

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

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**WHEREAS**, active civic engagement, discussion, and debate are hallmarks of American society, essential to the functioning of all levels of governmental and non-governmental institutions; and

**WHEREAS**, conduct and communication by many elected and other governing officials has become increasingly polarized and unprofessional at all levels; and

**WHEREAS**, this behavior does not encourage collaboration and does not support the health and wellbeing of the entities they represent; and

**WHEREAS**, this behavior discourages public engagement in decision-making processes essential to the functioning of governmental and non-governmental organizations; and

**WHEREAS**, a decrease in civic engagement is detrimental to the functioning of all levels of governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as to the communities served by such organizations.

**NOW THEREFORE**, I/we adopt this Code of Conduct to foster collaborative, productive civil discourse in the decision-making process and encourage it in others.

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**Purpose:** This Code of Conduct identifies principles for elected and appointed representatives (representative) of any government or non-profit entity (entity), while exercising their office, for effective collaboration in serving the best interests of the entity and its stakeholders.

Therefore, signatories of this Code of Conduct commit themselves to ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, without conflict of interest, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as representatives, regardless of the venue or platform.

**Participation.** Acceptance of an elected or appointed position includes a commitment of active participation in the entity and the decision-making process. Representatives should participate in a majority of meetings established by the entity.

**Act in the best interests of the entity and its stakeholders.** Recognizing that stewardship of the entity's stakeholders must be their primary concern, representatives will work for the common good of the stakeholders of the entity and not for any private or personal interest, and they will assure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims, and transactions coming before them.

**Conduct at meetings.** The professional and personal conduct of representatives while exercising their office must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Representatives shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other representatives of the entity, including staff, as well as the public.

Difficult questions, challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of debate and discussion. However, free debate does not require, nor justify, belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments.

The governing body of the entity will not tolerate inappropriate behavior of these types during its meetings.

**Open discussion.** Discussions by the governing body which result in official actions by that body should involve all members (and the public for public entities), except when expressly permitted by Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act or established policies of the entity.

**Respect for process.** Representatives shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the entity.

It is the responsibility of the chair of the governing body to keep the comments of members on track during public meetings. Representatives should honor efforts by the chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the chair's actions, those objections should be voiced respectfully and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.

The governing body will encourage different points of view in order to make good decisions and cultivate a sense of group responsibility, putting the emphasis on collective decisions versus individual decisions.

**Advocacy.** Representatives shall represent the official policies or positions of the entity to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When presenting their individual opinions and positions, representatives shall explicitly state they are not representing their entity, nor will they allow the inference that they do.

*I/we affirm that I/we have read and understand this Code of Conduct and will, to the best of my/our ability, comply with its guidance.*

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Representative signature

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Date

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Governing entity

Adopted December 20, 2022