San Francisco Ethics Commission

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Date: November 9, 2026

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 departmentwide programmatic and operational highlights since the last report. Updates about divisional operations are provided in quarterly division reports.

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

State Legislation Update

The California State Legislature adjourned its 2025-2026 session for Final Recess on August 31, 2026. During the session, the Policy Division tracked a total of 46 bills – 24 bills during the first half of the session, and 22 bills during the second half of the session. 30 of the bills ultimately passed and have been chaptered by the Secretary of State and are set to become law on or after January 1, 2027. Staff are preparing for any necessary operational changes based on updates to the law. Noteworthy pieces of legislation include:

- **Assembly Bill 775 (Fong) – Behested Payments: Reporting**
  - This bill introduces a new requirement that behested payment disclosure reports be filed on a quarterly basis using an electronic filing system either directly with the Fair Political Practices Commission or with a local agency that has its own electronic filing system.
- **Assembly Bill 2421 (Valencia) – Political Reform Act of 1974: Committee Termination**
  - This bill sets the procedure for a campaign committee to be terminated by the Secretary of State when the committee has a cash balance of $3,000 or less and has not filed a campaign report for at least the preceding 12 months.
- **Senate Bill 900 (McNerney) – Political Reform Act of 1974: Top Contributors: Disclosures**
  - This bill changes the disclosures required in campaign advertisements to make them shorter and take up less space, including larger format advertisements such as billboards and electronic advertisements displayed on a physical surface.

Pending certified results of the November 3, 2026 election, the 2027-2028 Regular Session will reconvene in January 2027. The Policy Division will continue its legislative tracking and monitoring work for the new session, including monitoring the California Fair Political Practices Commission meeting on

December 3, 2026 where Commissioners will likely discuss ideas for potential sponsored legislation ahead of the new session.

CalAccess Replacement System (CARS) Update

Following the July Executive Director's Report, the Policy Division continued its work in preparing for the launch of the Cal-Access Replacement System. Staff participated in the external user testing process from September 14 – October 16, were able to gain valuable insights into the system functionality and provide initial feedback to the Secretary of State's office. The Policy Division also held internal meetings with other divisions to review pending changes to California's Political Reform Act and its supporting regulations, feedback from the user testing process, and other necessary program and published resource updates to ensure a reliable transition as these changes are operationalized.

The California Secretary of State's Office announced last week that the system launch is being delayed from November 16, 2026 until February 16, 2027. This additional 90-day period is intended to allow adequate time for the project team to develop and test functionality issues identified during the user testing period. Staff are in communication with both the Secretary of State's Office and the Fair Political Practices Commission to facilitate continued conversations around the transition to a new electronic filing standard. There will be further updates as this work continues.

Legislative Projects

The Commission is currently working on multiple legislative matters; updates on these matters are provided below.

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- **Legislation to Reinforce Contribution Limits and Ensure Accountability for Violations of City Law (File #261017):** In August, the Commission voted unanimously to approve this campaign finance ordinance, which would enact recommendations originating from the Commission's policy report published this April. The legislation has since been introduced at the Board of Supervisors with Supervisor Fielder sponsoring. Commission staff are currently in the process of scheduling meetings with other members of the Board on this legislation and are looking to identify additional sponsors. The legislation is currently under the 30 Day Rule and should soon be heard at the Rules Committee.

- **Streamlining Legislation (File #250868 and File #250867):** The two ordinances from the Commission's streamlining project last year were both heard at the Government Audit and Oversight Committee in July. The streamlining ordinance regarding campaign finance rules was amended at committee and referred back to the Ethics Commission. Once there is a legislative path forward for this ordinance, Staff will recommend the amended legislation be considered by the Commission. The other ordinance regarding campaign consultants, recusal notifications, and major developers was continued to the call of the chair at committee.

- **Website Disclaimer Legislation (File #260987):** This legislation will update the required disclaimers for political advertisements and electioneering communications to reflect the Commission's upcoming change from a ".org" web domain to a ".gov" domain, as soon required by State law. This change was initially included as part of the campaign finance streamlining ordinance introduced last year (File #250868), however given the time sensitive nature of this change, it has been moved into this standalone legislation. Last month, the Commission voted to approve this legislation and it was then introduced at the Board of Supervisors, where President Mandelman is sponsoring. The legislation is currently under the 30 Day Rule and should soon be heard at the Government Audit and Oversight Committee.

- **Trustee Campaign Reporting Requirement Legislation (File #250928):** Last July, as part of the Commission's streamlining project, the Commission recommended the Board of Supervisors pass an ordinance removing the unnecessary, overly strict, and administratively burdensome campaign disclosure requirements that are currently applied to candidates for the Retirement Board, Health Service Board, and Retiree Health Care Trust Fund Board. This legislation was introduced last year by President Mandelman and subsequently referred from the Government Audit and Oversight Committee without recommendation last month. At a meeting of the full Board on September 29, the item was continued for one week to allow for additional engagement with stakeholders. Staff participated in a stakeholder meeting with representatives from President Mandelman's office and Protect Our Benefits on October 1. Staff anticipate the item returning to the full Board on October 6.

- **Biennial Code Review Legislation (File #261018):** Every two years, the City is required to review and update the list of City officers and employees who are required to file the Form 700 (Statement of Economic Interests). Commission staff have been working with the City Attorney's Office, the Clerk of the Board, and President Mandelman's office on this legislation which was introduced last month. A substitute version of this legislation has also been introduced that would retain the requirement that candidates for trustee positions file the Form 700 as candidates. This new language was added following concerns raised by the Board and other stakeholders regarding trustee candidates potentially not filing the Form 700 as candidates. This legislation does not require Commission approval and is currently pending action at the Rules Committee.

- **Behested Payment Waiver Legislation (File #250947 and File #261016):** In July, the Commission voted to approve President Mandelman's behested payment ordinance that would allow the Board of Supervisors to grant behested payment waivers for itself and require all waiver recipients to file reports with the Board regarding how their waivers were used. This legislation is still pending committee action. Last month, Supervisor Fielder introduced another behested payment waiver ordinance that would similarly require waiver recipients to file reports with the Board and which would prohibit the Board from granting waivers to anyone if they had already received a similar waiver within the last year. Commission staff are in communication with Supervisor Fielder regarding this new legislation.

- **Non-profit Lobbyist Legislation (Not Yet Introduced):** As reported in June, Supervisor Dorsey is pursuing legislation that would require nonprofit employees who engage in lobbying on behalf of their employer to register and report that lobbyist activity. This would involve removing an exception from the City's lobbyist rules that currently exempts this lobbying activity from the registration and reporting requirements when carried out by a non-profit employee. Commission staff have been working with Supervisor Dorsey's office on developing this legislation. Once introduced, this legislation would require Commission approval to be enacted.

Non-Substantive Changes Made to Ethics Commission Regulations

During the November 2024 Commission meeting, the Commission gave the Executive Director the authority to make non-substantive updates to the Commission's regulations and asked to be notified when such changes were made.

In July of 2025, the Policy Division completed its review of all the Commission's regulations and identified both substantive and non-substantive changes to be made in the future. At that time, the Policy Division also updated how the Commission's regulations are presented on the website, creating a standardized and more easily navigable layout.

Per the authority granted to the Executive Director, several non-substantive changes were made during September 2026. Across all regulations, except for the recently amended Enforcement Regulations, changes were made to:

- Adjust spacing and the bullet hierarchy in the printable versions to make them easier to read.
- Add additional spacing and emphasis for plain language examples provided in certain regulations.
    - Regulation 3.214-2, Example 3 was also updated to be more generally applicable, as the previous version was inconsistent with the Arts Commission's grantmaking process.
- Update phrasing to utilize gender-neutral language.
- Correct capitalization and formatting of regulation titles to ensure uniformity.
    - The regulations for Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code Section 3.100 (Conflict of Interest – Financial Disclosure), Charter Article VX (Ethics Training), and Administrative Code Section 67.33 (Sunshine Ordinance Training) did not previously have titles and were subsequently given titles to reflect the information presented.
- Correct minor typos, including missing or extra spaces and punctuation.