

Public Comment Guide for Opposing Changes to Seattle's Ethics Code

Committee Meeting on Thursday, May 22nd at 2:00 PM

Agenda:

- **1:00 PM**
 - Meet in lobby for briefing and poster making (*at tables just past the elevators*)
 - [Signup for remote public comment](#) will open
- **1:30 PM** – Signup for in-person public comment will open
- **2:00 PM** – Governance, Accountability, and Economic Development Committee begins

The public comment period is typically 20 minutes, however, the committee may vote to extend the comment period long enough to allow everyone who has signed up to testify. Speakers will be given **one minute** for their public comment. **The mic will be cut off** when you've reached the allotted time. *Best practice: Write your testimony ahead of time and practice with a timer.*

- 1. Introduce yourself, including the aspects of your identity that are relevant to your testimony, and where you live.**
 - a. My name is [First and Last Name].
 - b. I am a/n [descriptive noun(s)], living in [District # or neighborhood].
 - i. Constituent
 - ii. Voter
 - iii. Veteran
 - iv. Worker (*could include industry or income*)
 - v. Business owner (*could include size, industry, or business name*)
 - vi. Housing status (*renter, homeowner, unhoused resident, vehicle resident*)
 - vii. Memberships or affiliations (*e.g. unions, boards, commissions, etc.*)
- 2. Tell them what you're testifying about.**
 - a. I am here today to oppose any changes to the ethics code.
- 3. Support your position. Use any of these sample talking points or write your own.**
 - a. Seattle's ethics rules have been in place for 45 years. Trying to change the ethics rules now, while facing corruption and instability in our federal government, undermines public trust in local leadership and points to whose interests this Council is really serving.
 - b. Even if you believe that you are able to vote impartially, this opens the door to the same kind of corrupt, self-serving behavior we continue to see in the Trump administration.
 - c. We don't know who will be in your seats in the future and this would remove the only meaningful safeguard against self-dealing. Without mandatory recusal, there's no way to prevent public officials from using their positions for personal gain—only a chance to clean up the consequences afterward.

- d. The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) hasn't reviewed the amendments, hasn't issued a formal recommendation, and hasn't voted on the proposed legislation. Moving forward before the independent body tasked with overseeing ethics has fully evaluated the implications undermines public trust and signals that this Council is willing to change the rules without independent accountability.
- e. Transparency is not accountability. Real accountability means accepting limits on your own power to serve the public with integrity, even when it makes your job harder. It's not about following whatever rules exist at the moment. You can't be accountable to the people you serve if you're the one deciding when the rules apply to you.
- f. Changing the ethics rules would be a betrayal to the voters who elected you with the understanding that these basic ethical standards would remain in place. Your personal finances weren't on trial during your campaigns because people believed you'd be required to step back when a conflict arose, just like elected officials do in all of the other major west coast cities.
- g. This undermines the principles of democracy, which only works when the people *trust* that public decisions are made for the common good, not to pad the pockets of politicians or their allies. The chairs of 32nd, 34th, 36th, 37th, 43rd, and 46th Legislative District Democrats have all signed onto a letter opposing this legislation.

4. Restate your position.

- a. I oppose changing Seattle's Ethics Code.

5. Close

Did you run out of time or think of something you wanted to add to your testimony?

Email Seattle City Council: Council@seattle.gov

Other Notes:

Many people will be bringing signs to keep the message visible. We'll have supplies and will be meeting in the lobby at 1:00 PM to make signs together.