



Los Angeles City Ethics Commission

April 20, 2016

**Via Hand Delivery**

The Honorable Budget and Finance Committee  
c/o Richard Williams  
200 North Spring Street  
City Hall Room 395  
Los Angeles CA 90012

**Re: Proposed Ethics Commission Budget for Fiscal Year 2016-17**

*FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION*

Dear Committee Members:

The Mayor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2016-17 includes some of the Ethics Commission's requests, and we appreciate the support we have received from the Mayor's office and the CAO's office. However, we do want to point out two important items that we believe should be added to the Mayor's proposal.

The first would be to add an additional \$60,000 to our as-needed salary budget (for a total of \$100,000). We do not have any permanent clerical support for either the staff or for the members of the commission. In addition, our small staff continues to have to shoulder increased legal mandates regarding campaign financing requirements and the matching funds program. The only way to manage our work load for elections is by bringing on additional as-needed staff during critical months. This fiscal year, which is not an election year, we expect to use over \$85,000 in as-needed salaries. Our needs will only be greater next fiscal year, as we handle our duties for the 2017 City and LAUSD elections. Dedicated funding for as-needed salaries will significantly improve our ability to assist candidates and others who participate in those elections in complying with the laws and disclosing helpful information to the public about campaign activities.

The second addition we would make to the Mayor's proposed budget is one regular Special Investigator I position, at an initial salary cost of \$32,333 for six-month funding. As noted in our budget request, we currently have just three special investigator positions (half the number we had prior to the economic downturn) to handle the hundreds of complaints we receive each year. The number of complaints is increasing, and we do not have the staff to keep pace. For example, we had zero cold cases (those open for more than two years) in 2013, we had one in 2014, and we currently have 27. Each investigator is responsible for approximately 40 active cases at any given time, but that number should be 15. And based on historical trends, we expect next year, an election year, to worsen that ratio considerably.

We regularly receive public comments that it takes us too long to address violations of our laws, and we agree. We have already streamlined our processes and increased efficiency within existing resources to the extent possible. Further reductions to the amount of time that is required to resolve cases will require additional staff. Adding even one special investigator position will significantly increase our ability to respond to citizen complaints and resolve cases in a timely way.

As always, we are willing to work with our City partners to develop a fair and sustainable budget. We work diligently to manage our resources, and we stay within our budget every year. We urge you to invest in the Ethics Commission the additional \$92,333 identified above for Fiscal Year 2016-17, to help us provide the public with the governmental transparency and accountability that they voted for.

Thank you for your consideration as you determine next year's budget. We will be available to answer questions at committee and City Council budget hearings, and I am happy to talk with you or your staff at any time.

Sincerely,



Heather Holt  
Executive Director

cc: Matt Crawford, Budget Director, Mayor's Office  
Heather Smith, Analyst, CAO's Office