



## ETHICS AT A GLANCE SERVICE WITH OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

### SERVICE WITH NON-FEDERAL ORGANIZATIONS COMPARISON: OFFICIAL CAPACITY\* vs. PERSONAL CAPACITY

	official capacity	personal capacity
service requires management approval	YES	NO
use Government title	YES	NO
use Government resources	YES	NO
participate as part of agency duties on matters affecting the organization	YES (subject to agency limits)	NO
perform organization work during duty hours	YES	NO
receive payment for service	NO	YES <sup>†</sup>
accept travel payments to attend meetings	YES (if travel is provided to others)	YES
speak on behalf of the agency	YES	NO
express personal views on policy matters before the organization	NO (but possibly with a disclaimer)	YES
engage in fund-raising for the organization	NO	YES (with some limits)
advocate for the organization before the Federal Government	YES (with agency approval)	NO
participate in partisan political activities of the organization	NO	YES (if not career SES or NOAA Corps)
engage in “grass-roots lobbying” – urging the public to contact Congress or a state government	NO	YES
participate in internal organization matters not necessary to carry out the agency’s work (such as membership drives and personnel matters)	NO (unless necessary to support agency activities)	YES
organization documents are subject to the Freedom of Information Act, Privacy Act, and Records Retention Act	POSSIBLY	NO

\* service in an official capacity is allowed with a nonprofit or standards-setting body  
 † but limits on compensation apply to noncareer SES and Presidential appointees

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States  
 Department of Commerce  
 202-482-5384 – [ethicsdivision@doc.gov](mailto:ethicsdivision@doc.gov) – [www.commerce.gov/ethics](http://www.commerce.gov/ethics)  
 June 23, 2015