

Applicability of Ethics Rules During a Furlough or a Government Shutdown

When on furlough or during a shutdown of Government operations Federal employees remain subject to all conflict of interest statutes and ethics regulations, as they would during any other period when not on duty. Below are situations that may be of particular interest if you are a Government employee on furlough or during a Government shutdown.

Non-Government Employment and Activities

You can only accept employment or engage in an activity that is compatible with your Government position. Incompatible activities include working for a foreign government or contacting a Federal agency or court (if open) on behalf of others. Also, you cannot work for a company, organization, university, local government, or other entity with which you may have dealings as part of your Commerce duties when you return to work. Thus, you cannot: (a) work for an agency contractor, grantee, or licensee with which you work as part of your agency duties or (b) work for a member of a regulated industry if you deal with that industry at Commerce. This restriction applies to voluntary work, as well as paid work.

Political Activities

You cannot engage in fund-raising for a political party or candidates or run for office when on furlough or during a shutdown. If you are a career SES employee, NOAA Corps officer, or ALJ, you also cannot assist a campaign or hold a party office.

Gifts and Other Payments

You remain subject to restrictions on gifts, which means you cannot accept a personal gift from someone with interests before Commerce, unless an exception applies, such as a gift from a friend or a gift of \$20 or less.* You can attend a “widely-attended gathering”* if you received approval from a supervisor before the shutdown or furlough; otherwise, you may need to reimburse the host if you do not receive such approval when the furlough ends or Government operations resume.

** If you are a political appointee, the gift or invitation cannot be from a lobbyist or lobbying organization (unless it is a 501(c)(3) organization or a media company).*

Additional information on ethics laws and rules is available at www.commerce.gov/ethics.