



Illinois Ethics Matters

June 12, 2017

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Honesty, Integrity, Service

A newsletter from the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies
of the Illinois Governor

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Recent News

- The OEIG is pleased to announce that **Madeline Lewis** and **Jacqueline Strasser** began as Investigative Interns, and **Maggie Lipczynski** began as a Legal Intern.

NIU President Mismanaged Hirings



An OEIG investigation concluded that Northern Illinois University (NIU) President Douglas Baker brought in high-level consultants, who were then misclassified as “affiliate employees” for the purpose of circumventing procurement rules. As a result, NIU paid over \$1 million in public funds to five consultants who were not selected through a competitive process.

In an effort to meet President Baker’s directives to select these high-paid consultants, one of whom was his friend, NIU administrators circumvented rules and employment policies, and arranged for NIU to pay for their travel and lodging. President Baker ultimately failed to ensure that NIU engaged consultants and employees in compliance with applicable law and policy.

The OEIG recommended that NIU take appropriate action with regard to President Baker, counsel other employees, and limit any future use of the affiliate classification. In response to the OEIG investigation, NIU eliminated the “affiliate employee” classification, initiated a comprehensive review of procurement and contracting policies and practices, updated its whistleblower policy, and counselled President Baker and two other employees.

A copy of the report [In re: Baker et al. \(Case #14-01383\)](#) is available for download on the OEIG website, inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov.

Employee Fined for Soliciting Political Contributions

The EEC levied a \$1,000 fine against a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) employee for soliciting campaign contributions on compensated time and while on State property in violation of the Ethics Act, Secs. 5-15(a) and 5-35.

DJJ employee James Winburn acknowledged that he asked colleagues to authorize payroll deductions to PEOPLE, a political action committee (PAC) for AFSCME International, while they were in the workplace and were on compensated time. He claimed, however, that: PEOPLE was not a “political organization” as defined by the Ethics Act; federal regulations preempt the Ethics Act as to whether PEOPLE is a “political organization;” and contributions to PEOPLE did not benefit any campaign or political organization because “there was no specific earmarking of where those contributions might be used.”

The EEC rejected these arguments, concluding that federal election regulations did not conflict with Ethics Act restrictions on employee political activity, and that contributions to PEOPLE fell within the broad definition of being “for the benefit of any campaign for elective office or any political organization.”

A copy of the EEC decision, [Hickey v Winburn \(16 EEC 007\)](#) is available on the OEIG website.