

PRESS RELEASE

Connecticut Office of State Ethics Reaches \$500 Settlement for Ethics Violations

June 4, 2008

The Enforcement Division of the Office of State Ethics (OSE) executed a stipulation and consent order on May 20, 2008 with Lynda M. Morris, a former data processing supervisor for the Manchester Superior Court. Ms. Morris, now retired, paid civil penalties totaling \$500 for using state resources for her own financial benefit.

The former State Ethics Commission initiated the complaint, which alleged that Ms. Morris used the Court's computers to search criminal records for compensation from a private entity from 2000 to 2002. The OSE, in its follow-up of the case, determined, and the Respondent agreed, that there was probable cause to believe that she used her state position for financial gain, and accepted outside employment that impaired her independence of judgment as to her official duties.

Connecticut General Statutes §1-84(b) prohibits a state employee from accepting other employment that would impair the employee's independence of judgment as to her official duties or compel the employee to disclose confidential information gained in the course of her official duties.

Connecticut General Statutes §1-84(c) provides, in part, that no public official or state employee shall use her position to obtain financial gain.

Although the information retrieved by Ms. Morris was public record and accessed on her personal time, by using the Court's computers, she used state resources to her own benefit. She therefore paid a civil penalty to the State in the amount of \$500. At the time of Ms. Morris' violations, the maximum statutory penalty was \$2,000. It has since been elevated to \$10,000.

"State employees must always be conscious of the outside employment provisions of the ethics code," said OSE Executive Director, Carol Carson. "Generally, if one's outside employer can benefit from one's state position, such employment is not permissible. Additionally, the prohibition on the use of a state employee's office for personal, financial gain is at the heart of the Code of Ethics."

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