

products or services it furnishes under a Government contract.

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§ 2635.204 Exceptions.

The prohibitions set forth in § 2635.202(a) do not apply to a gift accepted under the circumstances described in paragraphs (a) through (l) of this section, and an employee's acceptance of a gift in accordance with one of those paragraphs will be deemed not to violate the principles set forth in § 2635.101(b), including appearances. Even though acceptance of a gift may be permitted by one of the exceptions contained in paragraphs (a) through (l) of this section, it is never inappropriate and frequently prudent for an employee to decline a gift offered by a prohibited source or because of his official position.

(a) *Gifts of \$20 or less.* An employee may accept unsolicited gifts having an aggregate market value of \$20 or less per source per occasion, provided that the aggregate market value of individual gifts received from any one person under the authority of this paragraph shall not exceed \$50 in a calendar year. This exception does not apply to gifts of cash or of investment interests such as stock, bonds, or certificates of deposit. Where the market value of a gift or the aggregate market value of gifts offered on any single occasion exceeds \$20, the employee may not pay the excess value over \$20 in order to accept that portion of the gift or those gifts worth \$20. Where the aggregate value of tangible items offered on a single occasion exceeds \$20, the employee may decline any distinct and separate item in order to accept those items aggregating \$20 or less.

Example 1: An employee of the Securities and Exchange Commission and his spouse have been invited by a representative of a regulated entity to a Broadway play, tickets to which have a face value of \$30 each. The aggregate market value of the gifts offered on this single occasion is \$60, \$40 more than the \$20 amount that may be accepted for a single event or presentation. The employee may not accept the gift of the evening of entertainment. He and his spouse may attend

the play only if he pays the full \$60 value of the two tickets.

Example 2: An employee of the Defense Mapping Agency has been invited by an association of cartographers to speak about his agency's role in the evolution of missile technology. At the conclusion of his speech, the association presents the employee a framed map with a market value of \$18 and a book about the history of cartography with a market value of \$15. The employee may accept the map or the book, but not both, since the aggregate value of these two tangible items exceeds \$20.

Example 3: On four occasions during the calendar year, an employee of the Defense Logistics Agency was given gifts worth \$10 each by four employees of a corporation that is a DLA contractor. For purposes of applying the yearly \$50 limitation on gifts of \$20 or less from any one person, the four gifts must be aggregated because a person is defined at § 2635.102(k) to mean not only the corporate entity, but its officers and employees as well. However, for purposes of applying the \$50 aggregate limitation, the employee would not have to include the value of a birthday present received from his cousin, who is employed by the same corporation, if he can accept the birthday present under the exception at § 2635.204(b) for gifts based on a personal relationship.

Example 4: Under the authority of 31 U.S.C. 1353 for agencies to accept payments from non-Federal sources in connection with attendance at certain meetings or similar functions, the Environmental Protection Agency has accepted an association's gift of travel expenses and conference fees for an employee of its Office of Radiation Programs to attend an international conference on "The Chernobyl Experience." While at the conference, the employee may accept a gift of \$20 or less from the association or from another person attending the conference even though it was not approved in advance by the EPA. Although 31 U.S.C. 1353 is the only authority under which an agency may accept gifts from certain non-Federal sources in connection with its employees' attendance at such functions, a gift of \$20 or less accepted under § 2635.204(a) is a gift to the employee rather than to his employing agency.

Example 5: During off-duty time, an employee of the Department of Defense (DOD) attends a trade show involving companies that are DOD contractors. He is offered a \$15 computer program disk at X Company's booth, a \$12 appointments calendar at Y Company's booth, and a deli lunch worth \$8 from Z Company. The employee may accept all three of these items because they do not exceed \$20 per source, even though they total more than \$20 at this single occasion.

(b) *Gifts based on a personal relationship.* An employee may accept a gift given under circumstances which make it clear that the gift is motivated by a family relationship or personal friendship rather than the position of the employee. Relevant factors in making such a determination include the history of the relationship and whether the family member or friend personally pays for the gift.

Example 1: An employee of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation has been dating a secretary employed by a member bank. For Secretary's Week, the bank has given each secretary 2 tickets to an off-Broadway musical review and has urged each to invite a family member or friend to share the evening of entertainment. Under the circumstances, the FDIC employee may accept his girlfriend's invitation to the theater. Even though the tickets were initially purchased by the member bank, they were given without reservation to the secretary to use as she wished, and her invitation to the employee was motivated by their personal friendship.

Example 2: Three partners in a law firm that handles corporate mergers have invited an employee of the Federal Trade Commission to join them in a golf tournament at a private club at the firm's expense. The entry fee is \$500 per foursome. The employee cannot accept the gift of one-quarter of the entry fee even though he and the three partners have developed an amicable relationship as a result of the firm's dealings with the FTC. As evidenced in part by the fact that the fees are to be paid by the firm, it is not a personal friendship but a business relationship that is the motivation behind the partners' gift.

(c) *Discounts and similar benefits.* In addition to those opportunities and benefits excluded from the definition of a gift by § 2635.203(b)(4), an employee may accept:

(1) Reduced membership or other fees for participation in organization activities offered to all Government employees or all uniformed military personnel by professional organizations if the only restrictions on membership relate to professional qualifications; and

(2) Opportunities and benefits, including favorable rates and commercial discounts not precluded by paragraph (c)(3) of this section:

(i) Offered to members of a group or class in which membership is unrelated to Government employment;

(ii) Offered to members of an organization, such as an employees' association or agency credit union, in which membership is related to Government employment if the same offer is broadly available to large segments of the public through organizations of similar size; or

(iii) Offered by a person who is not a prohibited source to any group or class that is not defined in a manner that specifically discriminates among Government employees on the basis of type of official responsibility or on a basis that favors those of higher rank or rate of pay; provided, however, that

(3) An employee may not accept for personal use any benefit to which the Government is entitled as the result of an expenditure of Government funds.

Example 1: An employee of the Consumer Product Safety Commission may accept a discount of \$50 on a microwave oven offered by the manufacturer to all members of the CPSC employees' association. Even though the CPSC is currently conducting studies on the safety of microwave ovens, the \$50 discount is a standard offer that the manufacturer has made broadly available through a number of similar organizations to large segments of the public.

Example 2: An Assistant Secretary may not accept a local country club's offer of membership to all members of Department Secretariats which includes a waiver of its \$5,000 membership initiation fee. Even though the country club is not a prohibited source, the offer discriminates in favor of higher ranking officials.

Example 3: The administrative officer for a district office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service has signed an INS order to purchase 50 boxes of photocopy paper from a supplier whose literature advertises that it will give a free briefcase to anyone who purchases 50 or more boxes. Because the paper was purchased with INS funds, the administrative officer cannot keep the briefcase which, if claimed and received, is Government property.

(d) *Awards and honorary degrees.* (1) An employee may accept gifts, other than cash or an investment interest, with an aggregate market value of \$200 or less if such gifts are a bona fide award or incident to a bona fide award that is given for meritorious public service or achievement by a person who does not have interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's official duties or by an association

or other organization the majority of whose members do not have such interests. Gifts with an aggregate market value in excess of \$200 and awards of cash or investment interests offered by such persons as awards or incidents of awards that are given for these purposes may be accepted upon a written determination by an agency ethics official that the award is made as part of an established program of recognition:

(i) Under which awards have been made on a regular basis or which is funded, wholly or in part, to ensure its continuation on a regular basis; and

(ii) Under which selection of award recipients is made pursuant to written standards.

(2) An employee may accept an honorary degree from an institution of higher education as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1141(a) based on a written determination by an agency ethics official that the timing of the award of the degree would not cause a reasonable person to question the employee's impartiality in a matter affecting the institution.

(3) An employee who may accept an award or honorary degree pursuant to paragraph (d)(1) or (2) of this section may also accept meals and entertainment given to him and to members of his family at the event at which the presentation takes place.

Example 1: Based on a determination by an agency ethics official that the prize meets the criteria set forth in § 2635.204(d)(1), an employee of the National Institutes of Health may accept the Nobel Prize for Medicine, including the cash award which accompanies the prize, even though the prize was conferred on the basis of laboratory work performed at NIH.

Example 2: Prestigious University wishes to give an honorary degree to the Secretary of Labor. The Secretary may accept the honorary degree only if an agency ethics official determines in writing that the timing of the award of the degree would not cause a reasonable person to question the Secretary's impartiality in a matter affecting the university.

Example 3: An ambassador selected by a nonprofit organization as recipient of its annual award for distinguished service in the interest of world peace may, together with his wife, and children, attend the awards ceremony dinner and accept a crystal bowl worth \$200 presented during the ceremony. However, where the organization has also offered airline tickets to the ambassador and his family to travel to the city where the

awards ceremony is to be held, the aggregate value of the tickets and the crystal bowl exceeds \$200 and he may accept only upon a written determination by the agency ethics official that the award is made as part of an established program of recognition.

(e) *Gifts based on outside business or employment relationships.* An employee may accept meals, lodgings, transportation and other benefits:

(1) Resulting from the business or employment activities of an employee's spouse when it is clear that such benefits have not been offered or enhanced because of the employee's official position;

Example 1: A Department of Agriculture employee whose husband is a computer programmer employed by an Agriculture Department contractor may attend the company's annual retreat for all of its employees and their families held at a resort facility. However, under § 2635.502, the employee may be disqualified from performing official duties affecting her husband's employer.

Example 2: Where the spouses of other clerical personnel have not been invited, an employee of the Defense Contract Audit Agency whose wife is a clerical worker at a defense contractor may not attend the contractor's annual retreat in Hawaii for corporate officers and members of the board of directors, even though his wife received a special invitation for herself and her spouse.

(2) Resulting from his outside business or employment activities when it is clear that such benefits have not been offered or enhanced because of his official status; or

Example 1: The members of an Army Corps of Engineers environmental advisory committee that meets 6 times per year are special Government employees. A member who has a consulting business may accept an invitation to a \$50 dinner from her corporate client, an Army construction contractor, unless, for example, the invitation was extended in order to discuss the activities of the committee.

(3) Customarily provided by a prospective employer in connection with bona fide employment discussions. If the prospective employer has interests that could be affected by performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties, acceptance is permitted only if the employee first has complied with the disqualification requirements of subpart F of this part applicable when seeking employment.

Example 1: An employee of the Federal Communications Commission with responsibility for drafting regulations affecting all cable television companies wishes to apply for a job opening with a cable television holding company. Once she has properly disqualified herself from further work on the regulations as required by subpart F of this part, she may enter into employment discussions with the company and may accept the company's offer to pay for her airfare, hotel and meals in connection with an interview trip.

(4) For purposes of paragraphs (e)(1) through (3) of this section, employment shall have the meaning set forth in § 2635.603(a).

(f) *Gifts in connection with political activities permitted by the Hatch Act Reform Amendments.* An employee who, in accordance with the Hatch Act Reform Amendments of 1993, at 5 U.S.C. 7323, may take an active part in political management or in political campaigns, may accept meals, lodgings, transportation and other benefits, including free attendance at events, when provided, in connection with such active participation, by a political organization described in 26 U.S.C. 527(e). Any other employee, such as a security officer, whose official duties require him to accompany an employee to a political event may accept meals, free attendance and entertainment provided at the event by such an organization.

Example 1: The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services may accept an airline ticket and hotel accommodations furnished by the campaign committee of a candidate for the United States Senate in order to give a speech in support of the candidate.

(g) *Widely attended gatherings and other events—(1) Speaking and similar engagements.* When an employee is assigned to participate as a speaker or panel participant or otherwise to present information on behalf of the agency at a conference or other event, his acceptance of an offer of free attendance at the event on the day of his presentation is permissible when provided by the sponsor of the event. The employee's participation in the event on that day is viewed as a customary and necessary part of his performance of the assignment and does not involve a gift to him or to the agency.

(2) *Widely attended gatherings.* When there has been a determination that his attendance is in the interest of the agency because it will further agency programs and operations, an employee may accept an unsolicited gift of free attendance at all or appropriate parts of a widely attended gathering of mutual interest to a number of parties from the sponsor of the event or, if more than 100 persons are expected to attend the event and the gift of free attendance has a market value of \$305 or less, from a person other than the sponsor of the event. A gathering is widely attended if it is expected that a large number of persons will attend and that persons with a diversity of views or interests will be present, for example, if it is open to members from throughout the interested industry or profession or if those in attendance represent a range of persons interested in a given matter. For employees subject to a leave system, attendance at the event shall be on the employee's own time or, if authorized by the employee's agency, on excused absence pursuant to applicable guidelines for granting such absence, or otherwise without charge to the employee's leave account.

(3) *Determination of agency interest.* The determination of agency interest required by paragraph (g)(2) of this section shall be made orally or in writing by the agency designee.

(i) If the person who has extended the invitation has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of an employee's official duties or is an association or organization the majority of whose members have such interests, the employee's participation may be determined to be in the interest of the agency only where there is a written finding by the agency designee that the agency's interest in the employee's participation in the event outweighs the concern that acceptance of the gift of free attendance may or may appear to improperly influence the employee in the performance of his official duties. Relevant factors that should be considered by the agency designee include the importance of the event to the agency, the nature and sensitivity

of any pending matter affecting the interests of the person who has extended the invitation, the significance of the employee's role in any such matter, the purpose of the event, the identity of other expected participants and the market value of the gift of free attendance.

(ii) A blanket determination of agency interest may be issued to cover all or any category of invitees other than those as to whom the finding is required by paragraph (g)(3)(i) of this section. Where a finding under paragraph (g)(3)(i) of this section is required, a written determination of agency interest, including the necessary finding, may be issued to cover two or more employees whose duties similarly affect the interests of the person who has extended the invitation or, where that person is an association or organization, of its members.

(4) *Free attendance.* For purposes of paragraphs (g)(1) and (g)(2) of this section, free attendance may include waiver of all or part of a conference or other fee or the provision of food, refreshments, entertainment, instruction and materials furnished to all attendees as an integral part of the event. It does not include travel expenses, lodgings, entertainment collateral to the event, or meals taken other than in a group setting with all other attendees. Where the invitation has been extended to an accompanying spouse or other guest (see paragraph (g)(6) of this section), the market value of the gift of free attendance includes the market value of free attendance by the spouse or other guest as well as the market value of the employee's own attendance.

NOTE: There are statutory authorities implemented other than by part 2635 under which an agency or an employee may be able to accept free attendance or other items not included in the definition of free attendance, such as travel expenses.

(5) *Cost provided by sponsor of event.* The cost of the employee's attendance will not be considered to be provided by the sponsor, and the invitation is not considered to be from the sponsor of the event, where a person other than the sponsor designates the employee to be invited and bears the cost of the employee's attendance through a con-

tribution or other payment intended to facilitate that employee's attendance. Payment of dues or a similar assessment to a sponsoring organization does not constitute a payment intended to facilitate a particular employee's attendance.

(6) *Accompanying spouse or other guest.* When others in attendance will generally be accompanied by a spouse or other guest, and where the invitation is from the same person who has invited the employee, the agency designee may authorize an employee to accept an unsolicited invitation of free attendance to an accompanying spouse or to another accompanying guest to participate in all or a portion of the event at which the employee's free attendance is permitted under paragraph (g)(1) or (g)(2) of this section. The authorization required by this paragraph may be provided orally or in writing.

Example 1: An aerospace industry association that is a prohibited source sponsors an industrywide, two-day seminar for which it charges a fee of \$400 and anticipates attendance of approximately 400. An Air Force contractor pays \$2,000 to the association so that the association can extend free invitations to five Air Force officials designated by the contractor. The Air Force officials may not accept the gifts of free attendance. Because the contractor specified the invitees and bore the cost of their attendance, the gift of free attendance is considered to be provided by the company and not by the sponsoring association. Had the contractor paid \$2,000 to the association in order that the association might invite any five Federal employees, an Air Force official to whom the sponsoring association extended one of the five invitations could attend if his participation were determined to be in the interest of the agency. The Air Force official could not in any case accept an invitation directly from the non-sponsor contractor because the market value of the gift exceeds \$305.

Example 2: An employee of the Department of Transportation is invited by a news organization to an annual press dinner sponsored by an association of press organizations. Tickets for the event cost \$305 per person and attendance is limited to 400 representatives of press organizations and their guests. If the employee's attendance is determined to be in the interest of the agency, she may

accept the invitation from the news organization because more than 100 persons will attend and the cost of the ticket does not exceed \$305. However, if the invitation were extended to the employee and an accompanying guest, her guest could not be authorized to attend for free since the market value of the gift of free attendance would be \$610 and the invitation is from a person other than the sponsor of the event.

Example 3: An employee of the Department of Energy (DOE) and his wife have been invited by a major utility executive to a small dinner party. A few other officials of the utility and their spouses or other guests are also invited, as is a representative of a consumer group concerned with utility rates and her husband. The DOE official believes the dinner party will provide him an opportunity to socialize with and get to know those in attendance. The employee may not accept the free invitation under this exception, even if his attendance could be determined to be in the interest of the agency. The small dinner party is not a widely attended gathering. Nor could the employee be authorized to accept even if the event were instead a corporate banquet to which forty company officials and their spouses or other guests were invited. In this second case, notwithstanding the larger number of persons expected (as opposed to the small dinner party just noted) and despite the presence of the consumer group representative and her husband who are not officials of the utility, those in attendance would still not represent a diversity of views or interests. Thus, the company banquet would not qualify as a widely attended gathering under those circumstances either.

Example 4: An employee of the Department of the Treasury authorized to participate in a panel discussion of economic issues as part of a one-day conference may accept the sponsor's waiver of the conference fee. Under the separate authority of § 2635.204(a), he may accept a token of appreciation for his speech having a market value of \$20 or less.

Example 5: An Assistant U.S. Attorney is invited to attend a luncheon meeting of a local bar association to hear a distinguished judge lecture on cross-examining expert witnesses. Although members of the bar association are assessed a \$15 fee for the meeting, the Assistant U.S. Attorney may accept the bar association's offer to attend for free, even without a determination of agency interest. The gift can be accepted under the \$20 de minimis exception at § 2635.204(a).

Example 6: An employee of the Department of the Interior authorized to speak on the first day of a four-day conference on endangered species may accept the sponsor's waiver of the conference fee for the first day of the conference. If the conference is widely attended, he may be authorized, based on a determination that his attendance is in the

agency's interest, to accept the sponsor's offer to waive the attendance fee for the remainder of the conference.

(h) *Social invitations from persons other than prohibited sources.* An employee may accept food, refreshments and entertainment, not including travel or lodgings, at a social event attended by several persons where:

- (1) The invitation is from a person who is not a prohibited source; and
- (2) No fee is charged to any person in attendance.

Example 1: Along with several other Government officials and a number of individuals from the private sector, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency has been invited to the premier showing of a new adventure movie about industrial espionage. The producer is paying all costs of the showing. The Administrator may accept the invitation since the producer is not a prohibited source and no attendance fee is being charged to anyone who has been invited.

Example 2: An employee of the White House Press Office has been invited to a cocktail party given by a noted Washington hostess who is not a prohibited source. The employee may attend even though he has only recently been introduced to the hostess and suspects that he may have been invited because of his official position.

(i) *Meals, refreshments and entertainment in foreign areas.* An employee assigned to duty in, or on official travel to, a foreign area as defined in 41 CFR 301–7.3(c) may accept food, refreshments or entertainment in the course of a breakfast, luncheon, dinner or other meeting or event provided:

(1) The market value in the foreign area of the food, refreshments or entertainment provided at the meeting or event, as converted to U.S. dollars, does not exceed the per diem rate for the foreign area specified in the U.S. Department of State's Maximum Per Diem Allowances for Foreign Areas, Per Diem Supplement Section 925 to the Standardized Regulations (GC,FA) available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402;

(2) There is participation in the meeting or event by non-U.S. citizens or by representatives of foreign governments or other foreign entities;

(3) Attendance at the meeting or event is part of the employee's official

duties to obtain information, disseminate information, promote the export of U.S. goods and services, represent the United States or otherwise further programs or operations of the agency or the U.S. mission in the foreign area; and

(4) The gift of meals, refreshments or entertainment is from a person other than a foreign government as defined in 5 U.S.C. 7342(a)(2).

Example 1: A number of local businessmen in a developing country are anxious for a U.S. company to locate a manufacturing facility in their province. An official of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation may accompany the visiting vice president of the U.S. company to a dinner meeting hosted by the businessmen at a province restaurant where the market value of the food and refreshments does not exceed the per diem rate for that country.

(j) *Gifts to the President or Vice President.* Because of considerations relating to the conduct of their offices, including those of protocol and etiquette, the President or the Vice President may accept any gift on his own behalf or on behalf of any family member, provided that such acceptance does not violate § 2635.202(c) (1) or (2), 18 U.S.C. 201(b) or 201(c)(3), or the Constitution of the United States.

(k) *Gifts authorized by supplemental agency regulation.* An employee may accept any gift the acceptance of which is specifically authorized by a supplemental agency regulation.

(l) *Gifts accepted under specific statutory authority.* The prohibitions on acceptance of gifts from outside sources contained in this subpart do not apply to any item, receipt of which is specifically authorized by statute. Gifts which may be received by an employee under the authority of specific statutes include, but are not limited to:

(1) Free attendance, course or meeting materials, transportation, lodgings, food and refreshments or reimbursements therefor incident to training or meetings when accepted by the employee under the authority of 5 U.S.C. 4111 from an organization with tax-exempt status under 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) or from a person to whom the prohibitions in 18 U.S.C. 209 do not apply. The employee's acceptance must be ap-

proved by the agency in accordance with part 410 of this title; or

NOTE: 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) is authority for tax-exempt treatment of a limited class of nonprofit organizations, including those organized and operated for charitable, religious or educational purposes. Many nonprofit organizations are not exempt from taxation under this section.

(2) Gifts from a foreign government or international or multinational organization, or its representative, when accepted by the employee under the authority of the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act, 5 U.S.C. 7342. As a condition of acceptance, an employee must comply with requirements imposed by the agency's regulations or procedures implementing that Act.

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§ 2635.205 Proper disposition of prohibited gifts.

(a) An employee who has received a gift that cannot be accepted under this subpart shall, unless the gift is accepted by an agency acting under specific statutory authority:

(1) Return any tangible item to the donor or pay the donor its market value. An employee who cannot ascertain the actual market value of an item may estimate its market value by reference to the retail cost of similar items of like quality. See § 2635.203(c).

Example 1: To avoid public embarrassment to the seminar sponsor, an employee of the National Park Service did not decline a barometer worth \$200 given at the conclusion of his speech on Federal lands policy. The employee must either return the barometer or promptly reimburse the sponsor \$200.

(2) When it is not practical to return a tangible item because it is perishable, the item may, at the discretion of the employee's supervisor or an agency ethics official, be given to an appropriate charity, shared within the recipient's office, or destroyed.

Example 1: With approval by the recipient's supervisor, a floral arrangement sent by a disability claimant to a helpful employee of the Social Security Administration may be placed in the office's reception area.