

ATLANTA ETHICS

IN ACTION

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Implementation of New Ethics Course

KEVIN SCHUKLE, ETHICS ADVISOR I

Online ethics training has long been standard at the City of Atlanta, but how employees engage with that training is about to take a significant step forward. The Ethics Office is excited to announce the upcoming launch of a redesigned annual ethics training course, designed to provide employees with a clearer, more engaging, and more practical learning experience.

Launching next month, the course will use **Synthesia**, a video-based platform, to deliver ethics training through AI-generated presenters, visual examples, concise explanations, and interactive knowledge checks. Instead of text-heavy slides, the course will guide employees through key ethics rules in a format that prioritizes clarity and memorability. The aim is to make training feel more like a guided learning experience, not just a compliance task.

The redesign reflects an **important goal** of the Ethics Office: to make ethics education meaningful and useful in employees' everyday work. The new platform allows for the delivery of consistent, high-quality, easy-to-follow training across all departments.

Equally important is the course's emphasis on *real-world* application. Employees will work through practical, scenario-based questions that reflect the types of ethical concerns the Ethics Office regularly receives, including gifts from vendors, outside employment, use of city resources, post-employment restrictions, and more. These scenarios are designed to encourage critical thinking, help employees identify potential issues early, and recognize when to seek guidance from the Ethics Office.

The Synthesia platform also positions the Ethics Office for **long-term flexibility**, allowing us to efficiently update course content as city policies evolve or new concerns emerge. This ensures that employees continue to receive timely, relevant guidance in a consistent format across all city departments.

What's Next

The new course will roll out next month. Additional information about course access, requirements, and deadlines will be provided in the coming weeks.

This launch represents a key step in continuing the City's culture of integrity. By investing in innovative tools and more engaging delivery methods, we are reinforcing our ongoing commitment to making ethics training practical, accessible, and meaningful. Ethics training should not be a box to check, but a real resource for every city employee.



2026 Financial Disclosure Season Wrap-Up

JANET KEENE, ETHICS ANALYST

Financial disclosure helps promote transparency, accountability, and public trust in city government. Each year, the Ethics Office partners with city departments, boards, and required filers to ensure accurate and timely filings.

The 2026 financial disclosure season finished with strong results: **94%** timely filing rate, with **2,771** of **2,959** required filers from city departments, boards, and NPUs submitting their statements by the April 3 deadline.

2026 SEASON AT A GLANCE

- **2,959 required filers identified**
- **2,771 timely filers (94%)**
- **600+ filers assisted by Ethics Office support**
- **Two E-File Days hosted at City Hall**

This continued progress reflects the effectiveness of the Ethics Office's refined procedures, expanded training and leadership engagement across the organization.

In the months leading up to the season, Ethics Office staff thoroughly reviewed the required filers' list and reassessed positions across all city departments and boards to confirm that each identified filer met the criteria set forth in **Section 2-814 of the City Code of Ethics**. This review was necessary to improve the accuracy and integrity of the filing process.

To support filers during the season, we continued to use our internal **Financial Disclosure Filing Process Standard Operating Procedures** to streamline and enforce consistent practices. Throughout the season, we assisted more than **600 filers** through the Financial Disclosure email and phone support lines. In addition, we hosted two E-File Days in the City Hall Atrium, giving filers an opportunity to receive in-person assistance and complete their filings on the spot.

Ethics Board Chair Nkoyo Effiong Lewis, joined by Board Member Gabriella Cole, presented the **Transparent Diamond Award** to the following exemplary departments and offices, each of which achieved between 98% and 100% compliance, with all required filers within the departments submitting by the April 3 deadline:

- **Atlanta Citizen Review Office**
- **Atlanta Police Department**
- **City Auditor’s Office**
- **Department of City Planning**
- **Department of Corrections**
- **Department of Customer Service (ATL 311)**
- **Department of Labor and Employment Services**
- **Department of Law**
- **Department of Procurement**
- **Department of Public Works**
- **Department of Transportation**
- **Municipal Court of Atlanta**
- **Office of the City Solicitor**
- **Office of the Inspector General**
- **Public Defender’s Office**



Vice Chair Drew Williamson and Board Member Keith Lamar presented the **Honorable Mention Award** to departments and offices that achieved a timely filing rate between 90% and 97%.

- **Atlanta City Council**
- **Department of Aviation**
- **Department of Finance**
- **Department of Grants and Community Development**
- **Department of Human Resources**
- **Department of Watershed Management**
- **Executive Offices**

The **Merit Award** recognizes a department with **275 or more required filers** that achieved a timely filing rate of at least 90%. This year’s recipient was:

- **Atlanta Fire Rescue**

Congratulations to the 2026 award recipients, whose dedication to compliance, ethical stewardship, and transparent government serves as an example for all.



Ethics in the Headlines

When Transparency Is Not Enough

In ethics, transparency is important, but can disclosure alone prevent conflicts of interest?

In “A Legislative Shift in Ethics Reform: Congressional Stock Trading Ban Challenges Transparency-Based Remedies,”

published by the Harvard Journal on Legislation in November 2025, Kedric L. Payne of the Campaign Legal Center examines that question through the issue of congressional stock trading.

Payne focuses on the STOCK Act of 2012, which requires members of Congress to publicly report certain stock trades within 45 days. The law was intended to increase transparency and strengthen public trust. However, Payne argues that disclosure has not meaningfully discouraged lawmakers from trading stocks during periods when government decisions can directly affect financial markets. Instead, public disclosures have created a record that investors can use to track congressional trades—potentially reinforcing concerns that officials may benefit from information connected to their public roles.

The article highlights the **Restore Trust in Congress Act**, a bipartisan proposal that would move beyond disclosure by prohibiting members of Congress, their spouses, and dependents from owning or trading individual company stocks while the member is in office.

Although the article focuses on Congress, its central question applies broadly to public service: **How do ethics rules move beyond transparency and produce meaningful accountability?**

For the Ethics Office, disclosure is one part of a larger ethics framework. Through training, financial disclosure review, ethics advice, and investigations, we work to identify conflicts, promote responsible decision-making, and strengthen public trust in city government.

Featured Source: Kedric L. Payne, Harvard Journal on Legislation, November 3, 2025.





Compliance Week

Reflections from the ECI Annual Conference

RAYMOND ROBINSON, DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION

Artificial Intelligence and Ethical Public Service

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant concept or a tool reserved for technology experts. It is already how many of us live and work.

During the *Ethics and Compliance Initiative's* annual conference in Washington, D.C., I attended sessions addressing a range of ethics and compliance topics, including ethical leadership, crisis response, board reporting, and the growing role of AI. The discussions on AI were especially thought-provoking because they focused not only on what these tools can do, but also on how organizations should use them ethically and responsibly.

Many of us already interact with AI through tools such as Siri, Alexa, Microsoft Copilot, Claude, and ChatGPT. In the workplace, AI may help draft emails, summarize information, create presentation outlines, organize data, or support other routine tasks. As these tools become more advanced, they may also be used to complete increasingly complex processes with less direct human involvement.

That potential creates both opportunity and responsibility. AI can help employees work more efficiently, but it also raises important ethical considerations: **Is the information accurate? Is confidential information protected? Who reviews the work before a decision is made or an action is taken? Who remains accountable when AI is involved?**

For public servants, those questions **matter**. Technology may support our work, but it cannot replace sound judgment, transparency, accountability, or the public's trust.

The conference reinforced an **important takeaway**: as AI continues to evolve, responsible use requires thoughtful safeguards, human oversight, and an ongoing commitment to ethical decision-making.



How To Play:
The first 10 people to email the correct answers to ethicstraining@atlantaga.gov by June 26, 2026, will win ETHICS SWAG!!!

Ethics Challenge: Test Your Knowledge!!!

What should city officials/employees do if they are not sure if their actions comply with the Ethics Code?

- A** Consult the Ethics Office or speak with their supervisor
- B** Seek advice from friends outside the workplace
- C** Discuss with colleagues outside of the department
- D** Use Google to find the right answer

Outside employment is always allowed as long as it does not take place during city work hours.

A True

B False

A city employee is offered a discounted ticket to one of the World Cup semi-final games because of their city position, but will not be performing any official duties at the event. May the employee accept it?

A**Yes****B****No**

Why is it important for city officials and employees to maintain integrity in their official job duties?

A**To maintain the respect of their peers and coworkers****B****To avoid potential public embarrassment resulting from misconduct****C****To earn the trust and confidence of the public, so they can be confident their tax dollars are being used responsibly****D****All of the above**



ETHICAL REMINDER

Check Before You Accept!!

Summer is a great time of year, and it ushers in **concerts, festivals, sporting events, and other entertainment opportunities**. It can also mean **free tickets or access** that raise ethical concerns for city officials and employees.

Our Ethics Code is clear about tickets. City officials and employees may **not** accept free or discounted tickets to sporting and entertainment events offered because of their city position, or from vendors, contractors, or others who do or seek to do business with the City, unless they are performing an official duty at the event. Employees may accept group or discounted tickets offered by the City on a first-come, first-served basis.

Tickets, parking passes, hospitality suite access, and other event-related benefits are things of value. Accepting them may create the appearance that city access, influence, or decisions can be influenced by personal benefits to officials or employees.

Before accepting any complimentary or discounted ticket, consider:

- **Who offered it?**
- **Why was it offered?**
- **Is the offer connected to my city role or city business?**

Don't guess whether an event invitation or ticket offer is questionable. Contact the Ethics Office **before** accepting or using the ticket to make an informed and ethical decision.

Reporting Misconduct in the City of Atlanta

Observing and reporting employee misconduct while working remotely may not seem as obvious as it is while working onsite. After all, if people are not in the office, they should not be doing anything unethical, right? Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Ethical misconduct and fraud can happen even in a remote workplace, and the opportunity to do so, rationalizing why it happens, as well as the pressure to behave improperly, remain present.

If you notice anyone engaging in ethical misconduct or fraud, misusing a city position or city funds or resources, it is important that you call the **Integrity Hotline** at **1-800-884-0911**. The complaints are sent directly to our office and thoroughly reviewed. If you are not comfortable providing your name, you can file an anonymous complaint, and your call will be confidential. You can also visit www.atlantaga.ethicspoint.com to file a complaint online. The site is confidential and secure. We want to hear from you, and we take all complaints seriously.



INTEGRITY HOTLINE

Special Announcements

NEW STAFF MEMBER!



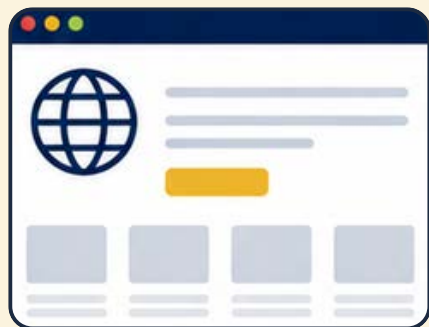
MICHAEL KIM
INVESTIGATOR SPECIALIST

Michael Kim serves as the Investigator Specialist for the City of Atlanta Ethics Office. In this role, he supports the Investigations Managers with complaints, reports, and investigative matters.

Mr. Kim brings nearly a decade of investigative and records research experience, with a professional background in security investigations, compliance, and background screening.

Prior to joining the City of Atlanta, Mr. Kim worked in both government and private-sector investigative roles. He holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Georgia.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHING!



A New Ethics Office Website is Coming Soon!

After 14 years, we're excited to announce that a brand new website is coming soon! Designed with our community in mind, the updated site will feature:

- ✓ Modern look
- ✓ Improved navigation
- ✓ Enhanced accessibility
- ✓ Easier access to the information and resources

Follow
Our
LinkedIn!



Stay tuned for the official launch!