



A WORD ABOUT ETHICS GIFTS

GIFTS FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

What gifts can I not accept?

- You cannot accept a gift:
 - that is offered because of your Government position, or
 - from someone:
 - with business (or seeking business) before the Department,
 - regulated by the Department, or
 - with interests that could be affected by performance of your dutiesunless acceptance is permitted under exceptions in ethics gift regulations.

What gifts are acceptable?

- Exceptions in the gift rules permit you to accept:
 - gifts from relatives and friends,
 - gifts of \$20 or less (if not in cash and limited to \$50 per year from the same donor),*
 - invitations to “widely-attended” gatherings *if a supervisor signs a form approving based on the benefit to the agency*,* and
 - gifts from a foreign government of \$375 or less (above that amount you can accept for the U.S. Government).

** You cannot use this exception if you are a political appointee and the gift is from a lobbying organization that is not a 501(c)(3) organization or a media company.*

GIFTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

Are there any limits on gifts between employees?

- Yes. You cannot not give a gift to a supervisor or accept a gift from a subordinate, unless the gift is:
 - \$10 or less (on an occasional basis);
 - for a major life event, such as a wedding, birth or adoption of a child, or retirement;
 - food shared in the office; or
 - personal hospitality at one’s home or a gift to a host or hostess (of appropriate value).

Can I give a gift a subordinate?

- Yes. Ethics rules do not restrict gifts from supervisors to subordinates.

GIFTS TO THE GOVERNMENT

Can I accept a gift on behalf of my agency?

- Yes, provided that you have authority to accept such gifts; the gift supports agency activities; acceptance will not create an appearance of loss of impartiality; and, if a travel gift, it was not solicited.
- Generally, a gift is not acceptable if from an agency contractor, grantee, or licensee or from someone in an industry sector regulated by the agency.

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States
Department of Commerce

202-482-5384 – ethicsdivision@doc.gov – www.commerce.gov/ethics

June 23, 2015