



Quality of Life Council

Creating a Sustainable Future for Northwest Indiana

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RESOLUTION Municipal and County Ethics Ordinances

Whereas the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council seeks to promote a higher quality of life in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties;

Whereas county and municipal governments play key roles in developing and maintaining a high quality of life that is sustainable over the long term;

Whereas confidence in the integrity of governmental officials, both elected and appointed, is critical to citizen engagement in the full life of the community;

Whereas confidence in the integrity of local government is shaken by reported and suspected incidences of waste, fraud, and mismanagement;

Whereas ethics ordinances have proven effective as:

- Guidelines for elected and appointed officials in the exercise of their public duties,
- Benchmarks against which the behavior of local officials can be assessed, and
- Tool through which to restore and increase public confidence in the integrity of local governments, and

Whereas effective ethics ordinances includes certain identifiable elements,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council supports the development, adoption, and full implementation of ethics ordinances in all municipalities and county governments in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties. At a minimum, these ordinances should include the following elements:

- An “aspirational” introduction that clearly states that the purpose of the code is not to create more criminal codes, but to establish systems that hold the potential to restore trust in local government,
- The appointment of an “ethics officer,” in most instances as a collateral duty of an appointee who is already in service to the municipality or county adopting the ordinance,
- Required training in ethics for all employees and elected officials,
- The identification of an investigatory body (e.g., an auditor, inspector general, prosecutor, or ethics commission) to address suspected violations of the ethics code, and
- Substantive sections that address the following issues: (1) gifts (i.e., solicitation, acceptance, and unauthorized compensation), (2) employment and business conducted with government entities (i.e., conflicts of interest, lobbying, the hiring of relatives, and patronage), (3) the misuse of public positions, (4) post and pre-employment restrictions, (5) voting conflicts, (6) financial disclosure, (7) sunshine laws and open meetings

stipulations, (8) access to public records, (9) procurement, (10) whistleblower protection, (11) campaign ethics, (12) the regulation of private citizens with respect to gifts and bribes, and (13) sanctions pertaining to all of the above, including fines, penalties, removal from office, and public reprimands.

Pursuant to this resolution, the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council will:

- Communicate the contents of this resolution to decision-makers in Northwest Indiana;
- Provide supplemental information and materials to decision-makers who can contribute to the development, adoption, and full implementation of ethics ordinances in all municipalities and county governments in the Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties; and
- Take steps to educate the general public regarding the need to adopt robust ethics ordinances.

Adopted: *September 5, 2003*