

Ethics Guidance
CONDUCT STANDARDS FOR SERVING AS A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

“Public Service is a Public Trust”

Recognize that You Are a Role Model – As a Government employee you will be a role model—to subordinates and to peers; you will set the standard for others in the Department and your behavior will be the basis for judgements others make regarding the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Government in general.

Do Not Misuse Your Government Position – Your position may entail considerable responsibilities; it is important that you do not misuse your power or authority in any way.

- Do not ask or pressure subordinates to do personal tasks for you—they are only authorized to perform tasks in furtherance of the Department’s mission, they cannot perform personal errands for you. For example, you cannot ask a subordinate to make doctor’s appointments for you or make hotel reservations for a vacation. Having staff perform personal errands violates ethics rules. Additionally, do not accept gifts or favors from subordinates, even if offered voluntarily (except those gifts specifically authorized under ethics regulations).
- Comply with all restrictions set forth in Federal Travel Regulations on the use of Government funds when traveling and when using Government credit cards; personal expenses not covered by Federal Travel Regulations cannot be charged to a Government credit card, even if you pay for all charges when due. All transportation and accommodations must be consistent with those travel regulations. For example, travel regulations do not allow employees to travel first or business class (with a few limited exceptions, such as for health reasons) so you may not travel first class or business class for Government travel unless you personally pay for the upgrade.
- Do not use other Government resources for purposes that are not authorized. Use of Government internet access is allowed for some personal purposes, but not for political activities, for-profit activities, discriminatory activities, or to access adult web sites.

Safeguard Government Resources and Information – You will likely have access to sensitive information; you must be careful to not disclose such information to members of the public or other Government employees except as authorized. You must also safeguard other Government resources, including equipment and supplies.

When in Doubt, Ask; When You See a Violation, Report –

- If you are not sure about the legality of an action, ask—contact an ethics attorney at 202-482-5384 or ethicsdivision@doc.gov.
- If you observe an instance of fraud, waste, or abuse, you are obligated to report it to the Office of Inspector General: 800-424-5197 or 202-482-2495 or hotline@oig.doc.gov.