics Commission organizational structure. The Commission directed staff to work on a draft on the organizational structure. GC Carpenter went through the rough draft of the organizational structure that was put together. The Commission discussed the rough draft of the organizational structure and provided feedback. Direction was given to omit the media relations portion.

The Commission recessed at 10:40 a.m. and all Commission members reconvened at 10:46 a.m.

- d. ED Binstock provided a brief overview of the response to the Office of the Attorney General. Former Commissioner Sagsveen drafted the memorandum which was provided to the Commission at the November meeting. Discussion was had regarding the drafted response and Commissioners agree that the response needs to be re-drafted. The Commission requested ED Binstock to draft a response with support from staff.
- e. ED Binstock provided a brief overview on the Secretary of State request for an Attorney General Opinion. The Office of Attorney General released this opinion on December 12, 2025. The Commission approved more time be given to GC Carpenter to review and analyze the opinion.

7. **Update on Process for Appointment of Commissioners:** ED Binstock provided an update on the process for Appointment of Commissioners. The selection committee met on December 16, 2025, and appointed Commissioner Jared Huibregtse. The selection committee discussed having another meeting to clarify and modify the selection process.
8. **Review & Discussion of Strategic Plan:** ED Binstock provided an update on the strategic plan. ED Binstock is requesting a special meeting in person in February to review the strategic plan in detail, draft changes, and review implementation objectives.
9. **Discussion of Public Comment Opportunity at Future Ethics Commission Meetings:** Chair Lindquist opened the discussion for giving the public the opportunity during future meetings for comments. GC Carpenter recommended the Commission create a policy first and once this policy is adopted, the Commission should clearly communicate the policy to the public prior to the first public comment opportunity. GC Carpenter will draft a policy and will review during the January meeting. The Commission further discussed the opportunity for public comment.

10. **Executive Session:** The Commission entered executive session during the general meeting at 11:52 a.m. to discuss Complaint Nos. 24-013, 24-015, 24-041, 25-059, 25-071, and 25-072. Information regarding the content and parties to a complaint to the Ethics Commission is confidential. The following participants entered the executive session: Chair Lindquist, Vice Chair Goodman, Commissioners Pamela Sharp, Mark Western, and Jared Huibregtse, Executive Director Rebecca Binstock, General Counsel Logan Carpenter, and Operations Administrator Adilene Moos.

Executive Session ended at 12:12 p.m. and all participants returned to the regular meeting.

During the Executive Session, the Commission discussed Complaint Nos. 24-013, 24-015, 24-041, 25-059, 25-071, and 25-072.

After Executive session, the following motions were made:

**Motion:** Commissioner Sharp moved to direct Commission staff to proceed as directed during executive session on Complaint Nos. 24-013 and 24-015. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goodman. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

**Motion:** Vice Chair Goodman moved to direct Executive Director Binstock to summarily dismiss Complaint No. 24-041 for lack of personal jurisdiction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sharp. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

**Motion:** Commissioner Huibregtse moved to direct Executive Director Binstock to summarily dismiss Complaint No. 25-059 for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sharp. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

**Motion:** Vice Chair Goodman moved to direct Executive Director Binstock to summarily dismiss Complaint No. 25-071 for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Western. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

**Motion:** Commissioner Sharp moved to direct Executive Director Binstock to summarily dismiss Complaint No. 25-072 for lack of personal jurisdiction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Huibregtse. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

The Commission recessed at 12:19 p.m. and all Commission members reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

11. **Discussion of Citizens Alliance of North Dakota et al v. Wrigley et al 1:25-cv-256 (D.N.D. 2025)**: ED Binstock provided an overview regarding the Citizens Alliance of North Dakota et al v. Wrigley et al. The Commission has retained Justin and Tiffany Vinje for this case. GC Carpenter entered into a stipulation with defense counsel for the Commission's response date to be on or before January 9, 2026. Discussion with counsels Justin and Tiffany Vinje regarding the above-stated case will be done during executive session.

**Motion:** Commissioner Western moved to enter executive session for attorney consultation regarding the matter of Citizens Alliance of North Dakota et al v. Wrigley et al 1:25-cv-256 (D.N.D. 2025) pursuant to N.D.C.C. §§ 44-04-19.1 and 44-04-19.2. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goodman. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

**Executive Session:** The Commission entered executive session at 12:45 p.m. pursuant to N.D.C.C. §§ 44-04-19.1 and 44-04-19.2 for the purposes of attorney consultation. The following participants entered the executive session: Chair Lindquist, Vice Chair Goodman, Commissioners Pamela Sharp, Mark Western, and Jared Huibregtse, Executive Director Rebecca Binstock, General Counsel Logan Carpenter, and Operations Administrator Adilene Moos, Attorneys Justin and Tiffany Vinje.

Executive Session ended at 1:16 p.m. and all participants except for Attorneys Justin and Tiffany Vinje returned to the regular meeting.

During the Executive Session, the Commission discussed attorney consultation regarding the matter of Citizens Alliance of North Dakota et al v. Wrigley et al 1:25-cv-256 (D.N.D. 2025).

After Executive session, the following motions were made:

**Motion:** Commissioner Western moved to direct counsel to proceed as discussed during executive session. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goodman. Chair Lindquist called for a roll call vote. The motion was approved by a majority roll call vote.

12. **Discussion of February – July 2026 Meeting Dates & Locations:** The Commission discussed potential in-person meetings and agreed on the following dates for future meetings:

- February 18, 2026;
- March 25, 2026;
- April 29, 2026;
- May 20, 2026;
- June 24, 2026;
- July 22, 2026;
- August 26, 2026;
- September 30, 2026;
- October 28, 2026;
- November 18, 2026;
- December 16, 2026.

13. **Adjourn:** Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., livestreamed with MS Teams.

Approved on 1/28/2026



Rebecca Binstock, Executive Director, North Dakota Ethics Commission