

§ 2635.403

created by the otherwise disqualifying financial interest. See also subpart C of part 2640 of this chapter, for additional guidance.

(4) *Consultation and notification regarding waivers.* When practicable, an official is required to consult formally or informally with the Office of Government Ethics prior to granting a waiver referred to in paragraph (d)(2) or (3) of this section. A copy of each such waiver is to be forwarded to the Director of the Office of Government Ethics.

(e) *Divestiture of a disqualifying financial interest.* Upon sale or other divestiture of the asset or other interest that causes his disqualification from participation in a particular matter, 18 U.S.C. 208(a) and paragraph (c) of this section will no longer prohibit the employee's participation in the matter.

(1) *Voluntary divestiture.* An employee who would otherwise be disqualified from participation in a particular matter may voluntarily sell or otherwise divest himself of the interest that causes the disqualification.

(2) *Directed divestiture.* An employee may be required to sell or otherwise divest himself of the disqualifying financial interest if his continued holding of that interest is prohibited by statute or by agency supplemental regulation issued in accordance with §2635.403(a), or if the agency determines in accordance with §2635.403(b) that a substantial conflict exists between the financial interest and the employee's duties or accomplishment of the agency's mission.

(3) *Eligibility for special tax treatment.* An employee who is directed to divest an interest may be eligible to defer the tax consequences of divestiture under subpart J of part 2634 of this chapter. An employee who divests before obtaining a certificate of divestiture will not be eligible for this special tax treatment.

(f) *Official duties that give rise to potential conflicts.* Where an employee's official duties create a substantial likelihood that the employee may be assigned to a particular matter from which he is disqualified, the employee should advise his supervisor or other person responsible for his assignments of that potential so that conflicting as-

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signments can be avoided, consistent with the agency's needs.

[57 FR 35042, Aug. 7, 1992, as amended at 62 FR 48747, Sept. 17, 1997]

§ 2635.403 Prohibited financial interests.

An employee shall not acquire or hold any financial interest that he is prohibited from acquiring or holding by statute, by agency regulation issued in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section or by reason of an agency determination of substantial conflict under paragraph (b) of this section.

NOTE: There is no statute of Government-wide applicability prohibiting employees from holding or acquiring any financial interest. Statutory restrictions, if any, are contained in agency statutes which, in some cases, may be implemented by agency regulations issued independent of this part.

(a) *Agency regulation prohibiting certain financial interests.* An agency may, by supplemental agency regulation issued after February 3, 1993, prohibit or restrict the acquisition or holding of a financial interest or a class of financial interests by agency employees, or any category of agency employees, and the spouses and minor children of those employees, based on the agency's determination that the acquisition or holding of such financial interests would cause a reasonable person to question the impartiality and objectivity with which agency programs are administered. Where the agency restricts or prohibits the holding of certain financial interests by its employees' spouses or minor children, any such prohibition or restriction shall be based on a determination that there is a direct and appropriate nexus between the prohibition or restriction as applied to spouses and minor children and the efficiency of the service.

(b) *Agency determination of substantial conflict.* An agency may prohibit or restrict an individual employee from acquiring or holding a financial interest or a class of financial interests based upon the agency designee's determination that the holding of such interest or interests will:

(1) Require the employee's disqualification from matters so central or critical to the performance of his official duties that the employee's ability

to perform the duties of his position would be materially impaired; or

(2) Adversely affect the efficient accomplishment of the agency's mission because another employee cannot be readily assigned to perform work from which the employee would be disqualified by reason of the financial interest.

Example 1: An Air Force employee who owns stock in a major aircraft engine manufacturer is being considered for promotion to a position that involves responsibility for development of a new fighter airplane. If the agency determined that engineering and other decisions about the Air Force's requirements for the fighter would directly and predictably affect his financial interests, the employee could not, by virtue of 18 U.S.C. 208(a), perform these significant duties of the position while retaining his stock in the company. The agency can require the employee to sell his stock as a condition of being selected for the position rather than allowing him to disqualify himself in particular matters.

(c) *Definition of financial interest.* For purposes of this section:

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, the term financial interest is limited to financial interests that are owned by the employee or by the employee's spouse or minor children. However, the term is not limited to only those financial interests that would be disqualifying under 18 U.S.C. 208(a) and § 2635.402. The term includes any current or contingent ownership, equity, or security interest in real or personal property or a business and may include an indebtedness or compensated employment relationship. It thus includes, for example, interests in the nature of stocks, bonds, partnership interests, fee and leasehold interests, mineral and other property rights, deeds of trust, and liens, and extends to any right to purchase or acquire any such interest, such as a stock option or commodity future. It does not include a future interest created by someone other than the employee, his spouse, or dependent child or any right as a beneficiary of an estate that has not been settled.

Example 1: A regulatory agency has concluded that ownership by its employees of stock in entities regulated by the agency would significantly diminish public confidence in the agency's performance of its regulatory functions and thereby interfere

with the accomplishment of its mission. In its supplemental agency regulations, the agency may prohibit its employees from acquiring or continuing to hold stock in regulated entities.

Example 2: An agency that insures bank deposits may, by supplemental agency regulation, prohibit its employees who are bank examiners from obtaining loans from banks they examine. Examination of a member bank could have no effect on an employee's fixed obligation to repay a loan from that bank and, thus, would not affect an employee's financial interests so as to require disqualification under § 2635.402. Nevertheless, a loan from a member bank is a discrete financial interest within the meaning of § 2635.403(c) that may, when appropriate, be prohibited by supplemental agency regulation.

(2) The term financial interest includes service, with or without compensation, as an officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee of any person, including a nonprofit entity, whose financial interests are imputed to the employee under § 2635.402(b)(2) (iii) or (iv).

Example 1. The Foundation for the Preservation of Wild Horses maintains herds of horses that graze on public and private lands. Because its costs are affected by Federal policies regarding grazing permits, the Foundation routinely comments on all proposed rules governing use of Federal grasslands issued by the Bureau of Land Management. BLM may require an employee to resign his uncompensated position as Vice President of the Foundation as a condition of his promotion to a policy-level position within the Bureau rather than allowing him to rely on disqualification in particular cases.

(d) *Reasonable period to divest or terminate.* Whenever an agency directs divestiture of a financial interest under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section, the employee shall be given a reasonable period of time, considering the nature of his particular duties and the nature and marketability of the interest, within which to comply with the agency's direction. Except in cases of unusual hardship, as determined by the agency, a reasonable period shall not exceed 90 days from the date divestiture is first directed. However, as long as the employee continues to hold the financial interest, he remains subject to any restrictions imposed by this subpart.

§ 2635.501

(e) *Eligibility for special tax treatment.* An employee required to sell or otherwise divest a financial interest may be eligible to defer the tax consequences of divestiture under subpart J of part 2634 of this chapter.

[57 FR 35042, Aug. 7, 1992, as amended at 59 FR 4780, Feb. 2, 1994; 60 FR 6391, Feb. 2, 1995; 60 FR 66858, Dec. 27, 1995; 61 FR 40951, Aug. 7, 1996; 62 FR 48748, Sept. 17, 1996]

Subpart E—Impartiality in Performing Official Duties

§ 2635.501 Overview.

(a) This subpart contains two provisions intended to ensure that an employee takes appropriate steps to avoid an appearance of loss of impartiality in the performance of his official duties. Under § 2635.502, unless he receives prior authorization, an employee should not participate in a particular matter involving specific parties which he knows is likely to affect the financial interests of a member of his household, or in which he knows a person with whom he has a covered relationship is or represents a party, if he determines that a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts would question his impartiality in the matter. An employee who is concerned that other circumstances would raise a question regarding his impartiality should use the process described in § 2635.502 to determine whether he should or should not participate in a particular matter.

(b) Under § 2635.503, an employee who has received an extraordinary severance or other payment from a former employer prior to entering Government service is subject, in the absence of a waiver, to a two-year period of disqualification from participation in particular matters in which that former employer is or represents a party.

NOTE: Questions regarding impartiality necessarily arise when an employee's official duties impact upon the employee's own financial interests or those of certain other persons, such as the employee's spouse or minor child. An employee is prohibited by criminal statute, 18 U.S.C. 208(a), from participating personally and substantially in an official capacity in any particular matter in which, to his knowledge, he, his spouse, general partner or minor child has a financial

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interest, if the particular matter will have a direct and predictable effect on that interest. The statutory prohibition also extends to an employee's participation in a particular matter in which, to his knowledge, an organization in which the employee is serving as officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee, or with whom he is negotiating or has an arrangement concerning prospective employment has a financial interest. Where the employee's participation in a particular matter would affect any one of these financial interests, the standards set forth in subparts D or F of this part apply and only a statutory waiver or exemption, as described in §§ 2635.402(d) and 2635.605(a), will enable the employee to participate in that matter. The authorization procedures in § 2635.502(d) may not be used to authorize an employee's participation in any such matter. Where the employee complies with all terms of the waiver, the granting of a statutory waiver will be deemed to constitute a determination that the interest of the Government in the employee's participation outweighs the concern that a reasonable person may question the integrity of agency programs and operations. Similarly, where the employee meets all prerequisites for the application of one of the exemptions set forth in subpart B of part 2640 of this chapter, that also constitutes a determination that the interest of the Government in the employee's participation outweighs the concern that a reasonable person may question the integrity of agency programs and operations.

[57 FR 35042, Aug. 7, 1992, as amended at 62 FR 48748, Sept. 17, 1997]

§ 2635.502 Personal and business relationships.

(a) *Consideration of appearances by the employee.* Where an employee knows that a particular matter involving specific parties is likely to have a direct and predictable effect on the financial interest of a member of his household, or knows that a person with whom he has a covered relationship is or represents a party to such matter, and where the employee determines that the circumstances would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question his impartiality in the matter, the employee should not participate in the matter unless he has informed the agency designee of the appearance problem and received authorization from the agency designee in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section.

(1) In considering whether a relationship would cause a reasonable person