

HB 4161 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Golden

Senate Committee On Rules

Action Date: 03/02/26
Action: Do pass.
Vote: 4-0-1-0
Yeas: 4 - Golden, Jama, Manning Jr, Starr
Exc: 1 - Thatcher
Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact
Revenue: No revenue impact
Prepared By: Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst
Meeting Dates: 2/27, 3/2

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure provides an exception to Oregon ethics law that allows a public body to provide food and beverages to public officials during meetings, other official events, or when required by state law or rules. It also allows a public body to provide merchandise to public officials 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, effective on its passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- The interim government ethics workgroup's recommendation to address whether public officials are allowed to eat food at an official event
- The applicability of the \$50 gift limit versus the limit provided in the measure
- Whether the \$100 limit should be adjusted for inflation

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon Ethics Law (Oregon Revised Statutes 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, legislators convened a workgroup to address concerns about 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 concern, discussed proposed language, and developed recommendations on public meetings law enforcement, serial communications, 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 for OGEC membership and maintaining attorney-client privilege for information provided to OGEC in a complaint investigation. House Bill 4161 contains the recommendations regarding the provision of food, beverages, and certain merchandise to a public official by a public body. House Bill 4177 A contains the recommendations around public meetings law, including serial communications, training, and enforcement.