



CEC

Whistleblower Hotline

1-800-824-4825

Frequently Asked Questions

Background

Q: What exactly is the Whistleblower Hotline?

A: The Los Angeles City Ethics Commission (CEC) Whistleblower Hotline is a 24-hour, toll-free number that City officials, employees and private citizens can call to report potential violations of the City's campaign, lobbying and ethics laws. It is part of the Whistleblower Program administered by the CEC and is mandated by City Charter §702(g).

Q: Does the CEC investigate all unethical conduct?

A: No. Not all activities that seem "unethical" constitute an actual violation of the laws within the CEC's jurisdiction. Under City law, the CEC is not obligated to investigate or respond to any complaint that does not contain sufficient facts (City Charter §706 (a)(1)). However, the Commission staff takes every complaint seriously and reviews every complaint to determine whether we have jurisdiction and whether there is sufficient information to initiate an investigation.

Q: What does the CEC investigate?

A: The CEC is authorized to investigate suspected violations of the following:

- Campaign Finance Provisions;
- Municipal Lobbying Ordinance; and
- Governmental Ethics Laws.

Q: How is the CEC's Whistleblower hotline different from the Controller's Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Hotline?

A: The CEC has specifically defined areas of jurisdiction as mentioned above. The CEC has enforcement authority and can independently initiate administrative prosecutions and assess fines for violations falling within its jurisdiction.

Filing a Complaint

Q: How can I file a complaint?

A: You may file a whistleblower complaint by:

- calling the 24-hour telephone hotline: 1-800-824-4825;
- calling our office during business hours: 1-213-978-1960;
- submitting a written complaint by fax: 1-213-978-1988;
- using the online complaint form on our web site: <http://ethics.lacity.org>; or
- filing a complaint in person or by mail at:

City Ethics Commission
200 N. Spring St., 24th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012.

“committed to supporting and equipping an informed citizenry...”

Q: Is it necessary to identify yourself when placing a whistleblower complaint?

A: No. You may remain anonymous. However, we encourage you to provide sufficient contact information, such as a telephone number, in case additional information is needed.

Q: Are whistleblower complaints recorded?

A: Complaints made on the 24-hour, toll-free Whistleblower Hotline are recorded. However, complaints made through the CEC's general office phone line are not recorded.

Q: As a whistleblower, how can I protect myself against retaliation?

A: City, state, and federal laws provide various types of whistleblower protection. Retaliation against whistleblowers is specifically prohibited by City law. The CEC is also authorized to assess monetary penalties against individuals who participate in retaliatory activity.

If you suspect you are being retaliated against, contact the CEC. You should try to document your suspected retaliation by saving voice mails, e-mails, or any other documentation which may prove that you are being punished for acting in the public's interest.

Q: What type of information should I provide when I file my complaint?

A: When filing a whistleblower complaint, please be prepared to provide as much information as possible, including:

- Who? (Who committed the violation? Name? Title and/or City department? Telephone number, address, or other contact information for the subject of the complaint?)
- What? (Describe improper activity. What law was violated?)
- When? (Date, time and frequency of the misconduct?)
- Where? (Location where improper activity occurred?)
- How do you know this? (Did you see the activity? Do you have supporting documentation? Are there any other witnesses?)

Q: Will anyone know that I filed a complaint?

A: The CEC works to ensure that all the information you provide is treated confidentially, within the limits of the law. It is a violation of the City Charter for any CEC employee to reveal the identity of an individual who files a whistleblower complaint unless it is necessary to conduct an investigation or in the course of an enforcement proceeding. The CEC will neither confirm nor deny the receipt or existence of any particular complaint or investigation.

Investigative Process

Q: What happens after I file my complaint?

A: If the complaint falls within the jurisdiction of the CEC, a preliminary investigation is conducted to verify facts and assess probability of a violation. If it appears likely that a violation occurred, the complaint will be closed and an enforcement case will be opened. If the matter falls outside of the CEC's jurisdiction, the CEC will make every effort to refer the matter to the appropriate agency.

Q: Can a whistleblower obtain written confirmation that the CEC has received his/her complaint?

A: Yes. If a whistleblower provides contact information with his/her complaint, the CEC will send him/her a letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint.

Q: Will I be contacted by the CEC?

A: Depending on the nature of the complaint and contact information provided, you may or may not be contacted by the CEC for more information.

Q: How will I know the outcome of my complaint?

Individuals who file a complaint and request to be notified of the complaint outcome will be contacted by the CEC upon final disposition of a formal enforcement action.

**CEC
Whistleblower
Hotline
1-800-824-4825**