



San Francisco Ethics Commission

25 Van Ness Avenue, STE 220
San Francisco, CA 94102-6053
ethics.commission@sfgov.org
415-252-3100 | sfethics.org

Date: November 10, 2025
To: Members of the Ethics Commission
From: Patrick Ford, Executive Director
Subject: **Agenda Item 4 – Executive Director’s Report**

Summary and Action Requested

This report provides various programmatic and operational highlights since the last report.

No action is required by the Commission, as this item is for informational purposes only.

Staffing Updates

As announced in the October report, Kyle Kennedy, the Commission’s Engagement and Compliance Manager, left the Commission last month. Laura Mandler is now the Acting Engagement and Compliance Manager. Laura joined the Commission in 2024 and has served in the Engagement and Compliance Division as Compliance Counsel since then. In this role, she has been a leader in the Commission’s advice program and lead the creation of the content for the new annual ethics training module. Laura previously worked in the FPPC’s Enforcement Division and Form 700 Unit and holds a JD from UC Law. Laura’s first quarterly report as Acting Engagement and Compliance Manager is presented as Agenda Item 5.

The Commission is currently awaiting permission from the Mayor’s Budget Office to begin formal recruitment of the Engagement and Compliance Manager position. Although the position is fully funded for FY26, permission is needed before the recruitment begins.

Similarly, the Commission is also awaiting permission to backfill the Senior IS Engineer position after Tyler Field vacates the position in early December. I will update the Commission on the status of both recruitments.

Budget

The Mayor’s Budget Office (MBO) has made several adjustments as it looks toward the upcoming budget season. MBO is no longer directly reviewing departmental travel requests after the city managed to reduce its travel budget by 50%. MBO is still maintaining its citywide hiring freeze and plans to operate under a “core programs” strategy that prioritizes filling positions that address each department’s core needs.

MBO has assigned a new budget analyst, Eliza Pugh, as the department’s liaison. Staff have been working closely with our new analyst to provide MBO with a guide to our programs and divisions. We

are hopeful that a close working relationship will result in budget instructions that are more targeted to our agency's needs than last year's blanket 15% cut.

Streamlining Legislation Project Update

In September, the Commission voted unanimously to approve two ordinances designed to improve and streamline various programs and policies administered by the Commission. One focused on changes regarding campaign finance rules ([File # 250868](#)) and the other covered several smaller programs and policies ([File # 250867](#)).

Both items should next be heard at the Rules Committee, as early as Monday November 17th, however this hearing has been delayed several times already. Staff have continued to engage with members of the Board and stakeholders regarding these ordinances. Ethics staff have heard from other stakeholders that Supervisor Chan is developing amendments to the campaign finance ordinance. Supervisor Chan has not responded to requests from staff to meet with her on this project.

We look forward to providing additional updates on these ordinances soon.

Prop E Commission Streamlining Task Force

In the November 2024 election, San Francisco voters approved [Proposition E](#). Prop E "created a Commission Streamlining Task Force (Task Force) to review the structure of the City's commissions and recommend to the Mayor and the Board by February 1, 2026, how the City could change, eliminate or consolidate commissions to improve the administration of City government." The [Commission Streamlining Task Force](#) consists of five appointed members, and the Task Force has been holding regular public meetings to discuss the operations of City commissions and how they might be changed.

On October 24, the staff of the Task Force published a [report](#) that contained recommendations concerning the Ethics Commission. The recommendations were keep the Ethics Commission and retain most of its current structure, including the appointment structure of the five commissioners. However, the report recommended three main changes:

- To make Ethics commissioners removable at will, as opposed to being removable only for official misconduct;
- To remove the Ethics Commission's ability to place measure before voters; and
- To remove the ability of voters to recall a member of the Ethics Commission.

On October 30, I sent a letter (Attachment 1) to the Task Force urging them to not make Ethics commissioners at will and to not remove the Commission's ability to place measures on the ballot. Both of these aspects of the Commission's structure are central to its independence and efficacy. If commissioners could be removed at will by their appointing authority, the Commission would be prone to political pressure and would not be able to function as an effective independent oversight agency. Similarly, the Commission's ability to place measures on the ballot is a core feature of the Commission's policymaking role that provides a critical path for good government laws to be enacted without prior approval by the elected representatives who are subject to those rules. For example, in 2000 the Commission placed Prop O on the ballot in order to create the City's public campaign financing program.

This is an example of how this unique power of the Commission is necessary in order to pass important ethics and campaign finance laws that may be unpopular with sitting elected officials.

On November 5, the Task Force held a hearing at which it discussed the Ethics Commission and the recommendations contained in the staff report. Task Force members expressed interest in deviating from the staff recommendation and maintaining the for-cause-removal protection of Ethics Commission. However, one member expressed interest in changing the removal standard from official misconduct to something less difficult to establish. Task Force members expressed concerns with the Commission's current power to place measures on the ballot and cited the Commission's 2024 ethics measure, Prop D, as a reason to eliminate the power.

The Task Force postponed taking any formal action on the Ethics Commission at this time and plans to discuss the Ethics Commission again at a Task Force meeting in December. The Task Force directed its staff to conduct more research into the ballot measure question as well as the meaning of official misconduct. Ethics staff are currently engaging with Task Force staff to support this research and encourage the Task Force to maintain the integrity of the Ethics Commission.