

# A WORD ABOUT ETHICS GIFTS

## GIFTS FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

### What gifts are not acceptable?

- An employee may not accept a gift:
  - that is offered because of the employee’s Government position, or
  - from someone:
    - with business (or seeking business) before the Department,
    - regulated by the Department, or
    - with interests that could be affected by performance of the employee’s duties *unless acceptance is permitted under exceptions in ethics gift regulations.*

### What gifts are acceptable?

- Exceptions in the gift rules permit employees to accept:
  - gifts from relatives and friends that are based on a personal relationship,
  - gifts of \$20 or less (if not in cash and limited to \$50 per year from the same donor),\*
  - invitations to “widely-attended” events *if a supervisor signs a form approving based on the benefit to the agency,\** and
  - gifts from a foreign government.

\* *exception is not applicable if the gift is to a political appointee from a lobbyist or from a lobbying organization that is not a 501(c)(3) organization or media company*

## GIFTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

### Are there any limits on gifts between employees?

- Yes. An employee may not give a gift to a supervisor or accept a gift from a subordinate, unless the gift is:
  - \$10 or less (on an occasional basis);
  - for a major life event, such as a wedding, birth of a child, or retirement;
  - food shared in the office; or
  - personal hospitality at one’s home or a gift to a host or hostess (of appropriate value).

### May an employee give a gift to a subordinate?

- Yes. Ethics rules do not restrict gifts from supervisors to subordinates.

## GIFTS TO THE GOVERNMENT

### May an employee accept a gift on behalf of the employee’s agency?

- Yes, *provided that:* the employee has authority to accept such gifts; the gift supports agency activities; acceptance will not create an appearance of loss of impartiality; and, if a travel gift, it was not solicited.

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