



March 2021

Message from the Executive Director

I hope this finds you safe and well, as we all look forward to better days.

At long last we have moved from our offices back to the Capehart-Crocker House. After a few chaotic weeks of packing and unpacking, our offices are ready to go. Most staff members continue to telework, but we hope to slowly move back to part-time work in the office in early April as the COVID-19 Pandemic risk lessens. Please check our website for more details on office hours. In the interim, Ethics staff looks forward to assisting you by phone or email.

Contact information is available on our website at <https://ethics.nc.gov/>. Please take note of our new website address, as our former NCSBE website will be retired.

- Kathleen Edwards



It's that time Again... Annual Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) Deadline

Completed SEIs are due on or before **APRIL 15, 2021**. We encourage you to file electronically. It's fast, efficient, your information is saved for future filing, and you receive immediate confirmation of your filing. If you do not receive a confirmation number as soon as you file, you have not successfully submitted your SEI and you need to log back in and make sure you completed **all** sections and hit the "submit" button.

We still offer manual filing for those who cannot file electronically, but hope you will give electronic filing a try. Trust us, you will be surprised at how easy it really is. Here is the website link to get started: <https://ethics.nc.gov/seis>.



Here are some of the most common errors that require that you to fix and refile your SEI:

- **Income Question:** You should list income sources (not amounts) of over \$5,000. Many select "*I had no reportable income over \$5,000*", which in some cases is an error. If you are employed, you most likely have income of \$5,000 or more and need to disclose it.
- **"Reason for Filing":** Our electronic system has all Agencies, Boards, Commissions, Community Colleges, Universities, and TACs listed, so make sure you make the correct selection(s). If you serve on more than one entity, you should list them **all** on your SEI, to avoid the need for multiple filings.
- **Missing Real Estate Disclosure Form (RED) for RPO/MPO filers:** You must select your TAC board as your "Reason for Filing," otherwise the system will not prompt you to complete a RED. If you file manually, the RED will print out with your SEI.

FREQUENTLY ASKED SEI QUESTIONS

Q: Who must file?

A: All public servants, legislators and judicial officers (justices, judges, district attorneys, clerks of court) and state employees subject to the Ethics Act must file a SEI. However, State employees covered by the Ethics Act who earn less than \$60,000.00 annually do not have to file an SEI.

Q: If I was an elected official, do I have to file a SEI if I am no longer in office?

A: Yes. Elected officials who were subject to the SEI filing requirements while in office (Council of State members, legislators, and judicial officers) must file a SEI the year after leaving office by April 15th.

Q: Do I have to file if my term on a Board or Commission has expired or will expire before April 15?

A: If your term has expired or will expire on or before April 15, 2021 *but you are still serving because you have not been replaced or resigned* prior to April 15th, you are still required to file a SEI by that deadline.

Q: Where Can I Check Agency or Board's SEI Compliance?

A: You can check compliance here, which lists the SEI filing date and education received date for your board or agency: <https://et.ncsbe.gov/Report>



The State Ethics Commission is Home Again!

We are excited to announce that in January 2021, the Ethics Commission offices returned to the Capehart-Crocker House in downtown Raleigh. The Queen Anne styled house, a designated Raleigh Historic Landmark, was built in 1898 for Lucy Capehart, daughter of former State Attorney General Bartholomew Moore. In 1908, the property was sold to Sheriff H.H. Crocker, who resided in the home for nearly 40 years. In 1971, the house was acquired by the State and has been used for government offices since. The house was originally constructed along North Wilmington Street but was relocated to its current location in 1979 when the Government Mall complex was developed in Raleigh.

The Ethics Commission first inhabited the Capehart-Crocker House in March 2009. Commission staff took up offices amongst the house's towers, turrets, dormers, and pediments, while the Commission met regularly in converted conference space adorned with elaborate wood ornamentation. The Commission's offices remained there until August 2017, when the Commission was merged with the State Board of Elections, housed in Raleigh's Dobbs Building. The Capehart-Crocker house remained vacant until 2019, when the Secretary of the Department of Administration temporarily moved to the home while the DOA building was renovated. Upon completion of DOA's renovation, the Ethics Commission, which was demerged from Elections and independently reconstituted effective January 2019, returned home.



Online Ethics Education

The seeds of our online ethics education program's destruction were likely sown in 2010, when Steve Jobs announced that Apple would not invest any efforts to make Adobe Flash Player run on its iPad. That announcement began a long, steady decline for Flash, as it became increasingly isolated from more platforms. Adobe finally pulled the plug in December, leaving products using it non-functional



The Ethics Commission began development of its online education program, using Flash Player, in 2009. That program has served North Carolina's public servants well, but like other Flash products, has become harder to manage over time.

But help is on the way. An entirely new and interactive program built on software that functions on all up-to-date browsers and devices (even iPads!) is in the works and will be published soon.



In the meantime, we are offering live webinars every month to help public servants comply with their ethics education requirements. Registration information for the live presentations can be found [here](#). These presentations are 90 minutes in length and participants can ask questions of the speaker.

For questions or additional information concerning the Ethics Education requirements, please contact us.

Ethics by the Numbers

The State Ethics staff has been very busy this year. Let's review the numbers.

#The Ethics Commission has **10** staff members. Fully staffed at **13** staff members in 2016, three positions were cut following the Commission's demerger from the Board of Elections.

#The Commission regulates some **7,000** individuals in varying ways, including 260 State boards.

#Over **6,000** individuals file SEIs with the Commission annually.

#The Ethics Act requires that most new appointees' SEIs be evaluated by Commission staff prior to serving and every two years thereafter. This SEI evaluation requirement is unique to North Carolina, most states only act as repositories for financial disclosure statements but do not individually evaluate those disclosures. In 2020 we evaluated nearly **2,000** SEIs.

#Commission staff also provides required education to legislators, covered State employees, and some State board members. In 2020 the Commission educated over **1200** officials.

#Commission staff also provides guidance to legislators, covered State employees, and State board members. In 2020, Commission Staff issued over **400** advisory opinions.

#Commission staff investigates complaints of violations of the Ethics Act and Lobbying Law. In 2020 it investigated nearly **40** complaints filed under those laws. Commission staff also assists members of the public who have concerns that do not arise under the Ethics Act by directing them to the appropriate forum to express their concerns.



Hero Corner

Because Ethics Liaisons are our heroes!

Did you know...?

...our **electronic filing system** is a remote, contactless way to submit a Statement of Economic Interest (SEI)

...electronic filing is **available 24/7** and retains each filer's financial and property information

...when your members use the electronic filing, the **SEI Compliance Report** is immediately updated.

Please note: In pandemic conditions, paper filings can be delayed weeks between mailing, delivering, processing, and scanning, making compliance tracking difficult. But with electronic filing the filer will receive immediate confirmation and their SEI will be uploaded within hours!

...the **average electronic filing** takes less than 20 minutes

...Ethics staff can **change the electronic filing email addresses** or **reset the password remotely**.

Please note: You should call us if your filers need help with their account from last year. Previous electronic filers should NOT create a new or second account because the filer's previous history will not transfer. Filers should also check their spam filter for the password reset email.

...Ethics Liaisons can also create a **mock electronic SEI** to familiarize themselves with the system. But please don't submit your mock SEI.



Insider Tips – The Ethical Kind

Have advice to pass along to your fellow ELs? Habits that help you track your agency or board's membership or compliance? Share your tips and we'll feature them in upcoming newsletters! Send tips to SEI@ncsbe.gov, flagging it as an "*Ethics Liaison Tip*" and indicate whether we can use it in future newsletters. Thanks!

Ethics Liaison Superheroes – Recognition for Outstanding Service

🏆 **BRITNE BECKER** of the **NC Dept. of Labor** stays in regular communication with our office, ensuring that the dozens of DOL employees get their required Ethics Education training and SEI filings done on time. Tracking education dates across boards and agencies for each member or employee is a daunting task—and that's why *Britne, you're a Superhero!*

🏆 **TONYA MORGAN** of the **NC Dept. of Transportation** works with the EL of NCDOT to ensure DOT employees are compliant with the State Ethics Act. We can always depend on Tonya to supply the most current information we need for our records, for instance telling us about new hires before their start date—and that's why *Tonya, you're a Superhero!*

