

## INVITATIONS

A WORD  
ABOUT  
ETHICS

### When can I accept an invitation?

- Like any other personal gift, you may accept an invitation if:
  - it is based on a personal relationship;
  - it is from someone with no interests in matters before the Department and no one is being charged to attend;
  - it is to an event at which you are speaking as a Government official;
  - it is from a foreign government; or
  - you pay fair market value.
- In addition, if you are not a political appointee, you may accept the invitation if:
  - it is \$20 or less in value (if total gifts from that source are \$50 or less that year) or
  - it is to a “widely-attended gathering” and is approved by your supervisor.
- If you are a political appointee, you may accept an invitation of less than \$20 or to a widely-attended event only if it is not from a lobbyist or lobbying organization (or if it is from a lobbying organization that is a 501(c)(3) organization or a media company).

### What is a “widely-attended gathering”?

- A widely-attended gathering (or WAG) is an event with a large number of people (usually more than 40) from outside the U.S. Government who represents a diversity of views.

### When can I accept an invitation to a widely-attended gathering (WAG)?

- You can accept an invitation to a WAG if your supervisor approves based on a determination that the benefit of the employee’s attendance will outweigh any appearance of personal benefit and loss of impartiality.

### Do some events present a problem?

- Yes, you cannot accept an invitation to an event if:
  - the event is primarily entertainment;
  - the invitation is not from the host and either the value is more than \$375 or fewer than 100 persons are attending; or
  - if you are a political appointee, the invitation is from (or the host is) a lobbyist or lobbying organization (unless it is a 501(c)(3) organization or a media company).

### How do I obtain approval to attend a widely-attended gathering?

- You must get approval from a supervisor, in writing if the invitation is from someone who may be affected by performance of the employee’s duties. The Ethics Law and Programs Division has created a form that can be used by supervisor; it is available through a link on the Division webpage at [www.commerce.gov/ethics](http://www.commerce.gov/ethics).

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States  
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January 4, 2016