

A WORD ABOUT ETHICS

HOLIDAY PARTIES AND GIFTS

INVITATIONS AND GIFTS

May Federal employees accept invitations to holiday parties?

- Yes, provided that the invitation is:
 - (1) based on a personal relationship,
 - (2) \$20 or less in value,* or
 - (3) to an event attended by a large range of private sector persons and the employee's supervisor approves as benefitting the agency.*Supervisors should sign an approval form, available from the ethics office.

** If the invitation is to a political appointee and from a lobbyist or lobbying organization (other than a media company or 501(c)(3) organization), the employee cannot accept even if it is under \$20 or is widely-attended.*

Are there limits on holiday gifts Federal employees may accept?

- Yes; holiday gifts are no different than gifts offered at other times. They cannot be accepted if given because of the employee's Government position or from someone with interests before Commerce, unless an exception applies, such as for:
 - (1) gifts based on a personal relationship and
 - (2) gifts worth \$20 or less (if not to a political appointee from a lobbyist).

GIFTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

May co-workers exchange gifts?

- Yes, if all persons are participating voluntarily. Employees may participate in mutual gift exchanges, but the value should be limited to no more than \$10 if subordinates will be exchanging gifts with supervisors. A gift to a supervisor may be no more than \$10. Note that the value of the gift, and not each employee's contribution, must not exceed \$10.

May contract workers participate in office parties and gift exchanges?

- Yes. They may not be solicited for a party contribution, but may voluntarily pay for their *per person* costs. Federal employees may give gifts to contract workers, but may accept only gifts totaling \$20 or less from all workers of the same contractor.

May employees collect money for an office holiday party?

- Yes, but participation must be voluntary—no one may be coerced. Those attending may be required to pay a reasonable set amount for the *per person* costs. Supervisors should not request funds and may not require participation.

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