



CITY OF HOUSTON

To: Mayor Whitmire

Date: March 6, 2026

CC: Marta Crinejo, Agenda Director
Troy Lemon, City Secretary

Pursuant to Article VII, Section 3 of the City Charter of the City of Houston, we request the following item to be placed on the City Council Agenda:

WHEREAS, the citizens of the City of Houston expect the highest standards of ethical conduct from public servants, including elected city officials, appointed officials, city official, or employee; and

WHEREAS, public confidence in municipal government depends upon transparency, accountability, and meaningful consequences for violations of ethical standards; and

WHEREAS, the City's Ethics Commission currently has authority to issue fines and letters of reprimand, but additional administrative tools are necessary to ensure compliance and deter misconduct; and

WHEREAS, violations involving campaigning on City time, misuse of City facilities, misuse of City resources, and abuse of public office erode public trust and unfairly advantage certain individuals; and

WHEREAS, administrative, non-criminal consequences—such as temporary loss of privileges, public disclosure requirements, and remedial training—may serve as proportionate and effective deterrents; and

WHEREAS, expanding administrative enforcement authority will allow the Ethics Commission to tailor remedies to the nature and severity of the violation while preserving due process protections;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HOUSTON, TEXAS:

Section 1. That the findings contained in the preamble of this Ordinance are determined to be true and correct and are hereby adopted as part of this Ordinance.

Section 2. That Section 39-18 of the Code of Ordinances, Houston, Texas, is hereby amended to read as follows:

Sec. 18-18 Expanded Administrative Enforcement Authority.

(a) Additional Administrative Sanctions.

In addition to any civil fines, letters of reprimand, or referrals otherwise authorized, the City of Houston Ethics Commission may impose one or more of the following administrative sanctions upon a finding of violation by the elected city official, city official, or employee by a preponderance of the evidence:

1. Temporary Suspension of Parking Privileges. Suspension of City-issued parking permits or access to City-controlled parking facilities for a period not to exceed 180 days.
- 1-2. Temporary Suspension of Electronic Credit Entries (direct deposit). The City will instead provide payment by check to be delivered to the elected city official, city official, or employee's regular pay location.
- 2-3. Loss of Discretionary Facility and City Vehicle Access. Temporary suspension of access to non-essential City facilities, City vehicles, event spaces, or reserved-use areas not required for the performance of essential job duties.
- 3-4. Mandatory Public Disclosure. In cases involving campaigning on City time or use of City facilities or resources for political purposes, the Commission may require:
 - Public posting on the City's website of a summary of findings; and
 - Posting of the city official or employee's relevant time sheets or leave records for the time period at issue, with appropriate redactions for confidential information.
1. Restitution. Repayment to the City of the fair market value of City resources, staff time, or facilities improperly used within 180 days. Failure to comply and reimburse the City for misuse of City resources, staff, or facilities after 180 days may result in the elected city official, city official, or employee losing the aforementioned privileges permanently.
1. Mandatory Ethics Training. Completion of enhanced ethics training beyond standard annual requirements, including in-person instruction if deemed appropriate.
2. Probationary Ethics Status. Placement on ethics probation for up to one year, during which any additional violation shall carry enhanced penalties.
3. -Referral for Employment Discipline. Formal referral to the appropriate department head or the Mayor for consideration of suspension, demotion, or termination consistent with City personnel policies.

(b) Campaigning Violations – Enhanced Transparency. If the violation involves campaigning on City time or within City facilities:

1. The Commission shall determine the number of work hours improperly used.
2. The individual shall reimburse the City at their hourly compensation rate for such time.
3. The City shall publicly post a summary of the violation and corrective measures taken for not less than 12 months.

(c) Due Process.

1. No sanction shall be imposed without notice and opportunity for hearing.
2. Findings must be issued in writing.
3. The respondent may appeal to a municipal court or appropriate reviewing body within 30 days.

(d) Public Ethics Scorecard

An annual publication shall be published on the City's website of anonymized data showing:

- Number of complaints
- Types of violations
- Time to resolution
- Penalties imposed

SECTION 3. If any provision of this ordinance is held invalid, the remainder shall not be affected.

SECTION 4. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon passage and approval.



Amy Peck
Houston City Council Member, District A



Joaquin Martinez
Houston City Council Member, District I



Twila Carter
Houston City Council Member, At-Large 3