New Business Item #15

COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Board of Commissioners	Presenter(s):	Chairman Steve Brown
Meeting Date:	Monday, February 17, 2014	Type of Request:	New Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Consideration of Chairman Brown's recommendation to adopt Resolution 2014-10 in support of Permanent, Independent Funding of the Georgia Ethics Commission.

Background/History/Details:

Georgia State Senator Josh McKoon has introduced Senate Resolution 7, proposing an amendment to the Georgia State Constitution so at to authorize the General Assembly to provide a fixed sum for funding the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission. The amendment calls for "an amount equal to 0.00025 percent of the total state funds appropriated shall be appropriated in each appropriations Act to the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission; and such appropriated amount shall not lapse as required by Article III, Section IX, Paragraph IV(c), and shall not be subject to the limitations of subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph". Senate Resolution 7will allow citizens to vote via referendum on independent funding for the State Ethics Commission.

There is no public trust without insuring governmental ethics, and the citizens of Georgia, irrespective of their political affiliations, have widely supported ethics reform throughout the State. However, State ethics enforcement is jeopardized by the threat of legislative defunding. Moreover, the Georgia Ethics Commission Board Members and their staff must be free to perform their duties without fear of reprisal. Interference in State Ethics Reforms does not promote trust in government. Senate Resolution 7 has languished in the Senate Ethics Committee for over a year, despite other states having constitutionally funded their ethics commissions.

Resolution 2014-10 is Fayette County's support for Senate Resolution 7 as proposed by Senator McKoon.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

Approval of Chairman Brown's recommendation to adopt Resolution 2014-10 in support of Permanent, Independent Funding of the Georgia Ethics Commission.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Not Applicable.

Has this request been considered within the past two years?	No	If so, when?	
Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*	No	Backup Provided with Request?	Yes

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

Approved by Finance		Reviewed by Legal	
Approved by Purchasing		County Clerk's Approval	Yes
Administrator's Approval			

Staff Notes:

County of Fayette;
State of Georgia

RESOLUTION 2014 - 10

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PERMANENT, INDEPENDENT FUNDING OF THE GEORGIA ETHICS COMMISSION

WHEREAS, there is no public trust without insuring governmental ethics; and

WHEREAS, the Citizens of the State of Georgia, in bipartisan fashion, overwhelming support ethics reform; and

WHEREAS, State ethics enforcement is severely hampered by the threat of legislative defunding; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Ethics Commission Board Members and staff must be allowed to perform their duties without fear of reprisal; and

WHEREAS, interference from the Legislature and the Governor's Office does not promote honest government and does not protect Citizens from harmful special interests; and

WHEREAS, State Senator Josh McKoon's Senate Resolution 7, allowing the Citizens to vote via referendum on independent funding for the State Ethics Commission, has languished in the Senate Ethics Committee for over a year; and

WHEREAS, other states across the nation already "constitutionally fund" their ethics commissions;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, along with the Atlanta Tea Party Patriots, the League of Women Voters of Georgia, Common Cause Georgia and numerous Republican and Democrat officials, does hereby formally support permanent, independent funding of the State Ethics Commission, inviting our full Fayette County Legislative Delegation to offer their support for getting Senate Resolution 7 to the ballot for all Georgia Citizens.

So resolved this 13th day of February 2014, by the FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

Attest:

_____
Steve Brown, Chairman

_____
Floyd L. Jones, County Clerk

Senate Resolution 7

By: Senator McKoon of the 29th

A RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution so as to authorize the General Assembly to provide a fixed sum for funding the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission; to provide that such funds shall not lapse; to provide for the submission of this amendment for ratification or rejection; and for other purposes.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Article III, Section IX, Paragraph VI of the Constitution is amended by adding a new subparagraph (o) to read as follows:

"(o) An amount equal to 0.00025 percent of the total state funds appropriated shall be appropriated in each appropriations Act to the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission; and such appropriated amount shall not lapse as required by Article III, Section IX, Paragraph IV(c) and shall not be subject to the limitations of subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph."

SECTION 2.

The above proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be published and submitted as provided in Article X, Section I, Paragraph II of the Constitution. The ballot submitting the above proposed amendment shall have written or printed thereon the following:

"( ) YES Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended so as to require the General Assembly to provide a fixed sum of the state budget to the Georgia
( ) NO Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission?"

All persons desiring to vote in favor of ratifying the proposed amendment shall vote "Yes." All persons desiring to vote against ratifying the proposed amendment shall vote "No." If such amendment shall be ratified as provided in said Paragraph of the Constitution, it shall become a part of the Constitution of this state.

- *5 Feb 2014*
- *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- *By Kristina Torres ktorres@ajc.com BRANT SANDERLIN /BSANDERLIN@AJC.COM*

Ethics funding gets push

State senator hopes to get measure before Ga. voters.

State Sen. Josh McKoon's push to let voters decide whether the Georgia ethics commission should be funded independently of the governor's office got a hearing Tuesday in committee — more than a year after he filed the proposal.

State Sen. Josh McKoon, R-Columbus, explains his proposals for process reform during a news conference Tuesday.

But since Ethics Committee Chairman Rick Jeffares, R-McDonough, has been noncommittal about whether the measure will get a vote, McKoon, R-Columbus, is in a familiar position: advocating for change with no guarantee of results since he's relatively new to the Legislature and hasn't won his colleagues' confidence.

McKoon's Senate Resolution 7 would create a permanent funding source for the ethics commission that amounts to about $4.9 million a year.

It's not the only proposal of its kind — Senate Democrats are pushing a similar measure to distance the commission from the state's top elected officials, who currently appoint its members. It hasn't, however, gotten much support from GOP leadership and needs support from two-thirds of the Legislature to be put on a ballot, where voters would have the final say.

Since his election in 2010, McKoon has persistently pushed ethics reform with the help of watchdogs and other advocates, including the Atlanta Tea Party Patriots, the League of Women Voters of Georgia and Common Cause Georgia. The coalition is widely credited with helping pass historic

ethics reforms last year that, for the first time, limited lobbyists' influence on legislators. Members of the coalition spoke in favor of McKoon's resolution Tuesday.

McKoon said the commission did important work and has previously been targeted for cuts: In 2006-07, lawmakers cut its budget by 40 percent after a particularly rigorous period of review.

The commission's current funding is about $1.7 million a year. McKoon said establishing a separate funding source independent of the state's general budget would allow the commission to "do its job without fearing ... reprisal."

His plan also follows examples in other states, including Alabama, which constitutionally funds its ethics commission at about $2.68 million.

"The fraction that we picked (in the resolution) is a very diminutive amount to restore public faith and public trust in government," McKoon said.