

**Dredging Contractors of America**  
Sustaining America's  
Access to the World

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November 10, 2011

Mr. Richard M. Thomas  
Associate General Counsel  
Office of Government Ethics  
1201 New York Avenue, N.W., Ste 500  
Washington, D.C. 20005-3917

Re: RIN 3209-AA04 – Proposed Amendments to Part 2635; Standards of Council for Employees of the Executive Branch; Proposed Amendments Limiting Gifts from Lobbyists and Lobbying Organizations

Dear Mr. Thomas:

The Dredging Contractors of America (DCA) opposes the proposed amendments published September 13, 2011 in the Federal Register, which address standards of ethical conduct for executive branch employees and gifts from registered lobbyists and lobbying organizations.

The DCA is the national non-profit trade association (501 c(6)) for the U.S. dredging and marine construction industries. Since its inception more than 78 years ago as the National Association of River and Harbor Contractors, DCA has worked diligently to improve the quality and responsiveness of dredging service delivery to the Nation, ensuring that America's ports, waterways, wetlands and beaches are efficiently constructed and maintained in an environmentally sustainable manner using innovative methods and American ingenuity.

We strongly believe that the proposed language to eliminate the exception for Widely Attended Gatherings and the exception for Social Invitations are unnecessary and harmful to the health of our industry and the federal policies that regulate it. These substantive changes will create another information barrier between industry and the government. It will adversely affect our ability to not only educate executive branch employees on the critical issues affecting the dredging and marine construction community but to also facilitate open, constructive dialogue and professional interaction between our member companies and their clients. More than sixty percent of our members are small businesses, and with limited resources they rely heavily on the DCA to organize professional workshops, meetings, and events for purposes of learning about the federal dredging program through formal presentations and Q&A sessions. If enacted, these changes could very easily produce unintended consequences and further challenges for maximizing lobbying transparency. First, they could motivate companies to abandon the collective advocacy nature of their trade association to pursue self-interested results, and second, they could prompt registered lobbyists to re-evaluate their actual lobbying time and deregister themselves.

The DCA respectfully requests that your office rescind these proposed changes to the gift rules and continue to enforce the current ones which we deem equitable and appropriate.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael M. Gerhardt II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "M" and "G".

Michael M. Gerhardt II  
Assistant Executive Director  
Dredging Contractors of America