



The holiday season traditionally is a time of parties, receptions, and gift exchanges. The following guidance addresses the most common ethics questions. If you have additional questions, please contact your Ethics Counselor (www.fws.gov/program/ethics/home).

HOLIDAY PARTIES

1. **SERVICE OFFICE PARTIES:** Many Service offices host or arrange holiday parties. Most are potluck events. Others are paid for through donations from managers or employees. Following are ethics rules if you plan to collect funds to pay for those parties:
 - **YOU MAY** fund your holiday party by requiring individuals to pay their own costs or by collecting voluntary donations to cover the cost of the party.
 - **DO ensure that all contributions are voluntary.** U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) regulations require that any recommendation for a contributed amount must be accompanied by a statement that an employee may choose to contribute less, or not at all. An employee who declines to contribute may not be excluded from a holiday celebration that is held in the office during business hours.
 - **DO NOT solicit subordinate employees.** However, supervisors may encourage participation.
 - **DO NOT solicit contractor personnel or other non-Federal persons present on Federal property.** Contractors may make voluntary nominal contributions on an occasional basis for items such as food and refreshments to be shared. A voluntary contribution from a contractor must come from the contract employee, not their employer. The Service may not be billed for the hours a contractor spends at a social gathering. Contract staff may need approval from their employers to attend Service social functions. Non-Governmental personnel such as grantees, partners, detailees from state governments, and other invited guests may attend Service social functions if there is no additional cost to the Government.
 - **DO NOT solicit donations from outside businesses or organizations.**
 - **DO NOT sell items on DOI owned or leased property to raise funds for an office party.** DOI regulation [43 CFR 20.504](http://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-43/chapter-20/subchapter-5/section-20.504) prohibits the sale of items for profit on DOI property. No bake sales, coffee mug sales or chili fundraisers on DOI property! **Note:** Employee Organizations, recognized through the process described in [PB 17-07 Recognition Procedures and Departmental Support for Employee Organizations \(Non-Labor\)](#), also are prohibited from fundraising in the workplace.
 - **DO NOT conduct “gambling” activities.** No gambling in the Federal workplace. Gambling is defined as a “game of chance” (such as a raffle, lottery, etc.) where an employee provides “consideration” (money or something of value) for the opportunity to win a “prize” (monetary award, meals, drinks, gift certificates, tickets to events, or cash.) A door prize raffle is allowed at a holiday party if tickets are available to all employees, without a requirement that they provide “consideration” (money or something of value), in exchange for the ticket. Door prizes at these events should be of modest value.



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2. **EVENT HOSTED BY A PARTNER ORGANIZATION, FRIENDS GROUP, CONTRACTOR OR OTHER NON-FEDERAL ORGANIZATION:** Service employees often are invited to holiday social events by non-profit friends' groups, conservation organizations, contractors, concessionaires, partners, and entities that receive permits, grants, or other assistance from the Service. These groups are "prohibited sources" as defined in the ethics regulations. Federal Ethics laws and regulations restrict your acceptance of gifts from "prohibited sources" or if given because of your official position. (A "*prohibited source*" for a Service employee includes any person, company, or organization that does business with the Service, is seeking to do business with the Service, conducts operations that are regulated by the Service, or has any interests that might be affected by the performance or non-performance of your official duties, or is an organization a majority of whose members are described above.) Following are the general rules if you are invited to an event sponsored by a "prohibited source" or if offered because of your official position.
 - **YOU MAY attend an event if the gift of food, beverage, and entertainment does not exceed \$20 in value for each event**, subject to a \$50 total limit on gifts from this same source during a calendar year.
 - **YOU MAY accept free attendance to a "Widely Attended Gathering" (e.g. banquet or reception) with a value over \$20 if you receive prior supervisor and ethics approval using a Departmental form [DI-1958](#).** An event is considered a "widely attended gathering" if a large number of people with a diversity of views or interests are present. Other conditions to acceptance also may apply. Contact your [Ethics Counselor](#) for additional information.
3. **EVENT HOSTED BY A CO-WORKER:** Supervisors generally may not accept gifts from employees making less pay. Also, employees generally may not give, donate to, or solicit contributions for, a gift to an official supervisor. However, there are a few exceptions:
 - **SUPERVISOR MAY accept personal hospitality at the residence of a subordinate** if it is the type and value of an event customarily provided to personal friends.
 - **SUPERVISOR MAY accept non-cash gifts of less than \$10 in value** on an occasion when gifts normally are exchanged (e.g. holiday gift exchange).
 - **SUPERVISOR MAY contribute to and accept food and refreshments to be shared in the office.**
 - **YOU MAY accept invitations to holiday parties from your supervisor or a co-worker.**
 - **YOU MAY give your supervisor a hospitality gift, if invited to a social event at the supervisor's residence**, if the gift is the type and value customarily given (bottle of wine, bouquet of flowers, etc.)

GIFTS

1. **GIFT FROM A "PROHIBITED SOURCE" OR IF GIVEN BECAUSE OF YOUR OFFICIAL POSITION:** See definition of "prohibited source" above.
 - **YOU MAY accept a (non-cash) gift valued at \$20 or less per occasion**, subject to a \$50 total limit on gifts from this same source during a calendar year.
 - **YOU MAY accept a (non-cash) gift valued at \$20 or less from a contract employee**, subject to a \$50 total limit on gifts from this same source during a calendar year. Contract employees are "prohibited sources." Just as government employees must use



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personal funds to purchase gifts for office gift exchanges, contract employees also must use personal (rather than company) funds for office gift exchanges.

- **YOU MAY**, at the discretion of your supervisor, accept perishable gifts valued at over \$20 when it is not practical to return the item. The gift should be given to an appropriate charity, shared within the recipient's office, or destroyed.
- 2. **GIFT TO A SUPERVISOR:** Generally, employees may not give to, donate to, or solicit contributions for, a gift an official supervisor. However, there are a few exceptions:
 - **YOU MAY** give your supervisor a gift valued at \$10 or less, at a time when gifts are customarily exchanged. For example, a supervisor and other employees may participate in an office gift exchange if the value of each gift does not exceed \$10.
 - **SUPERVISORS MAY** accept food and refreshments shared in the office and may donate to the expenses for an office party.

DONATIONS TO CHARITIES: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) forbids charitable fundraising in the Federal workplace, except for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) which is conducted during the fall each year. The only charitable fundraising allowed in the workplace, outside this time period, must be authorized by the OPM Director for victims of emergencies or disasters.

- **DO NOT** sell items in the workplace to benefit charitable organizations. DOI regulation [43 CFR 20.504](#) prohibits the sale of items for profit on DOI property. No selling of Scout cookies or candies, wrapping paper for school fundraisers, etc.
- **YOU MAY** collect "in-kind" donations (food, clothing, toy, etc.) any time of year as authorized by the Service. *For example*, your office may set up a Holiday Giving Tree in the lobby decorated with gift tags from a charity. Service employees may choose a tag and purchase the gift or a store gift card to put under the tree.
 - **No cash** donations may be gathered for the charity. General-use prepaid gift cards (e.g., those with a Visa/Mastercard/American Express logo) are considered cash equivalents and cannot be contributed.
 - **Store gift cards may be donated.** They are not considered cash equivalents.

For information about Gifts see the [Ethics Gifts Page](#).