



## VOCAL's MISSION

VOCAL is an inclusive grassroots group in Carroll County, Maryland advocating for moral and just principles, policies, and officials in local government.

<https://vocalcarrollcounty.wordpress.com/>

### VOCAL Supports Carroll County Commissioners Enacting Strong Local Ethics Law

Carroll County residents rightfully expect a transparent, ethically operated local government we can count on to be fair. At the center of that government must be elected officials who are committed to service and willing to publicly separate themselves from opportunities to unfairly benefit from their positions. Unfortunately, the adoption of a strong ethics ordinance that would clearly require greater transparency and fairness has been delayed by Carroll County Commissioners for far too long. The Board will soon enter its *eighth consecutive year* out of compliance with State ethics requirements for local governments. The sole filing requirement Commissioners must presently meet is a minimal, two-page financial disclosure and conflict of interest statement that's been in use since 2004.

**Carroll County stands alone among Maryland's 24 county-level governments in failing to enact the rigorous ethics requirements for local elected officials mandated by Maryland's Ethics Commission.**

The fault for the Board's failure to enact a compliant ethics law does not lie with Annapolis. Maryland's General Assembly has stood firmly in support of strengthened ethics laws. A bill was passed in 2010 requiring local governments to certify to the State Ethics Commission that their conflict of interest and financial disclosure provisions were either *equivalent to or exceeded* the requirements State legislators must meet. And to the credit of Carroll County legislators<sup>1</sup> serving in the General Assembly at the time, **these public servants unanimously voted in favor of the measure.**

Governor Hogan successfully led a bipartisan effort to enhance Maryland's ethics laws even more recently. Maryland's State leaders stood together during the 2017 General Assembly session to protect the right of voters to know their elected representatives' interests and hold them accountable. These laudable actions to strengthen public trust in government should lead the way for Carroll County's Board of Commissioners to address this serious issue.

**VOCAL is a non-partisan local organization asking Carroll County's Board of Commissioners to comply with State ethics requirements for local governments.**

Specifically, VOCAL is asking the Board of Commissioners to do the following as soon as possible:

1. Reschedule a public hearing, previously canceled, on the draft ethics ordinance, preferably to be held at such a time as to ensure maximum attendance by the public. Target completion: January 31, 2018
2. Affirm intent to enact a compliant ethics ordinance such that all candidates for County Commissioner are aware of the new requirements and that action has been taken before the Gubernatorial Election. Filing deadline is February 27, 2018 and early voting begins October 25, 2018.
3. Adopt the ordinance to go into effect no later than the swearing in of the next Board in December 2018.

#### **YOU CAN HELP MOVE THIS ISSUE FORWARD!**

Contact your Commissioner to express your concern about the current lack of strong ethics laws for local elected officials. Don't know who your Commissioner is? Visit <http://ccgovernment.carr.org/ccg/commiss/Meet.aspx>.



Want to learn more about the long, slow path Carroll County's Board of Commissioners has followed across multiple election cycles to bring us to our current situation?

**Turn the page!**



<sup>1</sup> David Brinkley, Larry Haines, Allan Kittleman, Donald Elliott, Susan Krebs, Justin Ready, Tanya Shewell, and Nancy Stocksdales.



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## Timeline for Carroll Board of County Commissioners' Consideration of Ethics Ordinance

