

(H. B. 1906)

(No. 2-2024)

(Approved January 10, 2024)

AN ACT

To amend Section 6.2 of Act No. 1-2012, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office Organic Act,” to provide that elected, recess-appointed, Senate- or Legislature-confirmed officials shall be those required to attend the training course directed by law; and for other related purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Corruption is an evil that affects all levels of our society. Corruption in the performance of a public function is one of the greatest challenges that the Government of Puerto Rico is facing to ensure the best and most efficient services to the people. It is public policy to tackle corruption to achieve the highest levels of governmental transparency and efficiency. Education is the best method to convey the message of achieving a sound public administration.

In view of the foregoing, Section 6.2 of Act No. 1-2012, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office Organic Act” (LOOEG, Spanish acronym), provides that every candidate certified by the State Elections Commission and any person nominated by the Governor must complete course on ethics offered by the Office of Government Ethics (OEG, Spanish acronym).

At present, the Government Ethics Act requires all candidates and nominees to complete the course offered by the OEG prior to being elected and confirmed. As a result, courses are offered to many individuals who ultimately do not become public servants.

At this time in history, we must focus on those who, in fact, become public servants and ensure that they receive this training, for it is necessary to perform in their duties.

At present, the Government Ethics Act provides for a 7.5 hour course, however, we believe that a 4 hour course is sufficient. The OEG shall have the duty to update the course every election period or as necessary for nominations that take place outside of the election period. It is hereby proposed that the OEG shall exercise discretion in determining whether to offer and adjust the course depending on whether individuals have been elected or nominated for the first time or if they have been reelected or renominated.

Sound public administration requires knowledge about ethics and government ethics to achieve excellence in government administration. Attaining this objective requires a detailed and rigorous discussion that allows elected officials, recess-appointed officials, and confirmed officials to recognize and learn about the importance of information management so they may better discharge their duties.

This Act reaffirms the obligation of every elected official and every recess-appointed or confirmed official to take a course on ethics and government ethics offered by the OEG.

Puerto Rico needs us to bring back the highest values, trust, integrity, and the best public administration practices. Therefore, it is essential that we adopt efficient and coherent measures that promote and ensure the rendering of excellent and quality public services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- Section 6.2 of Act No. 1-2012, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office Organic Act,” is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Section 6.2.- Education for Elected, Recess-Appointed, or Confirmed Persons of the Executive and Legislative Branches.

(a) Every person elected in a general or special election to hold a public office in the Executive or Legislative Branch must complete the training course developed by the Office. Said training must be completed within sixty (60) days of his or her election.

(b) Every person nominated by the Governor to hold an office or position in the Executive Branch who was appointed during a recess or confirmed by the Senate of Puerto Rico, or the Legislative Assembly must complete the training course developed by the Office. The training course must be completed within sixty (60) days of the recess appointment or confirmation.

(c) The Government Ethics Office shall have discretion to offer and adjust the training course, which shall last no more than 4 hours, depending on whether the person has been elected or nominated for the first time, or reelected or renominated.

If these candidates or nominees are public officials, the appointing authority shall grant them the necessary time off, not charged against any leave, to meet the requirements of this Section.

Section 2.- Effectiveness

This Act shall take effect upon its approval.