

# A WORD ABOUT ETHICS HOLIDAY PARTIES & GIFTS

## INVITATIONS AND GIFTS

### **May Federal employees accept Invitations to holiday parties?**

- Yes, provided that the invitation is:
  - based on a personal relationship,
  - \$20 or less in value,\* or
  - to an event attended by a large range of private sector persons and the employee's supervisor approves as benefitting the agency (using a form available from the Ethics Law and Programs Division).\*

*\* If the invitation is to a political appointee and from a lobbyist or lobbying organization the employee can accept only if it is a 501(c)(3) organization or a media company*

### **Are there limits on holiday gifts Federal employees may accept?**

- Yes; holiday gifts are no different than gifts offered at other times. They cannot be accepted if given because of the employee's Government position or from someone with interests before Commerce, unless an exception applies, such as for:
  - gifts based on a personal relationship or
  - gifts worth \$20 or less (if not to a political appointee from a lobbyist or lobbying organization).

## GIFTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

### **May co-workers exchange gifts?**

- Yes, if all persons are participating voluntarily. Employees may exchange gifts but the value should be limited to no more than \$10 if subordinates will be exchanging gifts with supervisors. A gift to a supervisor must be \$10 or less (meaning the value of the gift, not of each employee's contribution).

### **May contract workers participate in office parties and gift exchanges?**

- Yes. They may not be solicited for a party contribution, but may voluntarily pay for their *per person* costs. Federal employees may give gifts to contract workers, but may accept only gifts totaling \$20 or less from all workers of the same contractor.

### **May employees collect money for an office holiday party?**

- Yes, but participation must be voluntary—no one may be coerced. Those attending may be required to pay a reasonable set amount for the *per person* costs. Supervisors should not request funds and may not require participation.

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