

**CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
ETHICS COMMISSION**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**DATE:** February 6, 2015

**TO:** Chair and Members of the San Diego Ethics Commission

**FROM:** Stacey Fulhorst, Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** Proposal to Recommend to the City Council Charter Review Committee that the City Charter be Amended to Reflect a Name Change for the Ethics Commission

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When the Commission was established by the Mayor and City Council in 2001, they selected the name “Ethics Commission” because many other state and local agencies are similarly named. During the course of the Commission’s enforcement activities, however, respondents have periodically expressed reservations about entering into a stipulated settlement with the Ethics Commission because it would suggest that the respondent is an unethical individual. The issue has frequently arisen in connection with relatively nominal violations such as the late filing of disclosure documents.

In a report filed April 27, 2010, the San Diego County Grand Jury recommended that the City Council change the name of the Commission to avoid the “taint” caused by accusations of “unethical behavior.” Although the City Council responded that it agreed with this Grand Jury recommendation, the response indicated that additional analysis was required (which never took place).

The City Council recently formed a new Charter Review Committee to consider proposed revisions to the City Charter that would ultimately be submitted as a package of updates for voter approval. Because the Charter already includes two provisions associated with the Ethics Commission (subpoena power and independent legal counsel), it would be highly desirable to include any potential name change for the Commission in this package of Charter amendments.

If the Commission is interested in recommending a name change to the Charter Review Committee, the following names identified by staff during a review of COGEL (Council on Governmental Ethics Laws) members could be considered:

- Political Practices Commission
- Public Integrity Commission
- Office of Public Integrity

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- Governmental Ethics Commission
- Government Accountability Commission
- Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission

It's relevant to note that the vast majority of state and local agencies that are members of COGEL use the name "Ethics Commission," and that the San Diego Ethics Commission has been established long enough (fourteen years) that it is well known by its current name.

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Stacey Fulhorst  
Executive Director