



November 29, 2011

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Mr. Don Fox
Acting Director and General Counsel
Office of Government Ethics
1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3917
Re: RIN 3209-AA04

Dear Mr. Fox,

The California Hotel & Lodging Association (CH&LA) is the nation's oldest and largest statewide lodging association in the nation representing thousands of lodging facilities throughout California.

Today, we are writing in regard to proposed regulations issued by your office that extend to all federal employees certain restrictions on attending informational meetings and events that currently apply to political appointees. We are very concerned that the proposal as written would severely limit the ability of federal employees to attend meetings held by some but not all associations organized under section 501(c) (6) of the tax code. Further, this ban is of particular interest to us as it impacts us on two levels as most association events take place at hotels and conference centers.

While we understand the reasoning behind this proposed change, we are concerned that it will have the unintended consequences. Firstly, we believe it may restrict the necessary flow of information between the private sector and the federal government. This kind of information sharing is important for the development of regulations and policies that are effective and efficient but that do not place counterproductive burdens on the private sector. Secondly, it will have a negative impact on our industry in this very difficult economic environment.

The proposed regulations as written could have a detrimental effect on many of our constituents, including businesses-particularly hotels and restaurants, federal employees, and eventually the public who might ultimately bear the additional and avoidable cost if the private and government sectors cannot freely exchange information.

What is particularly troubling is that associations, all of which have essentially the same role in promoting and educating their membership and the public, are treated differently under the proposal depending on how they are organized.



PROTECTING THE RIGHTS & INTERESTS OF THE CALIFORNIA LODGING INDUSTRY.

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According to our understanding of the new regulations, if an association is organized as a professional society, the extension of this regulation to all federal employees does not apply. However, if their association is organized as a trade association, the proposed rules apply.

Both types of associations are organized under section 501(c) (6) of the tax code, yet they are not treated the same under the proposed regulations. Both hold educational and informational meetings that often provide important and necessary information to federal participants, yet one is somehow seen as more legitimate than the other.

It is important to point out that federal, state and local governments regularly reach out to the association community in the development of public policy. Government agencies want to ensure they have accurate information when they take actions. The best way to accomplish this is to reach out to the business community through association meetings. Examples range from the First Lady's initiative to combat childhood obesity to the efforts of the armed forces to develop appropriate security measures including the Department of Homeland Security's "see something, say something" program for hotel and hospitality professionals.

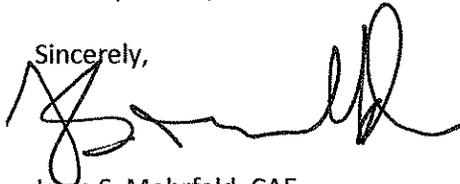
Every government agency interacts with trade associations in developing public policy for the good of the entire country; this proposal could greatly disrupt that communication. We also believe this action may cause state and local governments to follow suit resulting in a severe economic impact to our industry as well as a dearth of information on the part of government regulators who get their information from trade associations.

While it is certainly reasonable to tighten standards to make sure that social events are not used by organizations to garner favor on the part of federal employees, educational and informational meetings should not be held to the same standard. This exchange of information from educational and informational meetings is vitally important for federal employees work in promoting the public interest, and helps ensure that private interests better understand the federal regulations they must deal with on a daily basis.

We ask that all associations organized under section 501(c) (6) be treated in the same manner, and that the proposed regulations be modified so that the necessary flow of information between the public and private sector is not discouraged.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn S. Mohrfeld", written in a cursive style.

Lynn S. Mohrfeld, CAE