

**From:** [Marlene Znidar](#)  
**To:** [USOGE](#)  
**Subject:** "Proposed Amendments to Part 2635"  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 19, 2011 10:51:46 AM  
**Attachments:** [OGEtradeassocexcltram\\_FINAL.pdf](#)

Attached please find our comments on the proposed amendments to part 2635.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please don't hesitate to contact [Barbara Benton](#) or [Amy Mignogna](#).

Sincerely,

*Marlene*

Marlene Znidar, Administrative Assistant, Governmental Affairs

800.686.2727 ext 335

The Ohio Society of CPAs. . .Your partner for the future



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 [Proposed Amendments Limiting Gifts from Registered Lobbyists and Lobbying Organizations]

Dear Mr. Fox:

On behalf of The Ohio Society of CPAs (OSCPA) we appreciate the opportunity to comment on proposed rule RIN 3209-AA04, which restricts all executive branch employees of the Federal Government from using certain exceptions to accept gifts from registered federal lobbyists and lobbying organizations, including invitations to widely attended gatherings (WAGs).

OSCPA is a professional association that represents 22,000 certified public accountants across Ohio who are employed in public practice, business and industry, government, and education. As a highly regulated profession built upon public trust, we support the Office of Government Ethics' (OGE) mission to promote high ethical standards for executive branch employees. That said we are concerned with the inexplicable exclusion of trade associations from the list of organizations that can extend invitations to government employees to attend WAGs.

Under the proposed rule OGE states that it "does not believe that employees, including political appointees subject to the Ethics Pledge, should be precluded categorically from accepting offers of free attendance at substantive events that would provide a legitimate educational or professional development benefit that furthers the interests of an agency." In its reasoning for not including trade associations in that exclusion, OGE states that, "Trade associations may sponsor educational activities for their members and even the public, but the primary concern of such associations generally is not the education and development of members of a profession or discipline, which is the focus of the proposed exclusion." We respectfully disagree with that premise.

It is important to note that both trade associations and professional societies are typically exempt under section 501(c)(6) of the tax code. While many trade associations engage in advocacy, they also help resolve industry-wide issues that could otherwise threaten economic growth, and set safety and technical standards that benefit everyone in exactly the same way as professional associations, scientific organizations and learned societies. Further, the proposed rule simply ignores the important role these organizations play in virtually every industry that the government seeks to regulate. Companies join trade associations to promote common interests, share best practices and learn about the latest developments in their industry.

A mutually beneficial relationship exists between government and trade associations' interests. Today's mixed economy – where government and business both play important roles with regard to production, consumption, job creation, and investment – requires a free exchange of ideas, knowledge and expertise to ensure informed policymaking and economic progress.

Don Fox  
October 17, 2011  
Page Two

These educational and professional development programs conducted by trade associations are virtually indistinguishable from those conducted by the other types of organizations listed in the proposed rule. They offer the same benefits to government employees and should qualify for the same exclusion.

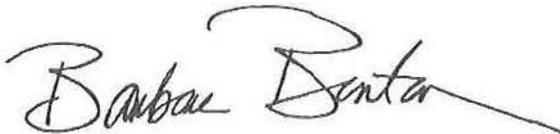
**We respectfully ask you to reconsider not including trade associations in the list of organizations that can extend invitations to government employees to attend WAGs.**

Thank you in advance for your consideration and if you have any questions, please contact one of us at 800.686.2727 or [government@ohio-cpa.com](mailto:government@ohio-cpa.com)

Sincerely,



J. Clarke Price, CAE



Barbara Benton, CAE