

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: KNOW WHO YOUR DISTRICT'S "FRIENDS" ARE

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When contracts and official decisions come before your district, remember to look at the transaction through a conflict of interest "lens." Review the kinds of relationships that exist between district officials and those who wish to do business with the district. This information may come from the FPPC Forms 700 filed by board members and designated employees, or from other sources, such as supervisors and other employees who have been trained to identify and report such relationships.

One level of scrutiny involves knowing who to be concerned about. While board members certainly have the power to make official decisions on behalf of the district, employees and even some consultants who participate in the decision-making process and the preliminary stages prior to the decision can trigger conflicts. The interests of spouses and registered domestic partners should be considered.



This process should occur at the earliest possible moment, ideally before a project even enters the planning stage. In that way, if you identify relationships of a board member or employee which might trigger a conflict on a particular project, the district may be able to screen that person from involvement in the project in such a way as to avoid the conflict. In some instances, the district will simply be precluded from approving certain contracts where a board member has a prohibited financial interest or an employee was not screened from the process. Spotting potential conflicts in advance and reviewing them with counsel is one of the best ways to keep your district free from conflict of interest problems.

The Fair Political Practices Commission also maintains a help line for issues that arise under the Political Reform Act – 1-866-ASK FPPC.