

Tennessee Ethics Commission
February 3, 2026, Meeting Minutes

The Tennessee Ethics Commission ("TEC" or "the Commission") of the Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance ("BECF" or "the Bureau") met at approximately 9:00 AM on February 3, 2026, in the Nashville Room of the WRS Tennessee Tower, 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., Nashville, TN 37243. This meeting considered the agenda from the Ethics Commission's postponed December 2, 2025, meeting as well as new items on the February 3, 2026, agenda.

Chair White presided over the meeting, joined by Commission Members Duane Gilbert, Martin McCain, and Dewey Branstetter.

Also present were Executive Director Bill Young, Assistant Director Lance Frizzell, Chief of Staff Janet Williams, Ethics Operations Officer Morgan Tygret, and General Counsel J. Seth May. The meeting was open to the public and recorded via video and audio recording.

Director Young opened the meeting by noting that a physical quorum of Commission members was present.

Director Young requested that the Commission authorize Commission staff to allow extensions of statements of interest for 2026 if circumstances warranted rather than require those filers to appear before the Ethics Commission to obtain an extension given State system and weather-related issues that might delay filings. Member McCain moved to accept Director Young's request, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Young requested permission to take items out of order. Member Branstetter moved to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA FOR MATTERS CONTINUED FROM DECEMBER 2, 2025 MEETING

Election of officers

Member Gilbert nominated Tammy White to serve as chair, seconded by Member McCain. Member McCain nominated Member Gilbert as secretary. These motions were combined for a vote and both motions passed unanimously.

Approval of April 1, 2025, amended minutes

Member McCain moved to accept the April 1, 2025, minutes as amended, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of August 12, 2025, minutes

Member McCain moved to approve the August 12, 2025, minutes, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

Sworn Complaints

Case No. C2025-009: Paul Jones, Craig Hayes, Steven Carter, and Steve Fann by Pam Farino
Pam Farino appeared in person but did not offer testimony or argument. Director Young advised that Commission staff believed the Commission had jurisdiction to hear this matter. Director Young recommended the Commission refer this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for investigation. Member Branstetter moved to accept Director Young's recommendation, seconded by Dr. McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Case No. C2025-010: Tabitha Swearingen by Leah Canon

Attorney Doug Berry appeared on this matter but did not offer testimony or argument. Director Young recommended the Commission dismiss this matter for lack of jurisdiction. Member McCain moved to accept Director Young's recommendation, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Previously Heard Sworn Complaints

Case No. C2025-005: Senator Brent Taylor by Jason Joe Montoya; Case No. C2025-006: Senator Brent Taylor by Kimela Biers, Lee Kleitsch, Robert Shalzer and Angela Marie Schultz

These matters were considered together. After discussion Member Gilbert moved to take no further action on these matters, which had been previously dismissed, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Case No. C2025-007: Commissioner James A. Hamilton, III, Paula Merrifield, Kathryn Held, Jim Waibel, Patrick Rice and Michael Combs by Claire Jackson

After discussion, the Commission took no further action on this matter which previously had been dismissed.

Reconsiderations

ESSARY, FRANKLIN Case No. 2025-018

Member Gilbert moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member White. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Gilbert moved to waive the civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

FOREMAN, AUBREY Case No. 2024-187

Member McCain moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

This matter then was deferred to the Commission's next meeting.

FULKERSON, JOY Case No. 2025-019

Member Branstetter moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Branstetter moved to waive the civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

HUNTER, LARRY Case No. 2024-397

Member McCain moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Branstetter moved to waive the civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

PARKER, BUBBA Case No. 2024-241

Member Branstetter moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Branstetter moved to waive the civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

THOMPSON, DICKIE Case No. 2025-043

Member Branstetter moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Branstetter moved to waive the civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

WEBB, RONNIE Case No. 2025-045

Member McCain moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Member McCain moved to waive civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Informal civil penalty assessment proceedings – Local Officials

BRADLEY, STEPHANIE Case No. 2025-772, MONDAY, GLENNIS Case No. 2025-740,
CARROLL, TRISTAN Case No. 2025-741, PITTS, CHRIS Case No. 2025-713

These matters were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in these matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

JARNIGAN, SHERYL Case No. 2025-742

Chair White moved to take no action in this matter, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

HILL, TERRY Case No. 2025-743, LOWERY, PAM Case No. 2025-772

Chair White moved to waive the civil penalty in these matters, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

SKONBERG, KATE Case No. 2025-770, MASON, JENNIFER Case No. 2025-420, POWERS, MIKE Case No. 2025-715, STRATTON, STEVEN Case No. 2025-736, CLAIBORNE, LARRY Case No. 2025-735, PAUL, CHRIS Case No. 2025-737, BARNETTE, JOHN Case No. 2025-688, BRUCE, LINDA SUE Case No. 2025-690

These cases were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in these matters, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

CLARK, EDDIE Case No. 2025-695, HUFF, HALI DANIELLE Case No. 2025-708, KELLY, BRENNAN Case No. 2025-769, TATE, DEXTER Case No. 2025-722, VINCENT, EDDIE Case No. 2025-724

These cases were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in these matters, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

BALTIMORE, JAMES Case No. 2025-728, JAMES, JEFF Case No. 2025-731, KINDER, CLYDE Case No. 2025-730, ROGERS, CHRIS Case No. 2025-729, SALMON, BETTY Case No. 2025-738, SWEARENGEN, JAMITA Case No. 2025-734, SWEARENGEN-WASHINGTON, JANA Case No. 2025-733, TOMLINSON, MARK Case No. 2025-732

These matters were considered together. Member McCain moved to continue these matters to the next meeting to allow Ethics Commission staff time to contact these individuals to request they update their statements of interest. The motion was seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

POTTS, JIMMY Case No. 2025-714, POWERS, KEVIN Case No. 2025-716, ROBERTS, JAMES Case No. 2025-763, SHARP, TYLER LANE Case No. 2025-720, WOODSON, JOE Case No. 2025-762

These matters were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to assess a civil penalty in the amount of \$1,000 in each case, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Informal civil penalty assessment proceedings – Local Candidates

KERR, WILLIE P. Case No. 2025-739

Member Branstetter moved to take no action in this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

GRAVES, NICHOLAS Case No. 2025-765, BROWN, MATT Case No. 2025-766

These two matters were considered together. Member McCain moved to take no action in these two matters, seconded by Member Branstetter. The motion passed unanimously.

GRIGGS, JEFF Case No. 2025-703, PICKARD, DEVIN Case No. 2025-712, WOODS, GWENDA Case No. 2025-744, GIBSON, CHARLIE Case No. 2025-700, WILLIAMS, DANNY HODGES Case No. 2025-727

These matters were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in each of these cases, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

BROWN, SAM Case No. 2025-689, HONEYCUTT, NATHAN Case No. 2025-706, JOHNSON, STAN Case No. 2025-709

These matters were taken together and continued to the next Ethics Commission meeting.

DAVIS, JAIMEE Case No. 2025-696 MCTIZIC, JULIAN A Case No. 2025-710 PAPWORTH, BRIAN Case No. 2025-711 PRIEST, SARA Case No. 2025-717, SPECK, BRANDI Case No. 2025-721

These cases were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in each of these cases, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

BIVENS, JOSHUA Case No. 2025-768, CHERRY, PATRICK Case No. 2025-693, CIPARRO, NICHOLAS Case No. 2025-694, FRAZIER, CHARLES A. Case No. 2025-698, GEORGE, JANE Case No. 2025-699, GRANT, JACOB Case No. 2025-702, HARTWELL, ERINN Case No. 2025-704, HOLMAN, DWAYNE Case No. 2025-705, HOUSLEY, MATTHEW Case No. 2025-707, NORRIS, JOHN S. Case No. 2025-764, RICH, JUSTIN Case No. 2025-719, ROE, BILL Case No. 2025-767, THOMAS, ERNEST RAY Case No. 2025-723

These cases were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to assess a civil penalty in the amount of \$1,000 in each case, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Informal civil penalty assessment proceedings – State Officials

LAMAR, LONDON Case No. 2025-745

Senator Lamar appeared in person. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in this case, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

DEAN, THOMAS Case No. 2025-771

Member Branstetter moved to take no action in this case, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Informal civil penalty assesment proceedings - Employer of Lobbyist

Common Cause of TN Case No. 2025-750

Member Branstetter moved to take no action in this case, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously. Dick Williams appeared telephonically on behalf of Common Cause of Tennessee after the case was called to apologize for his client's late filing.

Tennessee Partnership for Affordable Healthcare Case No. 2025-748, Tennessee Healthy Alternatives Association Case No. 2025-747, Tennessee Faith & Freedom Coalition Case No. 2025-746, HopeBridge Case No. 2025-752, Age of Learning Case No. 2025-749

These cases were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to take no action in these cases, seconded by Member McCain. This motion passed unanimously.

Elite Lobbyist Case No. 2025-751, Instructure, Inc. Case No. 2025-753, IOTA Community Schools Case No. 2025-754, MyCityRides Case No. 2025-755, Nashville Technology Council Case No. 2025-756, Tennessee Wildlife Officers Association Case No. 2025-757, TN Afterschool Network/United Ways of TN Case No. 2025-758

These cases were considered together. Member Branstetter moved to assess a civil penalty in the amount of \$750 in each case, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

JCBG Case No. 2025-759

This matter was continued to the next meeting of the Ethics Commission.

IonQ Inc. Case No. 2025-760, IonQ Inc. Case No. 2025-761

These cases were considered together. Member Gilbert moved to take no action in each case, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously. Member Branstetter disclosed that he knew one of the lobbyists for which Ionq Inc. did not pay the required fees, Beecher Frazier, but his relationship did not affect his vote.

NEW ITEMS FOR FEBRUARY 3,2025 MEETING

Sworn Complaints

Case No. C2025-011: Bobby Simpson, David Cripps, and Luke Prichard by Charles A. Bates

Director Young recommended the Commission dismiss this matter for lack of jurisdiction. Member Branstetter moved to accept Director Young's recommendation, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Case No. C2025-012: Crystal Lynn Iseldyke, C. Lee Lott, and TN State Board of Accountancy by Eric William Iseldyke

Director Young recommended the Commission dismiss this matter for lack of jurisdiction. Member Gilbert moved to accept Director Young's recommendation, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Reconsiderations

John Yarbrough – 2024-073

Member Branstetter moved to reconsider this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Branstetter moved to waive the civil penalty previously assessed in this matter, seconded by Member McCain. The motion passed unanimously.

Settlement Offers

Terry Hodges – 2024-202

Director Young recommended the Ethics Commission accept the settlement offer proposed by Mr. Hodges which had been submitted to Director Young by the Tennessee Attorney General's Office. Member Branstetter moved to accept Director Young's recommendation, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Brian Holt – 2024-204

Director Young recommended the Commission accept the settlement offer proposed by Mr. Holt which had been submitted to Director Young by the Tennessee Attorney General's Office. Member McCain moved to accept Director Young's recommendation, seconded by Member Gilbert. The motion passed unanimously.

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Update

Director Young explained that Tennessee's CLE Commission has now approved certain CLE credit for licensed attorneys serving on the Ethics Commission which included discussions of pending legislation impacting the work of the Ethics Commission. Assistant Director Frizzell the discussed relevant pending legislation.

Discuss Ted Boyatt Informal Advisory Opinion Request

Mr. Boyatt appeared and spoke briefly regarding his request. The Commission took no further action on this matter.

Set Meeting Dates for 2026

The Commission set its next meeting for April 15, 2026, at 9:30.

There being no further business, the Ethics Commission adjourned its meeting.