

LC 119  
2026 Regular Session  
1/27/26 (WJC/ps)

# D R A F T

## SUMMARY

Digest: The Act says that the Governor has to put a person with a certain background on the OGEC. The Act protects certain protected words during investigations by the OGEC. (Flesch Readability Score: 60.8).

Provides that the Governor shall appoint one member of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission who has local government experience.

Provides that attorney-client privilege is not waived when a communication is made to the commission for purposes of providing information regarding a complaint alleging a violation of government ethics laws or public meetings laws.

## 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT

2 Relating to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission; amending ORS  
3 40.225 and 244.250.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1.** ORS 244.250 is amended to read:

6 244.250. (1) The Oregon Government Ethics Commission is established,  
7 consisting of nine members. The appointment of a member of the commission  
8 is subject to confirmation by the Senate in the manner provided in ORS  
9 171.562 and 171.565. Members shall be appointed in the following manner:

10 (a) The Governor shall appoint eight members from among persons re-  
11 commended, two each by the leadership of the Democratic and Republican  
12 parties in each house of the Legislative Assembly. If a person recommended  
13 by the leadership of the Democratic or Republican party is not approved by  
14 the Governor, the leadership shall recommend another person.

15 (b) The Governor shall appoint one member, without leadership recom-  
16 mendation, **who has experience in local government.**

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted.  
New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1       (2) A person who holds any public office listed in ORS 244.050 (1) except  
2 as a member of the commission may not be appointed to the commission. No  
3 more than three members may be members of the same political party.

4       (3) The term of office of a member is four years. A member is not eligible  
5 to be appointed to more than two full terms but may additionally serve out  
6 an unexpired term. Vacancies shall be filled by the appointing authority for  
7 the unexpired term.

8       (4) The commission shall elect a chairperson and vice chairperson for  
9 such terms and duties as the commission may require.

10      (5) A quorum consists of five members but a final decision may not be  
11 made without an affirmative vote of a majority of the members appointed to  
12 the commission.

13      (6) Members shall be entitled to compensation and expenses as provided  
14 in ORS 292.495.

15      (7) The commission may retain or appoint qualified legal counsel who  
16 must be a licensee of the Oregon State Bar and who is responsible to the  
17 commission. The appointment of legal counsel under this subsection may be  
18 made only when the commission finds it is inappropriate and contrary to the  
19 public interest for the office of the Attorney General to represent concur-  
20 rently more than one public official or agency in any matter before the  
21 commission because the representation:

22       (a) Would create or tend to create a conflict of interest; and  
23       (b) Is not subject to ORS 180.230 or 180.235.

24      (8) The Attorney General may not represent before the commission any  
25 state public official who is the subject of any complaint or action of the  
26 commission at the commission's own instigation.

27      **SECTION 2.** ORS 40.225 is amended to read:

28      40.225. (1) As used in this section, unless the context requires otherwise:

29       (a) "Client" means:

30       (A) A person, public officer, corporation, association or other organiza-  
31 tion or entity, either public or private, who is rendered professional legal

1 services by a law practitioner, or who consults a law practitioner with a  
2 view to obtaining professional legal services from the law practitioner.

3 (B) A person, public officer, corporation, association or other organization  
4 or entity, either public or private, who consults a legal referral service with  
5 a view to obtaining professional legal services from a law practitioner.

6 (b) "Confidential communication" means a communication not intended  
7 to be disclosed to third persons other than those to whom disclosure is in  
8 furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client or  
9 those reasonably necessary for the transmission of the communication.

10 (c) "Law practitioner" means a person authorized, or reasonably believed  
11 by the client to be authorized, to practice law in any state or nation.

12 (d) "Legal referral service" means an entity that, as a regular part of its  
13 business, refers potential clients to law practitioners, including but not lim-  
14 ited to a public nonprofit entity sponsored or operated by the Oregon State  
15 Bar.

16 (e) "Representative of the client" means:

17 (A) A principal, an officer or a director of the client; or

18 (B) A person who has authority to obtain professional legal services, or  
19 to act on legal advice rendered, on behalf of the client, or a person who, for  
20 the purpose of effectuating legal representation for the client, makes or re-  
21 ceives a confidential communication while acting in the person's scope of  
22 employment for the client.

23 (f) "Representative of the law practitioner" means one employed to assist  
24 the law practitioner in the rendition of professional legal services, but does  
25 not include a physician making a physical or mental examination under  
26 ORCP 44.

27 (2) A client has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent any other  
28 person from disclosing confidential communications made for the purpose of  
29 facilitating the rendition of professional legal services to the client:

30 (a) Between the client or the client's representative and the client's law  
31 practitioner or a representative of the law practitioner;

1       (b) Between the client's law practitioner and the law practitioner's rep-  
2 resentative or the client's legal referral service;

3       (c) By the client or the client's law practitioner to a law practitioner re-  
4 presenting another in a matter of common interest;

5       (d) Between representatives of the client or between the client and a  
6 representative of the client;

7       (e) Between law practitioners representing the client; or

8       (f) Between the client or a representative of the client and a legal referral  
9 service.

10      (3) The privilege created by this section may be claimed by the client, a  
11 guardian or conservator of the client, the personal representative of a de-  
12 ceased client, or the successor, trustee, or similar representative of a corpo-  
13 ration, association, or other organization, whether or not in existence. The  
14 person who was the law practitioner or legal referral service or the law  
15 practitioner's representative at the time of the communication is presumed  
16 to have authority to claim the privilege but only on behalf of the client.

17      (4) There is no privilege under this section:

18       (a) If the services of the law practitioner or legal referral service were  
19 sought or obtained to enable or aid anyone to commit or plan to commit  
20 what the client knew or reasonably should have known to be a crime or  
21 fraud;

22       (b) As to a communication relevant to an issue between parties who claim  
23 through the same deceased client, regardless of whether the claims are by  
24 testate or intestate succession or by inter vivos transaction;

25       (c) As to a communication relevant to an issue of breach of duty by the  
26 law practitioner or legal referral service to the client or by the client to the  
27 law practitioner or legal referral service;

28       (d) As to a communication relevant to an issue concerning an attested  
29 document to which the law practitioner or legal referral service is an at-  
30 testing witness; or

31       (e) As to a communication relevant to a matter of common interest be-

1 tween two or more clients if the communication was made by any of them  
2 to a law practitioner retained or consulted in common, when offered in an  
3 action between any of the clients.

4 (5) Notwithstanding ORS 40.280, a privilege is maintained under this  
5 section for a communication made to the Oregon Public Defense Commission  
6 for the purpose of seeking preauthorization for or payment of fees or ex-  
7 penses under ORS 135.055.

8 (6) Notwithstanding subsection (4)(c) of this section and ORS 40.280, a  
9 privilege is maintained under this section for a communication that is made  
10 to the Oregon Public Defense Commission for the purpose of making, or  
11 providing information regarding, a complaint against a law practitioner  
12 providing public defense services.

13 (7) Notwithstanding ORS 40.280, a privilege is maintained under this  
14 section for a communication ordered to be disclosed under ORS 192.311 to  
15 192.478.

16 **(8) Notwithstanding ORS 40.280, a privilege is maintained under this**  
17 **section for a communication made to the Oregon Government Ethics**  
18 **Commission for the purpose of providing information regarding a**  
19 **complaint being adjudicated under ORS 244.260.**

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