

POLICY: BOARD MEMBER CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Policy

It is the ethical and legal duty of all School Board members to avoid conflicts of interest as well as the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Definitions

“Conflict of interest” means a situation when a board member’s private interests, as distinguished from the board member’s interest as a member of the general public, would benefit from or be harmed by his or her actions as a member of the board.

Implementation

In order to comply with the obligations thus imposed, the Board and its members will adhere to the following recommended standards.

1. A Board member will not give the impression that he or she would represent special interests or partisan politics for personal gain.
2. A Board member will not give the impression that he or she has the authority to make decisions or take action on behalf of the Board or the school administration.
3. A Board member will not use his or her position on the Board to promote personal financial interests or the financial interests of family members, friends or supporters.
4. A Board member will not solicit or accept anything of value in return for taking particular positions on matters before the Board.
5. A Board member will not give the impression that his or her position on any issue can be influenced by anything other than a fair presentation of all sides of the question.
6. Board members will be familiar with, and adhere to, those provisions of Vermont education law which define School Board powers and govern Board member compensation and public bidding processes.

Avoiding Conflicts

When a Board member becomes aware that he or she is in a position that creates a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest as defined in state law or this policy, he or she will declare the nature and extent of the conflict or appearance of conflict for inclusion in the Board minutes, and will abstain from voting or participating in the discussion of the issue giving rise to the conflict.

Complaints of Conflict of Interest

When a conflict of interest claim against a Board member is brought to the Board in writing and is signed by another Board member or a member of the public, and the Board member against whom the claim is made does not concur that a conflict in fact exists, the following Board procedures will be followed.

1. Upon a majority vote of the remaining Board members, or upon order of the chair, the Board will hold an informal hearing on the conflict of interest claim, giving both the Board member and the person bringing the claim an opportunity to be heard.
2. At the conclusion of the informal hearing, the remaining Board members will determine by majority vote whether to:
 - a. Issue a public finding that the conflict of interest charge is not supported by the evidence and is therefore dismissed;
 - b. Issue a public finding that the conflict of interest charge is supported by the evidence and that the member should disqualify him or herself from voting or otherwise participating in the Board deliberations or decision related to that issue, as required by Vermont statute; and/or
 - c. Issue a public finding that the conflict of interest charge is supported by the evidence and the Board member should be formally censured or subjected to such other action as may be allowed by law.

Date Warned:

Date Adopted: 8-19-08

Legal Reference(s):

16 V.S.A. § 262(d) (Election of officers)

16 V.S.A. §557 (Gratuity/compensation prohibited)

16 V.S.A. §558 (Eligibility for election to school board)

16 V.S.A. §559 (Public bids)

16 V.S.A. §563(20) (Powers of school boards)

Cross Reference:

¹ See 16 V.S.A. §563(20). "...establish policies and procedures designed to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest."