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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ETHICS COMMISSION ISSUES ADVISORY OPINION

At its October 2, 2020 meeting, the Ohio Ethics Commission issued formal [Advisory Opinion No. 2020 – 03](#), which addresses ethics questions about public officials attending ceremonial events. The Commission held the meeting by conference call as authorized by Am. Sub. House Bill 197 and also addressed other matters on its [agenda](#).

The opinion notes the general rule that public officials and employees may not solicit or accept invitations to events of substantial value from any party that is doing or seeking to do business with, interested in matters before, or regulated by the officials' public agency. It also notes that public officials and employees may not solicit or accept compensation from third parties to perform their public duties.

However, the Commission reviewed prior informal Commission precedents and concluded that these restrictions would not prohibit public officials or employees from attending an event where the official or employee is performing a ceremonial or honorary function appropriate to their public positions.

"Public officials and employees are often asked to attend public events such as the opening of a new exhibit, a ground-breaking or ribbon-cutting ceremony," said Executive Director Paul M. Nick. "This advisory opinion provides helpful guidance on when those officials are acting in their official or ceremonial capacity, so their attendance does not pose any potential for a conflict of interest."

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