



**Supervisor Rich Gordon
County of San Mateo**

Memo

To: Members, Board of Supervisors
From: Rich Gordon *RM*
Date: July 17, 2005
Re: Ethics Task Force

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish a Task Force on Ethics to study and report back to the Board of Supervisors on issues related to campaign financing, lobbying, gifts, officeholder accounts, incompatible outside employment, and post-elective office activities.

BACKGROUND

The public demands and deserves a government that is transparent and open. In order to provide assurance to the public many local governments have recently enacted or revised ordinances relating to the ethical behavior of elected officials. The most current local example of this is the City of San Jose.

There has not been an examination of ethical standards in San Mateo County. The County does not have a comprehensive ethics ordinance. Certain standards are included in the County Charter. Others are in ordinance and/or policy.

I am proposing that we establish a time-limited Task Force on Ethics to review our current standards and the best practices in place in other jurisdictions. This Task Force could explore issues including; but not limited to; campaign financing, lobbying and the role of lobbyists, ex-parte communication, gifts and gift reporting, officeholder accounts, incompatible outside employment, conflict activities for spouses and domestic partners, and post-elective office activities.

I would recommend that the Task Force be a five-person body with each member of the Board of Supervisors appointing one individual representing their district to the Task Force. I would also recommend that we solicit for two ex-officio members: one from the League of Women Voters and the other recommended by the Markkula Center for the Study of Ethics at the University of Santa Clara. The Task Force would select a chair from among their members and would receive staff support the County Counsel's Office. Within six months of the initiation of the Task Force they would make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors

detailing their scope of work and timeline for conclusion. It is hoped that this effort could be completed with a final report to the Board of Supervisors within twelve months.

VISION:

The County Vision 2010 calls for government decisions to be based on careful consideration of future impact, rather than temporary relief or immediate gain.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The creation of a time-limited Task Force on Ethics would impact staffing in the County Counsel's office, but County Counsel is convinced that support of the Task Force can be accomplished using existing resources. Therefore, there is no financial impact for these proposed actions.