

A Word About Ethics INVITATIONS

WHEN MAY 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 MAY 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.

ETHICS LAW AND PROGRAMS DIVISION – OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL – UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

202-482-5384 – ETHICSDIVISION@DOC.GOV – WWW.COMMERCE.GOV/ETHICS

JANUARY 11, 2017