

OUTSIDE WRITING

A WORD
ABOUT
ETHICS

Can I write an article or book as an outside activity?

- Yes, you may write and publish an article, book, or other writing if:
 - it does not contain nonpublic Government information;
 - it does not entail work with a publisher or coauthor with whom you must work as part of your agency duties; and
 - it will not create an appearance of misuse of your agency position or of Government endorsement.

Do I need to receive prior approval before publishing?

- No. However, if the writing relates to your job duties and Commerce programs, policies, or operations, must submit a draft to your agency for prior review.

Can I refer to my Government title in connection with an outside writing?

- You can use your Government title:
 - with an article published in a scientific or professional journal if there is also a disclaimer stating that the views expressed are not those of the agency or
 - in a biographical sketch along with other biographical information.

Can I receive compensation for outside writing?

- Yes, you may receive payments for the outside writing if:
 - the writing was not done as part of your Government duties;
 - you were asked to write because of your personal expertise rather than your Government position;
 - you were not asked to write by a person who has interests that may be affected by the performance your Government duties;
 - the writing does not deal with a matter to which you were assigned during the past year;
 - the writing does not concern an ongoing policy, program, or operation of the Department of Commerce; and
 - if you are a political appointee in SES, the writing is not on the general subject matter area of your agency.
- Note that these restrictions do not apply if the only payment is for travel expenses (unless you are a political appointee in the SES).

Are there other limitations?

- Yes, you cannot use Government time or resources in connection with personal writing.
- There are also limitations on outside earned income for SES political appointees and Presidential appointees.

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States
Department of Commerce

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