

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
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STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION CASE NO. 36-15A  
OAL Dkt. No. ETH 07206-20

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**IN THE MATTER OF**  
**JOEL SOTO**  
**Network Administrator 1**  
**New Jersey**  
**Office of Information Technology**

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**Administrative Action**

**CONSENT ORDER**

WHEREAS, the State Ethics Commission ("Commission") is authorized to initiate, receive, investigate, review and hear complaints regarding violations of the New Jersey Conflicts of Interest Law, N.J.S.A. 52:13D-12 *et seq.* ("Conflicts Law"), applicable rules of the Commission, N.J.A.C. 19:61-1.1 *et seq.*, the Uniform Ethics Code, and any agency code of ethics, by any State officer or employee or special State officer or employee; and

WHEREAS, this matter was brought before the Commission by a complaint filed with the Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Commission conducted an investigation of all matters and issues raised by the complaint; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the investigation, the Commission and Joel Soto ("Soto") desire to enter into a final and complete resolution of all the matters and issues raised thereby;

IT IS THEREFORE agreed by the parties as follows:

1. Soto was employed by the New Jersey Department of the Treasury ("Treasury") from 2004 until November 2017, when he was reassigned to the Office of Information Technology ("OIT").

2. As an employee of OIT, Soto is a State employee bound by the Conflicts Law, the applicable Commission rules and the Uniform Ethics Code.

3. Over an extended period of time, Soto frequently communicated with a co-worker through phone calls and text messages using his State-issued mobile phone, and emails using his State email account.

a. Most of these communications occurred during State work time.

b. Soto and his co-worker's email records show that from April 28, 2010 to August 24, 2015, they exchanged emails up to twenty (20) times in a single day.

c. Between April 30, 2012 and December 8, 2014, Soto called or texted his co-worker using his State-issued mobile phone 3,480 times.

d. Soto did not have current work-related responsibilities with his co-worker and most of the communications were personal and not work-related.

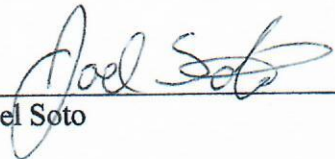
4. It is the Commission's position that Soto violated sections 23(e)(3) and (e)(7) of the Conflicts Law by using State time and resources, including his State-issued mobile phone and his State email account and computer, to communicate with his co-worker on personal matters.

5. Soto acknowledges that his excessive use of State resources to communicate with

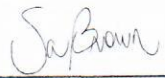
his co-worker violated section 23(e)(3) of the Conflicts Law and created the impression that he engaged in conduct violative of the public trust, in violation of section 23 (e)(7) of the Conflicts Law.

6. In consideration of the above, Soto agrees to pay a civil penalty in the amount of \$1,250.00.


7. The parties agree to enter into this Consent Order in settlement of all matters and issues that are involved herein. Soto agrees to withdraw his appeal in the Office of Administrative Law, ETH 07206-20, with prejudice.

  
Joel Soto

Dated: 07-21-2022

  
State Ethics Commission  
By: Stephanie A. Brown, Esq., Chair

Dated: September 26, 2022

  
State Ethics Commission  
By: Joy-Michele Johnson, Executive Director

Dated: 9/26/2022