

**RCW 42.52.900 Legislative declaration.** Government derives its powers from the people. Ethics in government are the foundation on which the structure of government rests. State officials and employees of government hold a public trust that obligates them, in a special way, to honesty and integrity in fulfilling the responsibilities to which they are elected and appointed. Paramount in that trust is the principle that public office, whether elected or appointed, may not be used for personal gain or private advantage.

The citizens of the state expect all state officials and employees to perform their public responsibilities in accordance with the highest ethical and moral standards and to conduct the business of the state only in a manner that advances the public's interest. State officials and employees are subject to the sanctions of law and scrutiny of the media; ultimately, however, they are accountable to the people and must consider this public accountability as a particular obligation of the public service. Only when affairs of government are conducted, at all levels, with openness as provided by law and an unswerving commitment to the public good does government work as it should.

The obligations of government rest equally on the state's citizenry. The effectiveness of government depends, fundamentally, on the confidence citizens can have in the judgments and decisions of their elected representatives. Citizens, therefore, should honor and respect the principles and the spirit of representative democracy, recognizing that both elected and appointed officials, together with state employees, seek to carry out their public duties with professional skill and dedication to the public interest. Such service merits public recognition and support.

All who have the privilege of working for the people of Washington state can have but one aim: To give the highest public service to its citizens. [1994 c 154 s 1.]