



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

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DO-94-044

MEMORANDUM

TO: Designated Agency Ethics Officials, General Counsels and Inspectors General

FROM: Stephen D. Potts  
Director

SUBJECT: Holiday Gifts and Celebrations

As the holiday season approaches, you may wish to remind employees about the rules relating to gifts from outside sources and gifts between employees. You may find the attached poem useful.

Attachment

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**THE HOLIDAY SEASON**

The holiday season -- a time for good cheer!  
For egg nog, for parties, for friends to be near.  
But I must be careful  
Lest I accept free  
A gift not permitted, no matter how wee.

Part two six three five of the 5 CFR  
Explains in detail the relevant bar.  
It defines the term gift  
To mean all things worth money.  
That's NBA tickets or jars full of honey.

Some gifts may be taken but some are verboten.  
The source is the key -- it's the rule that I'm quotin'.  
When from me or others  
The source seeks some act,  
I must find an exception or I could be sacked.

Even others who give can cause problems for me.  
If my job prompts the giving -- my position, you see.  
But lucky for me,

Some exceptions exist.  
They're in subpart B and they should not be missed.

I can pay market value if the gift I do like,  
Or I can at my option say "go take a hike."  
I can always say no,  
But I need not decline.  
If worth twenty or less then the gift can be mine.

This exception has prompted some very loud hollers.  
It says gifts are okay if worth twenty dollars.  
But surely the public  
Is certain to see,  
I could never be bought for a sandwich and tea.

Restrictions apply so it does not suffice  
To pay twenty bucks for a gift twice the price.  
And in any one year  
I can't use it, of course,  
To go over the limit -- fifty dollars per source.

For gifts that a friend or my sister might send,  
The rules recognize I don't want to offend.  
Regardless of value,  
It only must be  
That their motive to give wasn't business, but me.

The rule's much the same in the case of my spouse  
Who happens to work as she can't stand our house.  
Although her employer  
Is one of those sources,  
I can go to their fete and avoid more divorces.

In the case of most parties, the rule's not so clear  
As the agency must have an interest, I fear.  
If worth more than twenty  
And it's no friend true,  
Then I'd better seek guidance or I could be blue.

What of those in the office with whom I share much?  
Are all treats a taboo -- must we always go dutch?  
The rules here are different,  
They're in subpart C.  
They okay some gifts even to and from me.

I can give to my boss to a limit of ten --

A baseball, a cap, or a blue ballpoint pen.  
If not to my boss  
Or my chain of command,  
To a friend I can give more without being canned.

I always look forward to my office party.  
We're all in good moods and the food is so hearty.  
If no arm is twisted,  
Collecting's okay  
To make sure that everyone has a good day.

So go forth with good cheer and know there's no reason  
To think that the gifts rules will ruin your season!