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EXECUTIVE BRANCH ETHICS COMMISSION
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FRANKFORT, KY – At its meeting today the Executive Branch Ethics Commission presented John R. Steffen with its prestigious Livingston Taylor Ethics Award for the 2015-2017 biennium. The Commission established this biennial award program to recognize individuals, programs, or agencies within the executive branch of state government for their outstanding achievement and contributions in promoting the ethical conduct of executive branch employees.

Mr. Steffen, who served the Ethics Commission as General Counsel and then Executive Director for eleven years, for the improvements to the Commission's process and his particular achievements in steering the Commission's activities to be more proactive rather than reactive during his decade with the Commission. Mr. Steffen increased the effectiveness of the Commission through his efforts to spread the presence and relevance of the Ethics Commission throughout state government. One of the primary ways he did so was through the establishment of the Inspector General/Ethics Workgroup (IGEW). IGEW is a group of state agency divisions including Offices of Inspector Generals and Internal Affairs divisions that meet on a quarterly basis with the staff of the Ethics Commission. These meetings have proven to be very beneficial to the Ethics Commission's mission as these agencies are now more routinely referring matters to the Commission. These meetings have also been used to share best and worst practices, to commiserate about investigation techniques, and discuss reforms to agencies policies and procedures. The Commission has continued to reap the benefits of Mr. Steffen's efforts in this regard long after his departure in 2015.

Mr. Steffen presently serves as the Executive Director of the Registry of Election Finance where he has continued to serve and aid the Ethics Commission staff in matters that involve potential campaign solicitation issues. Furthermore, in his new role for this watchdog agency, he continues to serve as a model for high ethical standards and impartiality.

Previous recipients of the award include Rep. Tanya Pullin, former sponsor of legislation related to ethics; Robert D. Vance, former Secretary of the Public Protection Cabinet; Crit Luallen, former Auditor of Public Accounts; Jill LeMaster, retired Executive Director of the Executive Branch Ethics Commission; and the Transportation Cabinet's Office of Inspector General.

The award is named in honor of Livingston Taylor, a former investigative reporter for the Courier –Journal, who wrote many articles on state government throughout his 26 year tenure, and who, upon his retirement, served as the Commission's first chairman from 1992 -1995. Mr. Taylor was responsible for the early direction of the Commission and donated a considerable amount of time and effort in leading the Commission. He set the tone for the Commission with his concern that the Commission be politically independent and show no favoritism. His dedication to promoting the ethical conduct of executive branch employees will long be remembered.

Before joining the staff of the Ethics Commission in July 2004, Mr. Steffen was Assistant General Counsel for the Finance and Administration Cabinet. He has also served as a staff attorney for the Kentucky Labor Cabinet and the Public Service Commission. In addition, Mr. Steffen is a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army Reserve, Judge Advocate General's Corps. He was called to active duty twice in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the first time in March 2003 and again in March 2008, serving for a period of one year each time. He currently serves as a Team Chief with the 9th Legal Operations Detachment, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio.

Mr. Steffen is a graduate of Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, and earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Kentucky College of Law. He resides in Georgetown, Kentucky, with his four children.