

Hawaii

# Help Wanted: Panels On Ethics, Campaigns Need Volunteers

Hawaii's Judicial Council has extended for a second time this year the deadline to apply to be a board commissioner.

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By Chad Blair    / March 14, 2017

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Two high-profile state agencies are having difficulty attracting viable candidates to serve on their boards.

The state Judicial Council first advertised for vacancies on the [Hawaii State Ethics Commission](#) and the [Campaign Spending Commission](#) in January.

When applications were slow in coming, the council extended the deadline in February.

Now it's been pushed back a third time, to March 31.

To drum up interest, two public interest groups are sponsoring a forum Thursday evening at the state Capitol to explain the duties and responsibilities of the members of the "good government commissions," as well as how to apply for nomination to the commissions.



Hawaii State Ethics Commissioner Susan DeGuzman at a February meeting.

Current commissioners will also be on hand to speak.

Sponsors of the forum say the two agencies are essential to good governance in the state.

“We, the people, place an extraordinary amount of faith and trust in our government,” said Corie Tanida, executive director of [Common Cause](#) of Hawaii. “As our watchdog state agencies, the Campaign Spending and Ethics Commissions play an important role in how (laws and rules) are administered and enforced.”

Tanida said the commissioners are made up of members of the public, with varying backgrounds from across the state.

“They represent us the people and help to hold power accountable,” she said.

Janet Mason, co-chair of the legislative committee for the [League of Women Voters](#) of Hawaii, concurs.

“Especially with the Ethics Commission, we need to have people willing to step up and say, ‘This is not acceptable behavior’ to the larger community,” said Mason, who said the commissioners are guided by staff and legal counsel. “But in the end some judgment is required about whether a person who is the subject of an inquiry has crossed the line in terms of what is acceptable to the public.”

The Ethics Commission, according to the advertisement for the vacancies, addresses ethical issues involving legislators, registered lobbyists and state employees (with the exception of judges, who are governed by the Commission on Judicial Conduct).

The work includes investigating complaints, providing advisory opinions and enforcing decisions issued by the commission. Commissioners are also not allowed to take an active part in “political management” or political campaigns.

The main purpose of the Campaign Spending Commission is to supervise campaign contributions and expenditures.

Campaign Spending Commission members are prohibited from participating in political campaigns or contributing to candidates or political committees.

Commissioners also cannot participate in political campaigns or contribute to candidates or political committees.



Cory Lum/Civil Beat

A Campaign Spending Commission meeting in 2015.

The [five-member](#) Ethics Commission will have a vacancy come June 30, when the term of Ruth Tschumy ends.

On the [five-member](#) Spending Commission, Adrienne Yoshihara's term also ends June 30. The terms for Eldon Ching and Gregory Shoda expired last summer, but they continue to serve.

Mason said it can be challenging to attract applicants for both commissions, in part because it can sometimes be stressful to serve.

"Unfortunately, public officials don't like commissioners probing them about anything," she said. "That's understandable, so it's a very difficult job. It requires that the staff have a good deal of personal integrity and courage, really."

Hawaii's Supreme Court Chief Justice said he hopes qualified candidates will come forward.

"The Hawaii State Ethics Commission and Campaign Spending Commission play a crucial role in helping

to maintain the public's trust in our system of government," said Mark Recktenwald, chief justice of the state Supreme Court. "We encourage Hawaii residents from every island to apply to serve on these commissions. This is a unique opportunity to make a very direct contribution to the civic well-being of our state."

Those interested in applying should submit [an application](#), a resume and three letters of recommendation ("attesting to the applicant's character and integrity") postmarked by March 31 to the Judicial Council.



State Ethics Commissioner Reynaldo Graulty in May 2016

[Click here for details.](#)

Thursday's forum will take place in the Capitol, Room 229, 5-6 p.m. RSVP via email ([m.vomvoris@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:m.vomvoris@capitol.hawaii.gov)) or call (808) 586-6686.

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