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2007 Wis Eth Bd 8

MEALS, LODGING, TRAVEL, AND ENTERTAINMENT; LOBBYING LAW

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The Ethics Board advises that a state official may accept food, drink, and entertainment from anyone as long as the person extending the invitation is not a lobbyist or a lobbying principal and the official can demonstrate that the person made the offer for a reason unrelated to the official's holding or having held a government position.

Facts

¶1 You are a state government official subject both to Wisconsin's Code of Ethics for State Public Officials and to Wisconsin's lobbying law.

Questions

¶2 Your questions relate to the application of Wisconsin's Ethics Code and lobbying law to your acceptance of food, drink, and entertainment.

Application of principles to situations about which you have asked

¶3 The Ethics Board's guideline, "Salaried, appointed state public officials' receipt of food, drink, favors, services, etc." [Ethics Board publication #212], identifies the statutes that we administer that pertain to the circumstances about which you have asked.

¶4 You may accept food, drink, and entertainment from anyone, including a lawyer employed by your former law firm, as long as the individual extending the invitation is not a lobbyist and you can demonstrate that the individual made the offer for a reason unrelated to your holding or having held a government position.

¶5 You may accept food, drink, and entertainment from your former law firm if you can demonstrate that the firm has made the offer for a reason unrelated to your holding or having held a government position. The presence of executives or representatives of organizations that engage in advocacy before your agency, including lawyers for those entities, is evidence that the firm has invited you for a reason related to your holding a public office.

¶6 If you cannot establish that an individual or organization has invited you an event for a reason unrelated to your being a member of a state board, the best practice is for you to decline the invitation.

¶7 The Ethics Code requires that you identify each person from whom you receive a gift or gifts having a total value of more than \$50. §19.44 (1) (g), *Wisconsin Statutes*. You need identify an individual only once on each Statement of Economic Interests that you file. You need not identify the items or services received or their value.