

Article - General Provisions

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§5–515.

(a) (1) A legislator may request a written opinion from the Joint Ethics Committee on the propriety of any current or proposed conduct of the legislator and involving the applicable standards of ethical conduct for legislators established by law, rule, or other standard of ethical conduct.

(2) A request for an opinion shall:

- (i) be in writing and signed by the legislator;
- (ii) be addressed to the Joint Ethics Committee or either cochair;
- (iii) be submitted in a timely manner; and
- (iv) include a complete and accurate statement of the relevant facts.

(3) If a request is unclear or incomplete, the Joint Ethics Committee may seek additional information from the legislator.

(4) (i) The Counsel to the Joint Ethics Committee shall prepare for the Committee a response to each written request for an opinion under this subsection.

(ii) Each opinion shall discuss all applicable laws, rules, or other standards.

(5) Except as provided in paragraph (6)(i) of this subsection, an opinion must be approved by a majority of the members of the Joint Ethics Committee.

(6) (i) The cochairs of the Joint Ethics Committee may approve an opinion on behalf of the Committee if they determine that the opinion is consistent with prior precedent and therefore does not require consideration by the full Committee.

(ii) An opinion issued under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph shall be distributed to each member of the Joint Ethics Committee not later than the next meeting of the Committee.

(iii) Notwithstanding subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, if a cochair of the Joint Ethics Committee is the legislator requesting the opinion, the opinion must be approved by a majority of the Committee.

(b) The Joint Ethics Committee is not required to issue an opinion if the request is not made in a timely manner.

(c) The Joint Ethics Committee on its own motion may issue opinions as it

considers appropriate.

(d) (1) The cochairs shall determine whether an opinion shall be made public, with deletions and changes necessary to protect the legislator's identity.

(2) (i) The Counsel to the Joint Ethics Committee shall compile and index each opinion that will be made public.

(ii) The compilation of opinions shall be distributed to each member of the General Assembly and shall be available to the public.

(e) The Joint Ethics Committee may take no adverse action with regard to conduct that has been undertaken in reliance on a written opinion if the conduct conforms to the specific facts addressed in the opinion.

(f) Information provided to the Joint Ethics Committee by a legislator seeking advice regarding prospective conduct may not be used as the basis for initiating an investigation under § 5-515 of this subtitle if the legislator acts in good faith in accordance with the advice of the Committee.

(g) (1) An opinion issued under this section is binding on any legislator to whom it is addressed.

(2) A published opinion is binding on all members of the General Assembly.

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