



ETHICAL PRINCIPLES & CODE OF CONDUCT



Dear Colleagues,

Electoral Boards play a critical role as guardians of our democratic process, responsible for ensuring the integrity and fairness of elections. We bear the weight of ensuring that voting is well-organized, that every legal vote is counted, and that election outcomes reflect the will of the electorate. The importance of your role demands that you uphold the highest standards of conduct in the execution of your duties.

Election administration is complex and challenged with limited resources. Electoral Boards tirelessly strive to administer free, fair, and secure elections. You cannot anticipate every challenge and operate without error, and conduct must be judged with consideration of this reality.

Finally, responsibility for carrying out our democratic process does not fall entirely on Electoral Boards. It is a shared duty. We must work together to safeguard our elections and provide support and resources that make our work possible.

Mr. John Nunnally, President

Virginia Electoral Board Association

VEBA thanks and acknowledges the contributions to the success of this project.

The American Law Institute

Ethical Standards for Election Administration

Dr. Charles Stewart III of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Research Director and Co-Chairs
Bob Bauer of New York University School of Law and Ben Ginsberg of the Hoover Institution.

Election Center, The National Association of Election Officials

Standards of Conduct

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The Virginia Department of Elections

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Virginia Electoral Board Association

Board of Directors

Special Thanks to the Ethics Committee

Rick Michael, Chair, Paul Kitchen, Roger Omwake, JoAnne Speiden, Clara Belle Wheeler



Ethics - eth·ics ['eTHiks] – noun

moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity: “a code of ethics”

Why are ethics important?

Ethics are crucial because they shape the foundation of trust, fairness, and responsibility in society. They guide individuals and organizations in making decisions that promote integrity and respect.

Here are a few key reasons why ethics matter:

- **Building Trust**
- **Social Responsibility**
- **Preventing Harm**
- **Guiding Innovation**





The VEBA code is tailored to election administration professionals.

- **Focused on election law**
- **Protecting the integrity of elections**
- **Assuring safe, fair, and accurate elections**

Why did VEBA adopt this code?

“To facilitate free and fair elections with the highest standard of integrity in Virginia, to promote communications between its members, the General Registrars, the Department of Elections, the State Board of Elections, and elected officials including members of the General Assembly.”

ADHERE TO THE LAW

Election officials have a duty to uphold the Constitution of the United States and administer the law as written, amended, and interpreted by the applicable authorities within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

APPLICATION

- **Understand and adhere to the law**
- **Stay current**
- **Adhere to proper procedures**
- **Document decisions**
- **Act as a nonpartisan resource for federal, state, and local lawmakers**

PROTECT AND DEFEND THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTION PROCESS

Election officials have a duty to ensure the integrity of elections and to safeguard against unfounded attacks on the integrity of the election process.

APPLICATION

- **Act with honesty and accuracy**
- **Protect the independence of election administration**
- **Bolster the election administration profession**



PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY IN THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

Election officials have a duty to make election administration transparent to the public.

APPLICATION

- **Establish clear protocols in advance**
- **Be impartial**
- **Promote accurate information**
- **Ensure transparency with voters and the public**



TREAT ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE ELECTION PROCESS IMPARTIALLY

Election officials have an obligation to treat all participants in the electoral process uniformly and to ensure impartiality, including voters, candidates, citizens, and political committees.

APPLICATION

- **Promote dignity, equality, and respect**
- **Provide clear instructions**
- **Provide inclusive voter support**
- **Lead by example**



DEMONSTRATE PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Election officials have a duty to conduct themselves honestly and forthrightly in all interactions with superiors, peers, candidates, campaign officials, and the general public.

APPLICATION

- **Act with honesty and accuracy**
- **Protect the independence of election administration**
- **Bolster the election administration profession**



PRACTICE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF ETHICS AND STEWARDSHIP

Election officials have a duty to expend public funds carefully and foster respect among employees and volunteers.

APPLICATION

- **Use resources efficiently**
- **Follow established procurement processes**
- **Regularly review spending**
- **Communicate needs**



PROTECT THE PUBLIC OFFICE

Election officials have a duty to protect the probity of elections from manipulation for personal or partisan gain.

APPLICATION

- **Follow relevant ethics and campaign finance laws**
- **Set special guardrails when running for office**
- **Seek to maintain impartiality and avoid perceived conflicts of interest**



ADVANCE PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

Election officials have a duty to stay informed about election laws and new developments in election management.

APPLICATION

- **VEBA = Professional development**
- **Seek learning opportunities**
- **Set staff up for success**
- **Be open to improvement**





QUESTIONS?



A final thought

Esse Quam Videri

To Be, Rather than seem to be.
Authenticity, Integrity, and true
to oneself.