

Ethical Guidelines for Members of the Storting

Adopted by the Presidium 13th June 2013.

The work of the Members of the Storting is regulated by the Norwegian Constitution, the Storting's Rules of Procedure, special laws and regulations that apply to the Members, and the resolutions that are adopted by the Presidium. In addition to this, Members are subject to the same laws and regulations as all other citizens. Members must also be conscious of standards and principles of an ethical nature.

The role of Member of the Storting is Norway's foremost position of trust. Through their conduct, Members are expected to show themselves to be worthy of this trust and to contribute to protecting the reputation and quality of the Storting.

It is the Presidium's wish that Members must be conscious of how they relate to the commonly accepted ethical values and norms that apply in Norwegian society. We wish to promote reflection on and awareness of ethical dilemmas and choices by highlighting certain central ethical principles and conditions that Members should pay particular attention to. It is important that measures are taken to prevent Members from being involved in situations that may subsequently be perceived as a breach of trust.

When performing their duties, Members must safeguard the interests of society. Members must not exploit their position for the purposes of obtaining unwarranted advantages for themselves or others.

In principle, Members are entitled to deal with all types of matters in the Storting, including those in which they must take a position on questions regarding legislation or budgets that may affect them personally. It is for this reason that no written conflict of interest rules have been formulated on the consideration of matters in the Storting. Nevertheless, certain customs have evolved in the field.

Members are considered to be disqualified from dealing with matters that concern their own credentials after a general election and with the consideration of questions about their own constitutional responsibility. On such rare occasions, it is the Member's own circumstances that are the subject of the Storting's consideration. A situation may arise in which a Member or a close acquaintance of the Member has an especially strong personal interest in a matter that is to be considered by the Storting. In such cases, the Member ought to consider whether or not to abstain from taking part in proceedings. If necessary, Members may consult the Presidium on how to act.

If a Member wishes to withdraw from a matter, one option may be to apply for leave of absence in accordance with § 5 of the Rules of Procedure. In such cases, a Substitute Member will be summoned. If there is a need to withdraw, the use of the parliamentary pairing system may also be an alternative.

It must be assumed that the most likely scenario would be for Members to withdraw from debates in the Chamber. In cases where Members have expressed a wish to refrain from taking part in a debate or from voting, the practice of the Storting has been to agree to this.

Situations may also be envisaged in which a Member wishes to withdraw from considering a matter in committee. Such cases should be raised in the committee.

Members are obliged to register their appointments and economic interests in accordance with the Regulation on the Register of Members of the Storting's Appointments and Economic Interests.

The position of Member of the Storting does not in itself preclude holding other appointments or economic interests, but it is viewed as ill-judged for a Member to have concealed interests or income. It is for this reason that the Register of Members of the Storting's Appointments and Economic Interests was set up. It is the personal responsibility of all Members to provide the information required.

The purpose of the Register is to provide open and complete information about these circumstances. The Register will be able to reveal potentially ill-judged conflicts of interest or roles between the position of Member of the Storting and private interests.

For the Register to have the necessary credibility, it is essential that Members provide correct and complete information. This prerequisite will enable questions raised about a Member's views and motives to be assessed on an impartial and correct basis.

In the event of uncertainty over whether or not an appointment or interest should be registered, the first step is to raise the issue with the registrar.

No Member may put forward or speak on a matter in the Storting for payment, or accept compensation or any other form of reward or gift that may be intended to influence them to adopt a particular position on a certain matter in the Storting.

Gifts that are received on behalf of the Storting as an institution must be passed on to the Storting, unless they are of insignificant value.

Members must not accept gifts or other economic benefits that are intended to call their integrity into question. Consequently, an assessment should always be made of whether a gift and the like may be intended to influence a Member's position on one or more specific matters. Here, such factors as the value of the gift and the context in which it has been received should be emphasized.

All received gifts or other economic benefits that relate to a Member's activities as such, and which are valued at more than 2000 kroner, must be recorded in the Register of Members of the Storting's Appointments and Economic Interests.

Members must make responsible use of the resources that are placed at their disposal for the completion of their duties. Members are expected to adhere strictly to the regulations on remuneration and expenses.

It is essential for Members to acquaint themselves with the regulations, which are accessible on the Storting's internet, and otherwise to consult with members of staff in the Storting Administration if they are uncertain about the rules, or need help in gaining a better overview of expenses in connection with official travel, etc.

Public openness and transparency about the activities and decision-making processes in the Storting are prerequisites for confidence in the Storting and the Members.

Openness, transparency and freedom of information are also essential conditions for an efficient democracy.

The Constitution states that sittings in the Storting must be open to the public. The Storting's Rules of Procedure contain provisions on public hearings and state that all Members must register their appointments and economic interests in a public register. The general public may follow the activities of the Storting and the decision-making process via the Storting's website by means of the transmission of sittings and hearings and through access to a broad range of written materials.

To the extent possible, the Storting complies by the Freedom of Information Act. It has also adopted its own rules on the right of access to Storting documents.

A Member's freedom of speech is a constitutional right. Nevertheless, Members are pledged to secrecy on all matters that are dealt with in camera in the Storting and on other information that is explained in more detail in § 73 of the Rules of Procedure. Members are not permitted to quote statements made by other committee members during in camera committee meetings, or to quote other factions' comments or proposals before a recommendation has been submitted.

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