



FWS ETHICS PROGRAM



FALL 2020 | ISSUE 1

ETHICS UPDATE

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the FWS Ethics Update! The purpose of this update is to provide you with relevant ethics information and useful resources. For additional guidance, visit the The FWS website at www.fws.gov/ethics or the DOI website at www.doi.gov/ethics.

NEW FORM ALERT!

The Departmental Ethics Office (DEO) is excited to announce the launch of new versions of three ethics request forms: the [DI-1958](#) (Free Attendance at Widely Attended Gatherings); the [DI-2000](#) (Non-Federal Payments for Travel Expenses); and the [DI-7010](#) (Outside Work and Activities). The forms have been updated and streamlined as resources for employees to submit requests for authorization, approval, or ethics guidance on these topics. The forms are available as fillable PDFs and permit electronic signatures to make it easier to fill out.

You can now find these new forms, step-by-step instructions, and FAQs on the DEO's updated ethics forms webpage at the following URL: <https://www.doi.gov/ethics/forms>.

If you have any questions about these forms or processes contact your [Ethics Counselor](#).

HATCH ACT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Scrolling through your personal Instagram account and a presidential campaign ad catches your eye? STOP before you LIKE!!! The Hatch Act may apply!

What is the Hatch Act?

The Hatch Act limits Federal employees' participation in partisan political activities. It prohibits engagement in political activities while on duty, in the workplace, while wearing an official uniform, or while using a Government vehicle.

What is Political Activity?

It is activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.

What does the Hatch Act have to do with Social Media?

When using social media platforms, such as Facebook, employees should be mindful that the Hatch Act prohibits posting, retweeting, and liking partisan political content while on duty. Yes, even while teleworking! [Learn more.](#)

Are you saying I can't comment on political discussion on my personal time, on my personal device?

In general, the Hatch Act doesn't limit what you can say when you are off-duty and using personal devices, but you should be aware that there are some limits and pitfalls (e.g., you can never engage in fundraising, including posting, re-sharing, or liking fundraising posts!) Here is a handy [quick reference guide](#).

What happens if I violate the Hatch Act? Violations may result in disciplinary action, to include removal from Federal employment.

Learn more! Check out this [video training on the Hatch Act!](#)

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

"Can you provide me with a letter of recommendation?"

Federal ethics rules include guidance about conventional business practices, such as writing letters of recommendation. These rules are summarized in **FWS Manual Chapter 212 FW 12**.

You **MAY**

- Sign an employment recommendation or character reference using your official title and agency letterhead only if:
 - you personally know of the ability or character of the individual with whom you have worked during the course of your Federal employment **and/or**
 - the individual is applying for a Federal position.
- Write a letter of recommendation for a personal friend, who you have not dealt with in your Federal position, even if the friend is not applying for Federal employment, if you do not use agency letterhead or sign the letter using your official title. However, you may refer to your official position in the body of the letter.

You **MAY NOT** sign a letter of recommendation on agency letterhead, using your official title, if you are recommending a personal friend or relative for a non-federal position.

CY 2020 ANNUAL ETHICS TRAINING REMINDER!

Are you required to file a yearly financial disclosure report? If yes, have you completed your annual ethics training for CY 2020? New training modules have been released! Complete your training [here!](#)

Did you know that DOI has it's own Ethics App?

Need information about conflicts of interest, gift acceptance, or misuse of position outside of work hours? The DOI Ethics App provides immediate access to Federal ethics laws, forms, and contact information for ethics officials around the clock from any device. You also can view the latest ethics updates and deadlines for various ethics requirements.

The App can be downloaded to your official or personal phone from the app store. Go ahead and give it a try!



ETHICS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST CORNER

Have you been assigned work on a government matter involving your outside employer or your spouse's employer?

Before you start working on that matter, talk to your Ethics Counselor! You may have a conflict of interest!

The financial interests of your spouse or minor child, or an organization where you serve on a board or hold outside employment can create a conflict of interest. The Conflict of Interest laws are criminal statutes. For information conflicts of interest, visit <https://www.fws.gov/ethics/financial-conflicts.html>

For more information on the above topics or any other Ethics topic, visit the [Service Ethics Web Page](#) or contact your [Ethics Counselor](#).