

HB 4161 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 2/17

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure provides an exception to Oregon ethics law to allow a public body to provide public officials food and beverages during meetings, other official events, or when required by state law or rules, and merchandise, if the cost does not exceed \$100 in a calendar year or as provided by the public body's policies. The measure declares an emergency and is effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon Ethics Law (ORS Chapter 244) prohibits public officials from using or attempting to use their official positions or offices to obtain a financial benefit for themselves, relatives, or businesses they are associated with if that financial benefit or opportunity for financial gain would not be available except for the position or office held.

In October 2025, Rep. Nathan Sosa convened a workgroup to address concerns about recent guidance and opinions from the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC). Representatives from cities, counties, special districts, education associations, media, and OGEC met with a group of House and Senate members from October 2025 to January 2026. The group identified areas of concerns, discussed proposed language, and developed a set of recommendations around public meetings law enforcement, serial communications, maintaining confidentiality of protected information, training requirements, OGEC membership, and the provision of food and beverages to a public official by their public body.

House Bill 4159 contains the group's recommendations around OGEC membership and maintaining attorney-client privilege for information provided to OGEC in a complaint investigation. House Bill 4161 contains the recommendations related to the provision of food, beverages, and certain merchandise to a public official from a public body. House Bill 4177 contains the recommendations around public meetings law, including serial communications, training, and enforcement.