



January 22, 2021  
LA-21-03

LEGAL ADVISORY

TO: Designated Agency Ethics Officials

FROM: Emory A. Rounds, III  
Director

SUBJECT: Executive Orders on Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel

On January 20, 2021, President Biden signed an Executive Order titled “Executive Order on Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel.” Pursuant to section 4(c)(i) of the Executive Order, the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) is providing agency ethics officials with the attached copy of the Ethics Pledge and a [link](#) to the Executive Order.

Among other things, this Executive Order requires every “appointee” in each executive agency appointed on or after January 20, 2021, to sign the Ethics Pledge established therein. The definition of “appointee” in the Executive Order covers “every full-time, non-career Presidential or Vice-Presidential appointee, non-career appointee in the Senior Executive Service (or other SES-type system), and appointee to a position that has been excepted from the competitive service by reason of being of a confidential or policymaking character (Schedule C and other positions excepted under comparable criteria) in an executive agency.” Executive Order, sec. 2(b). However, “[i]t does not include any person appointed as a member of the Senior Foreign Service or solely as a uniformed service commissioned officer.” *Id.*

With respect to this Executive Order, ethics officials and employees may continue to rely on OGE’s prior guidance regarding Executive Orders 13490 and 13770 to the extent that such guidance addresses language common to either of these Executive Orders and the new Executive Order. OGE will issue additional interpretive guidance as needed to address issues implicating new language that appears only in the new Executive Order.

Additionally, Executive Order 13770, which applied to appointees appointed on or after January 20, 2017, was revoked by an Executive Order signed by President Trump on January 20, 2021. The latter [Executive Order](#) states, in part, that “[e]mployees and former employees subject to the commitments in Executive Order 13770 will not be subject to those commitments after noon January 20, 2021.”

As always, agency ethics officials may contact their OGE Desk Officers for advice concerning the application of these Executive Orders in individual cases.

Attachment: Ethics Pledge Form



## ETHICS PLEDGE

I recognize that this pledge is part of a broader ethics in government plan designed to restore and maintain public trust in government, and I commit myself to conduct consistent with that plan. I commit to decision-making on the merits and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit. I commit to conduct that upholds the independence of law enforcement and precludes improper interference with investigative or prosecutorial decisions of the Department of Justice. I commit to ethical choices of post-Government employment that do not raise the appearance that I have used my Government service for private gain, including by using confidential information acquired and relationships established for the benefit of future clients.

Accordingly, as a condition, and in consideration, of my employment in the United States Government in a position invested with the public trust, I commit myself to the following obligations, which I understand are binding on me and are enforceable under law:

1. *Lobbyist Gift Ban.* I will not accept gifts from registered lobbyists or lobbying organizations for the duration of my service as an appointee.
2. *Revolving Door Ban — All Appointees Entering Government.* I will not for a period of 2 years from the date of my appointment participate in any particular matter involving specific parties that is directly and substantially related to my former employer or former clients, including regulations and contracts.
3. *Revolving Door Ban — Lobbyists and Registered Agents Entering Government.* If I was registered under the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*, or the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), 22 U.S.C. 611 *et seq.*, within the 2 years before the date of my appointment, in addition to abiding by the limitations of paragraph 2, I will not for a period of 2 years after the date of my appointment:
  - (a) participate in any particular matter on which I lobbied, or engaged in registrable activity under FARA, within the 2 years before the date of my appointment;
  - (b) participate in the specific issue area in which that particular matter falls; or
  - (c) seek or accept employment with any executive agency with respect to which I lobbied, or engaged in registrable activity under FARA, within the 2 years before the date of my appointment.
4. *Revolving Door Ban — Appointees Leaving Government.* If, upon my departure from the Government, I am covered by the post-employment restrictions on communicating with employees of my former executive agency set forth in section 207(c) of title 18, United States Code, and its implementing regulations, I agree that I will abide by those restrictions for a period of 2 years following the end of my appointment. I will abide by these same restrictions with respect to communicating with the senior White House staff.
5. *Revolving Door Ban — Senior and Very Senior Appointees Leaving Government.* If, upon my departure from the Government, I am covered by the post-employment restrictions set forth in sections 207(c) or 207(d) of title 18, United States Code, and those sections' implementing regulations, I agree that, in addition, for a period of 1 year following the end of my appointment, I will not materially assist others in making communications or appearances that I am prohibited from undertaking myself by (a) holding myself out as being available to engage in lobbying activities in support of any such communications or appearances; or (b) engaging in any such lobbying activities.
6. *Revolving Door Ban — Appointees Leaving Government to Lobby.* In addition to abiding by the limitations of paragraph 4, I also agree, upon leaving Government service, not to lobby any covered executive branch official or non-career Senior Executive Service appointee, or engage in any activity on behalf of any foreign government or foreign political party which, were it undertaken on January 20, 2021, would require that I register under FARA, for the remainder of the Administration or 2 years following the end of my appointment, whichever is later.
7. *Golden Parachute Ban.* I have not accepted and will not accept, including after entering Government, any salary or other cash payment from my former employer the eligibility for and payment of which is limited to individuals accepting a position in the United States Government. I also have not accepted and will not accept any non-cash benefit from my former employer that is provided in lieu of such a prohibited cash payment.
8. *Employment Qualification Commitment.* I agree that any hiring or other employment decisions I make will be based on the candidate's qualifications, competence, and experience.
9. *Assent to Enforcement.* I acknowledge that the Executive Order entitled "Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel," issued by the President on January 20, 2021, which I have read before signing this document, defines certain of the terms applicable to the foregoing obligations and sets forth the methods for enforcing them. I expressly accept the provisions of that Executive Order as a part of this agreement and as binding on me. I understand that the terms of this pledge are in addition to any statutory or other legal restrictions applicable to me by virtue of Federal Government service.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name (Type or Print): \_\_\_\_\_