

TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR



April 5, 2024

Susan Myers
Executive Director, Oregon Government Ethics Commission
3218 Pringle Road SE, Suite 220
Salem, OR 97302

Dear Director Myers,

Governor Kotek has been working to clarify the role of the Governor's First Partner, as defined in ORS 244.020 (6). Oregon has very limited documented definitions and guidelines pertaining to the role of the First Partner. The Governor's Office has been consulting with the National Governors Association on what the best practices are in other states. We have learned that the modern role of the First Spouse or Partner envisions spouses and partners using their official positions to support the Governor's priorities or otherwise advance initiatives consistent with a Governor's vision. Regardless of party affiliation or gender identity, the Governor's spouse or partner serves a role as a public official to serve all Oregonians. That role should be clearly defined and transparent.

To that end, the Governor's Office is requesting guidance, opinions, and advice from the Oregon Government Ethics Commission regarding the following preliminary questions:

1. ORS 244.020(6) defines the "First Partner" as "the spouse or domestic partner of the Governor" and encompasses alternative titles such as "First Lady," "First Husband" or "First Spouse." The "First Partner" is a "public official." ORS 244.020(15). May the First Partner, as a public official, participate in the development of, advise on, and/or promote the Governor's priorities, consistent with the ethical duties required of public officials in ORS Chapter 244?
2. If the First Partner is performing official duties as a public official in the Governor's Office supporting the Governor's priorities, may the First Partner be supported by staff and provided other office resources necessary to perform such assigned official duties, consistent with Oregon's government ethics laws?
3. Many public officials are volunteers who serve Oregon without compensation, such as the thousands of individuals serving on state boards and commissions. The current First Partner is solely a volunteer. Given this set of facts, what other ethical considerations should we consider?

**TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR**



We appreciate your assistance and cooperation. The hope is this effort will benefit all future Governors, their spouses and partners, and the Oregonians they are dedicated to serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Warner".

Chris Warner
Interim Chief of Staff for Governor Tina Kotek