



United States  
**Office of Government Ethics**  
1201 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005-3917

November 23, 1999  
DO-99-046

MEMORANDUM

TO: Designated Agency Ethics Officials

FROM: Stephen D. Potts Director

SUBJECT: Joint Initiative on the Creation of Retention Periods for Common Ethics Program Records

The efficient management of records helps to prevent conflicts of interest and is an important component of all well-run executive branch ethics programs. Realizing this, the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) have undertaken an initiative to revise and expand the General Records Schedules' (GRS) coverage of ethics program records. OGE and NARA believe that the participation of agency ethics officials in this project will significantly add to its quality and usefulness and are asking interested parties for their involvement.

The GRS, which provides authorized retention periods for temporary records common to several or all agencies of the Federal Government, currently covers financial disclosure reports (GRS 1, Item 24), standards of conduct files (GRS 1, Item 27), and semi-annual expense reports for non-Federally funded travel (GRS 9, Item 6). It is available on NARA's Web site at <http://ardor.nara.gov/grs/index.html>. By improving the GRS coverage of ethics records, OGE and NARA seek to promote continuity in the operation of executive branch ethics programs. In addition, we anticipate that the guidance will help to clarify the administrative responsibilities of agency ethics officials and eliminate the need for them to spend their limited staff resources on scheduling common ethics records.

OGE and NARA have approved a multiphased plan for the identification, description, and development of retention periods for common ethics records suitable for inclusion in the GRS. A critical component of the plan is the creation of a work group consisting primarily of interested agency ethics officials that will assist OGE and NARA in completion of the initiative. Work group members will meet in January 2000 to discuss their role in identifying, describing, and suggesting retention periods for common ethics program records. The responsibilities of the group will be completed by April 2000 and the results of the project will be presented at the September 2000 Ethics Conference. If you are interested in participating in the work group or want more information regarding the initiative and the role of work group members, we

encourage you to contact OGE's Records Management Officer, Michael J. Lewandowski at 202-208-8000, ext. 1185.