

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 commissions and other agencies, so as to create the Public Authority Ethics Board; to define
3 certain terms; to provide for membership of such board; to provide for officers and
4 administrative matters; to provide for powers and duties of such board; to provide for related
5 matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to commissions
9 and other agencies, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

10 "ARTICLE 9

11 50-12-150.

12 As used in this article, the term:

13 (1) 'Authority' means any public authority created by general law.

14 (2) 'Board' means the Public Authority Ethics Board created by this article.

15 50-12-151.

16 (a) There is created the Public Authority Ethics Board, with such duties and powers as are
17 set forth in this article.

18 (b) The board shall be governed by six members appointed as follows: two members, who
19 shall not be from the same political party, shall be appointed by the Governor, one for a
20 term of three years and one for a term of two years; one member shall be appointed by each
21 majority leader of the Senate and House of Representatives for terms of four years; and one
22 member shall be appointed by each minority leader of the Senate and House of
23 Representatives for terms of three years. The initial members shall take office on July 1,

1 2008. Upon the expiration of a member's term of office, a new member, appointed in the
2 same manner as the member whose term of office expired as provided in this subsection,
3 shall become a member of the board and shall serve for a term of four years and until such
4 member's successor is duly appointed and qualified. If a vacancy occurs in the
5 membership of the board, a new member shall be appointed to the unexpired term of office
6 by the official who appointed the vacating member. Members of the board shall not serve
7 for more than one complete term of office.

8 (c) All members of the board shall be residents of this state.

9 (d) Any person who:

10 (1) Has been a member or employee of any public authority subject to this article within
11 a period of five years prior to such person's appointment;

12 (2) Has held any state or local public office within a period of five years prior to such
13 person's appointment; or

14 (3) Serves as an officer of any political party, whether such office is elective or
15 appointive and whether such office exists on a local, state, or national level

16 shall be ineligible to serve as a member of the board.

17 (e) The board shall elect a chairperson, a vice chairperson, and other officers as it deems
18 necessary. The members shall not be compensated for their services but they shall be
19 reimbursed in an amount equal to the per diem received by the General Assembly for each
20 day or portion thereof spent in serving as members of the board. They shall be paid their
21 necessary traveling expenses while engaged in the business of the board.

22 (f) A majority of the members of the board constitutes a quorum for the transaction of
23 business. The vote of at least a majority of the members present at any meeting at which
24 a quorum is present is necessary for any action to be taken by the board. No vacancy in the
25 membership of the board impairs the right of a quorum to exercise all rights and perform
26 all duties of the board.

27 (g) Meetings of the members of the board shall be held at the call of the chairperson or
28 whenever any two members so request.

29 50-12-152.

30 The funds necessary to carry out this article shall come from the funds appropriated to and
31 available to the Public Authority Ethics Board and from any other available funds. The
32 board shall be a budget unit as defined in Part 1 of Article 4 of Chapter 12 of Title 45, the
33 'Budget Act'; provided, however, that the board shall be assigned for administrative
34 purposes only to the Secretary of State.

1 50-12-153.

2 The board is vested with the following powers:

- 3 (1) To meet at such times and places as it may deem necessary;
- 4 (2) To contract with other agencies, public or private, or persons as it deems necessary
5 for the rendering and affording of such services, facilities, studies, and reports to the
6 board as will best assist it to carry out its duties and responsibilities;
- 7 (3) To cooperate with and secure the cooperation of every department, agency, or
8 instrumentality in the state government or its political subdivisions in the furtherance of
9 the purposes of this article;
- 10 (4) To employ an executive secretary and such additional staff as the board deems
11 necessary to carry out the powers delegated to the board by this article;
- 12 (5) To issue subpoenas to compel any person to appear, give sworn testimony, or
13 produce documentary or other evidence;
- 14 (6) To institute and prosecute actions in the superior courts, in its own name, seeking to
15 enjoin or restrain any violation or threatened violation of this article;
- 16 (7) To adopt in accordance with Chapter 13 of Title 50, the 'Georgia Administrative
17 Procedure Act,' such rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the purposes of
18 this article; and
- 19 (8) To do any and all things necessary or convenient to enable it to perform wholly and
20 adequately its duties and to exercise the powers granted to it.

21 50-12-154.

22 The board shall have the following duties:

- 23 (1) To accept and file any information voluntarily supplied that exceeds the requirements
24 of this article;
- 25 (2) To make investigations upon receipt of the written complaint of any person with
26 respect to any alleged violation of any provision of law. Nothing in this Code section
27 shall be construed to limit or encumber the right of the board to initiate on probable cause
28 an investigation on its own cognizance as it deems necessary or appropriate;
- 29 (3) To establish procedures for filing complaints and to require a filing fee not to exceed
30 \$100.00;
- 31 (4) To request the state auditor to conduct a complete and thorough audit of any authority,
32 and such request shall be given priority treatment;
- 33 (5) To conduct a preliminary investigation of the merits of a written complaint by any
34 person who believes that a violation of law has occurred. If there are found no reasonable
35 grounds to believe that a violation has occurred, the complaint shall be dismissed, subject
36 to being reopened upon discovery of additional evidence or relevant material. If the

1 board determines that there are such reasonable grounds to believe that a violation has
 2 occurred, it shall give notice by summoning the persons believed to have committed the
 3 violation to a hearing. The hearing shall be conducted in all respects in accordance with
 4 Chapter 13 of Title 50, the 'Georgia Administrative Procedure Act.' The board may file
 5 a complaint charging violations of any provision of law, and any person aggrieved by the
 6 final decision of the board is entitled to judicial review in accordance with Chapter 13 of
 7 Title 50; provided, however, that nothing in this Code section shall be construed to limit
 8 or encumber the right of the board to initiate on probable cause an investigation on its
 9 own cognizance as it deems necessary or appropriate;

10 (6) To report suspected violations of law to the appropriate law enforcement authority;

11 (7) To issue orders, after the completion of appropriate proceedings, prohibiting the
 12 actual or threatened commission of any unlawful conduct, which order may include a
 13 provision requiring the violator to cease and desist from committing further violations;

14 (8) To petition the superior court within the county where the hearing was or is being
 15 conducted for the enforcement of any order issued in connection with such hearing; and

16 (9) To carry out the procedures, duties, and obligations relative to the board set forth in
 17 this article.

18 50-12-155.

19 The board shall order the removal of any member of an authority which the board by
 20 majority vote finds by clear and convincing evidence to have committed the acts or
 21 omissions with which he or she has been charged. The appointing authority shall fill any
 22 such post in the manner provided for the filling of a vacancy. The finding of the board
 23 shall not be admissible in a criminal trial based on the same facts. The board shall
 24 immediately dismiss a complaint if the person charged voluntarily resigns his or her
 25 position.

26 50-12-156.

27 If an appointing authority by majority vote certifies to the board that a member of an
 28 authority has demonstrated a pattern of activity in variance with published purposes and
 29 goals of the appointing authority, the board shall take such evidence as the board deems
 30 appropriate and shall be authorized to order the removal of the member if the evidence so
 31 dictates."

32 SECTION 2.

33 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
 34 without such approval.

SECTION 3.

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- 2 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.