



The Ohio Ethics Law & the Private Sector



This brochure is designed to offer several “quick hints” to private sector businesses and organizations that do business with or are regulated by a governmental agency. For more information about the Ethics Law or the Ethics Commission, visit our web site at ethics.ohio.gov

1. When recognizing the efforts of public officials or employees, a note of thanks (especially if the letter of appreciation is copied to a supervisor or agency director) is preferable to an offer of a gift.

2. The Ethics Law prohibits private parties who do business with or have interests before a public agency from offering things of value, including employment, to the officials and employees of the agency.

Therefore, if you thinking of offering a job or consulting opportunity to a public employee, be aware that the employee cannot continue official interactions as a public servant with you.

3. The Ethics Law limits “revolving door” activity, just as non-compete agreements impose limits in the private sector, to protect against conflicts of interest. Individuals who leave government service have, in effect, a “cooling off” period before they can represent new employers or

clients before government agencies on many matters. Be mindful of this restriction when you consider hiring a public servant, and ask questions about the “Revolving Door.”

4. Public officials and employees must fully pay their own way when private sector parties offer substantial entertainment, like golf outings, fine dining or tickets to sporting events. These restrictions protect both the private party and the public servant from challenges that public decisions were improperly influenced by a gift.

If you would like public officials or employees to participate in such private sector events, provide a method for them to pay their fair share of the costs.

5. Private sector parties are encouraged to contact the Ohio Ethics Commission when they have questions. We are here to answer your questions and to assist the private sector in understanding and complying with the Ethics Law. A brief investment of time, before you act, may save you and your organization a tremendous amount of resources, money, and lost goodwill at a later date.



The “Do’s and Don’t’s of Interacting with Government

- ✓ Do be aware that private companies or businesses are regulated by the Ethics Law when they do or seek to do business with, are regulated by, or have an interest in a matter pending before a government office.
- ✓ Do contact the Ohio Ethics Commission when you have questions!
- ✓ Do respect “Revolving Door” and Confidentiality restrictions when hiring former public servants into your organization.
- X Don’t offer, promise, or give substantial things of value to public servants.
- X Don’t assume that public servants can legally accept travel expenses or honoraria for events related to their public duties.
- X Don’t compensate a public servant, financially or otherwise, for some official action, inaction, or decision of the public servant.

Questions? Contact Us!

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