

PARTICIPATION OF SENIOR COMMERCE OFFICIALS IN POLITICAL EVENTS

If a Commerce Department employee is speaking at or attending a political event, the following rules must be followed. An ethics attorney, who can provide guidance on these matters, may be reached at 202-482-5384 or ethicsdivision@doc.gov.

Event Information

- The event organizer must provide the Department with a description of the event, including its venue, any sponsors, and a description of invitees, including whether any persons attending will be registered lobbyists.
- For small events with limited attendance (20 persons or fewer), the event organizer must also provide the Department with a list of known, confirmed attendees with their occupations.

Event Audiences

- The event organizer cannot target invitations to persons with interests in matters before the Department of Commerce, if the employee has Department-wide responsibilities, or before the employee's agency, if the employee has more limited responsibilities.

Event Announcements, Invitations, and Other Materials

- All event materials, including both print and electronic, must be cleared in advance of distribution by the Department's counsel.
- The employee's Government title cannot be used in any materials or at the event.
- The employee's name cannot appear on a page of event materials that requests funds.
- The employee cannot be described in event materials as a host, presenter, or member of the host committee. The employee can be described as a guest speaker or special guest.
- All event materials must include the disclaimers required by Federal election law.

Payment of Travel Expenses

- If the employee is traveling only to participate in a political event, the political organization sponsoring the event must pay the entire cost of the travel.
- If travel involves both political and official events, the cost of travel for the entire trip will be either: (1) for a non-Presidential campaign event, prorated between the Government and political organization, based on the percentage of time spent on each type of activity or (2) for a Presidential campaign event, charged to the campaign to the full extent of costs as if the Presidential campaign event were the only activity during the trip.
- Any payment must be made in advance of the travel.

Prepared by the Ethics Law and Programs Division, Office of the Assistant General Counsel for Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, January 3, 2012