# WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §6B-1-2

**§6B-1-2. Legislative findings, purpose, declaration and intent.**

(a) The Legislature hereby finds that the holding of a public office or public employment is a public trust. Independence and impartiality of public officials and public employees are essential for the maintenance of the confidence of our citizens in the operation of a democratic government. The decisions and actions of public officials and public employees must be made free from undue influence, favoritism or threat, at every level of government. Public officials and public employees who exercise the powers of their office or employment for personal gain beyond the lawful emoluments of their position or who seek to benefit narrow economic or political interests at the expense of the public at large undermine public confidence in the integrity of a democratic government.

(b) It is the purpose of this chapter to maintain confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the governmental process in the State of West Virginia and its political subdivisions and to aid public officials and public employees in the exercise of their official duties and employment; to define and establish minimum ethical standards for elected and appointed public officials and public employees; to eliminate actual conflicts of interest; to provide a means to define ethical standards; to provide a means of investigating and resolving ethical violations; and to provide administrative and criminal penalties for specific ethical violations herein found to be unlawful.

(c) The Legislature finds that the state government and its many public bodies and local governments have many part-time public officials and public employees serving in elected and appointed capacities; and that certain conflicts of interest are inherent in part-time service and do not, in every instance, disqualify a public official or public employee from the responsibility of voting or deciding a matter; however, when such conflict becomes personal to a particular public official or public employee, such person should seek to be excused from voting, recused from deciding, or otherwise relieved from the obligation of acting as a public representative charged with deciding or acting on a matter.

(d) It is declared that high moral and ethical standards among public officials and public employees are essential to the conduct of free government; that the Legislature believes that a code of ethics for the guidance of public officials and public employees will help them avoid conflicts between their personal interests and their public responsibilities, will improve standards of public service and will promote and strengthen the faith and confidence of the people of this state in their public officials and public employees.

(e) It is the intent of the Legislature that in its operations the West Virginia Ethics Commission created under this chapter shall protect to the fullest extent possible the rights of individuals affected.

WV Legislature