

A People's Watchdog for the Constitution

The Lean Integrity and Transparency Amendment

Keeper Edition | Original concept and drafting: Walter Hargrave / ClubKnowledge | Prepared June 1, 2026

Maximum accountability, zero new bureaucracy.

Framing Note

This document preserves the strongest parts of the original proposal: a lean constitutional accountability framework built around transparency, verifiable public action, whistleblower protection, interest disclosure, access to information, periodic review, and proportional interpretation.

The separate "Constitutional Guard" concept is not included here. It remains a bolder speculative design track. This keeper edition focuses on the reform package most likely to be legible, defensible, and adaptable across constitutional systems.

Core Proposition

Public power should be able to explain itself.

A government that acts on facts should be able to identify those facts. A public official who holds power should disclose conflicts. A citizen who asks for records should receive a timely answer or a reviewable reason for denial. A whistleblower who reports abuse in good faith should be protected. A constitution should contain a modest mechanism for periodic self-correction.

This amendment does those things without creating a large new agency. It uses existing public institutions, clear response duties, written reasons, public reporting, and judicial review.

Article X - Open and Accountable Governance

Section 1 - Verifiable Foundation of Public Acts

Public laws, decisions, and official factual determinations materially relied upon by public authorities shall rest on identifiable sources of fact or law.

Upon reasonable request, an authority shall identify the evidence, legal authority, or official record materially relied upon.

A reasonable request is a specific, proportionate inquiry that can be answered without significant diversion of public resources.

Authorities may charge a nominal fee for manifestly excessive or repetitive requests, subject to a statutory cap.

Any refusal shall be reasoned in writing and reviewable by a court or other competent review body.

Section 1A – Preservation of Public Records

Public records required by law shall be preserved in accordance with standards established by law.

Intentional destruction, concealment, alteration, falsification, or unauthorized removal of required public records constitutes misconduct and shall be subject to penalties prescribed by law.

Official communications concerning public business shall remain subject to preservation requirements regardless of whether such communications occur through government systems, personal devices, encrypted applications, private accounts, or future communication technologies.

No public authority shall evade preservation duties through the use of unofficial communication systems.

Section 2 - Merit, Integrity, and Whistleblower Protection

Public office is a public trust.

Law shall provide transparent standards for appointment, discipline, and removal from public office.

Any person who, in good faith and without malicious falsehood, reports corruption, abuse, serious incompetence, or misuse of public authority shall be protected from retaliation.

Section 3 - Lean Integrity Forum

The Auditor-General, Ombudsman, public ethics authority, or their equivalent institutions shall convene annually as an Integrity Forum to review systemic risks, coordination gaps, and recurring accountability failures.

The chair shall rotate annually among the participating institutions.

The Forum shall issue at least one actionable recommendation and publish a concise public report.

Public comment shall remain open for at least 30 days after publication.

Unless renewed by law after ten years, the Forum shall lapse automatically.

Section 4 - Disclosure of Interests

Every holder of public office shall declare personal, financial, and organizational interests upon assuming office and shall update those declarations annually.

Declarations shall be filed with the competent authority and published in the official Gazette, public register, or equivalent official record.

Failure to declare, materially misrepresentation, concealment, or repeated failure to update required interests constitutes misconduct.

Law may provide for proportionate sanctions including reprimand, suspension, removal from office, disqualification from future public office, restitution, civil penalties, or criminal penalties where appropriate.

Section 4A – Public Office and Private Benefit

No holder of public office shall knowingly use the powers, resources, visibility, or authority of public office primarily for personal financial gain or for the financial benefit of immediate family members, controlled entities, or associated organizations.

Law shall provide procedures for disclosure, recusal, divestment, blind trust arrangements, or other measures reasonably necessary to manage conflicts of interest.

Nothing in this section shall prohibit lawful ownership of property or investment interests where appropriate safeguards exist.

Section 5 - Access to Information

Public records are open to inspection unless restricted by law for legitimate reasons including national security, privacy, law-enforcement sensitivity, legally privileged material, ongoing investigation, or protected deliberative process.

Requests shall receive a written response within 30 days unless a lawful extension is justified in writing.

Denials shall state reasons and shall be subject to administrative appeal and judicial review.

Annual statistics on request volumes, denial rates, extensions, and unresolved requests shall be published to promote transparency as habit.

Section 5A – Emergency Powers and Public Justification

Any declaration of emergency or exercise of extraordinary emergency authority shall be accompanied by a written statement identifying the factual basis, legal authority, scope, and intended duration of the action.

Emergency measures shall remain subject to judicial review and periodic reconsideration as provided by law.

To the greatest extent consistent with public safety and national security, the justification for emergency measures shall be publicly available.

Section 6 - Periodic Constitutional Review

At least once every ten years, the legislature shall consider whether a general constitutional review is required.

A public petition endorsed by at least 5 percent of registered voters, or a lower threshold set by law for smaller jurisdictions, shall compel such consideration.

If the legislature resolves to proceed, a temporary Review Committee shall be constituted for a limited term.

The Committee shall not exceed 15 members and shall include plural, geographic, demographic, and generational representation.

Section 7 - Interpretive and Governance Principles

This Constitution shall be interpreted to favor transparency, proportionality, human dignity, simplicity, institutional accountability, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Courts and public authorities shall apply these principles as interpretive guides where the constitutional text reasonably permits more than one construction and where doing so remains consistent with the structure and purposes of this Constitution.

Plain English Summary

This amendment keeps government honest without building another bureaucracy.

- Officials must be able to identify the facts and legal authority behind public actions.
- Whistleblowers acting in good faith get protection.
- Existing watchdog institutions meet once a year, publish one actionable reform recommendation, and sunset unless renewed.
- Public officials disclose conflicts and update those disclosures every year.
- Citizens get timely access to public records, with written reasons for denials and review rights.
- Every decade, the political system must at least consider whether constitutional review is needed.
- Courts interpret the constitution through transparency, proportionality, dignity, simplicity, and stewardship.

Implementation Snapshot

Mechanism	Cost Profile	Primary Custodian	Oversight Path
Verifiable public acts	Low	Public authorities	Courts or review bodies
Whistleblower protection	Low	Public service or ethics authority	Anti-corruption unit or courts
Integrity Forum	Minimal	Existing watchdog institutions	Public report and sunset review
Interest declarations	Low	Ethics office, Gazette, or	Misconduct process

		public register	
Access-to-information clock	Low	Line ministries and agencies	Administrative appeal and judicial review
Periodic review trigger	Variable, only when activated	Electoral body and legislature	Public petition and temporary committee

Guardrails

The amendment should be implemented with safeguards so transparency does not become harassment or paralysis.

- Requests must be specific and proportionate.
- Repetitive or excessive requests may carry capped administrative fees.
- Sensitive records may be withheld for lawful reasons, but denials must be reasoned and reviewable.
- Whistleblower protection requires good faith and excludes malicious falsehood.
- The Integrity Forum must issue actionable recommendations and expires after ten years unless renewed.
- Constitutional review is triggered by consideration first, not automatic wholesale revision.

Comparative Anchors

This design draws from established democratic accountability tools:

- Access-to-information rights in Kenya and Uganda.
- Merit, discipline, and whistleblower-protection frameworks in India and other common-law systems.
- Sunset and periodic-review models used in public administration reform.
- Citizen petition traditions associated with Switzerland and other direct-democracy systems.
- Proportionality and dignity principles common in modern constitutional interpretation.

Why It Works

This proposal does not try to solve every constitutional failure at once.

It does something more durable: it removes excuses.

It says public action should be traceable. Public office should be accountable. Public records should be reachable. Conflicts should be visible. Whistleblowers should not stand alone. Constitutions should contain a modest habit of self-review.

It is not a revolution of structure. It is a discipline of governance.

Credit

This keeper edition is adapted from the October 2025 Integration Edition of **A People's Watchdog for the Constitution**, originally conceived and drafted by **Walter Hargrave / ClubKnowledge**.

The core civic thesis remains unchanged: