GIFTS FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

What gifts can I not accept?
- You cannot accept a gift:
  • that is offered because of your Government position, or
  • from someone:
    – with business (or seeking business) before the Department,
    – regulated by the Department, or
    – with interests that could be affected by performance of your duties unless acceptance is permitted under exceptions in ethics gift regulations.

What gifts are acceptable?
- Exceptions in the gift rules permit you to accept:
  • gifts from relatives and friends,
  • gifts of $20 or less (if not in cash and limited to $50 per year from the same donor),*
  • invitations to “widely-attended” gatherings if a supervisor signs a form approving based on the benefit to the agency,* and
  • gifts from a foreign government of $375 or less (above that amount you can accept for the U.S. Government).

* You cannot use this exception if you are a political appointee and the gift is from a lobbying organization that is not a 501(c)(3) organization or a media company.

GIFTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

Are there any limits on gifts between employees?
- Yes. You cannot give a gift to a supervisor or accept a gift from a subordinate, unless the gift is:
  • $10 or less (on an occasional basis);
  • for a major life event, such as a wedding, birth or adoption of a child, or retirement;
  • food shared in the office; or
  • personal hospitality at one’s home or a gift to a host or hostess (of appropriate value).

Can I give a gift a subordinate?
- Yes. Ethics rules do not restrict gifts from supervisors to subordinates.

GIFTS TO THE GOVERNMENT

Can I accept a gift on behalf of my agency?
- Yes, provided that you have authority to accept such gifts; the gift supports agency activities; acceptance will not create an appearance of loss of impartiality; and, if a travel gift, it was not solicited.
- Generally, a gift is not acceptable if from an agency contractor, grantee, or licensee or from someone in an industry sector regulated by the agency.