

**Guide to the Code of Ethics
for Current or Potential
State Contractors**



2006

INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut Office of State Ethics (OSE) is an independent regulatory agency for the state of Connecticut, charged with administering and enforcing Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 10, Part I and Part II.

The Ethics Codes under the OSE's jurisdiction are comprised of:

- The Code of Ethics for Public Officials (Part I); and
- The Code of Ethics for Lobbyists (Part II).

This guide provides general information only. The descriptions of the law and the OSE are not intended to be exhaustive. Please contact the OSE with any questions regarding interpretation of the law.

For more information on the subjects discussed in this guide, call, write or visit:

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THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS (OSE)

The Connecticut Office of State Ethics (OSE) was officially created on July 1, 2005, by Public Act 05-183. The governing body of the OSE is the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board (CEAB), nine members appointed by the Governor and legislative leadership. The CEAB holds monthly meetings that are open to the public and that are often covered by CT-N. A schedule of CEAB meeting dates, times and locations is available on the OSE's Web site, www.ct.gov/ethics.

The OSE is an independent watchdog agency for the state of Connecticut that administers Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 10, Parts I and II.

Simply put, the OSE educates all those covered by the law (the "regulated community"); provides information to the public; interprets and applies the codes of ethics; and investigates potential violations of the codes.

The OSE is made up of the following components:

- Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board
- Executive Director
- Legal Division
- Enforcement Division

THE BIG PICTURE

All state officials and employees (except judges) are covered by Part I of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials (henceforth, Part I, or the Code). It is important to remember that certain provisions of the Code also apply to public officials and state employees after they leave state service.

As you read through this guide, be aware that these laws were enacted to prevent individuals from using their public position or authority for personal, financial benefit.

Each state agency also has its own ethics policy, which in many cases may be more restrictive than what follows. Be sure to obtain a copy of the agency's policy before you attempt to provide any benefit to an agency official or employee.

GIVING BENEFITS TO STATE PERSONNEL

Gifts

As a current or potential state contractor, you are presumably doing business with or seeking to do business with a state agency, and are therefore considered to be a **regulated donor**. In general, public officials or state employees may not accept gifts from regulated donors.

Regulated Donors

Regulated donors include:

- Registered lobbyists (the OSE can tell you who is registered);
- Individuals or groups doing business with a state department or agency;
- Individuals or groups seeking to do business with a state department or agency;
- Individuals or groups engaged in activities regulated by a state department or agency; or
- Contractors pre-qualified by the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 4a-100).

A **gift** is defined as anything of value that is directly and personally received by a public official or state employee (or sometimes family members of those two categories) *unless* consideration of equal or greater value is provided. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-79 (e).

Gift Exceptions

There are, however, certain exceptions to this definition of gift. Not all exceptions are covered below; see Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-79 (e) (1) – (16) for the complete list.

- **Token Items** – Regulated donors such as current or potential state contractors may provide any item of value that is under \$10 (such as a pen, mug, or inexpensive baseball cap) to a public official or state employee, provided that the annual aggregate of such items from a single source is under \$50. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-79 (e) (16).
- **Food and Beverage** – Regulated donors may also provide up to \$50 worth of food and beverage in a calendar year to a public official or state employee, provided that the regulated donor or his/her representative is in attendance when the food and/or beverage is being consumed. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-79 (e) (9).
- **Other Exceptions** – There are a total of 16 separate gift exceptions in the Code. Also exempt from the definition of gift are items such as informational materials germane to state action, ceremonial plaques or awards costing less than \$100, or promotional items, rebates or discounts also available to the general public. See Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-79 (e) (1) – (16).

Guide for Current or Potential State Contractors

Note: The popularly-cited exception for major life events does not apply to those who are regulated by, doing business with or seeking to do business with a state agency. The only regulated donor that can make use of this very narrow exception is a registered lobbyist.

Gift Provisions

Example: You are in the process of submitting a contracting bid to a state agency. You provide the agency head with a gift certificate for \$45 to a popular West Hartford eatery for her to use on her own. You have not previously given anything of value to this individual.

Even though you are under the permissible \$50 food and beverage limit, this gift is not allowed because you or your representative will not be in attendance while the food and beverage is being consumed.

Reporting Requirements

Should you or your representative give anything of value to a public official or state employee, you must, within **10 days**, give the gift recipient and the head of that individual's department or agency a written report stating:

- Name of the donor;
- Description of item(s) given;
- Value of such item(s); and
- Total cumulative value of all items to date given to that recipient during the calendar year.

This helps both you and the state employee keep track of the gift exceptions noted above, so that permissible limits are not exceeded. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (o).

Necessary Expenses

You may provide necessary expenses to a public official or state employee *only* if the official or employee, in his/her official capacity, is actively participating in an event by giving a speech or presentation, running a workshop, or having some other active involvement.

Necessary expenses can include:

- Travel (not first class);
- Lodging (standard cost of room for the nights before, of, and immediately following the event);
- Meals; and
- Related conference expenses.

Entertainment costs (tickets to sporting events, golf outings, night clubs, etc.) are *not* necessary expenses. Necessary expense payments also *do not* include payment of expenses for family members or other guests.

Please note, within 30 days of receiving payment or reimbursement of necessary expenses for lodging or out-of-state travel, state employees must file an ETH-NE form with the Office of State Ethics (OSE). Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (k).

Fees/Honorariums

Public officials and state employees may *not* accept fees or honorariums for an article, appearance, speech or participation at an event in their official capacity.

Fees or honorariums for such activities, if offered based solely on expertise and without any regard to official capacity, may be acceptable. Contact the OSE before offering such payment to an official or employee. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (k).

Necessary Expenses, Fees and Honorariums

Example: You invite a state employee to travel to New York City to give a speech to your managers on issues surrounding contracting with a state agency. You provide Amtrak fare for the employee as well as his spouse, who will spend the day in the city. The evening of the speech, you will treat the employee and his spouse with complimentary tickets to a Broadway show in lieu of a speaking fee.

You may provide non-first class travel expenses only to the state employee who is actively participating in an event. In this case, you may only provide Amtrak fare for the employee giving the speech, not his spouse. Entertainment costs, such as tickets to a show, are not considered necessary expenses and may not be provided. Additionally, state employees may not accept fees or honorariums for a speech given in their official capacity.

Gifts to the State - NEW

Regulated donors are *prohibited* from giving gifts to the state (such as a fax machine, truck, or free training or conference/event participation). This is new as of April 2006, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (q), and as interpreted by Advisory Opinion No. 2006-3.

Note that non-regulated donors may still provide gifts to the state.

Gifts to the State

Example: For the past five years, your company has donated overstock equipment such as fax machines and photocopiers to a state agency for its use in carrying out state business. You would like to do so again in 2006.

An item donated for use on state property falls within the Code's definition of a gift to the state. As of April 2006, however, such gifts to the state are prohibited from regulated donors. Therefore, you are not permitted to provide the machines to the agency.

Gifts to the State

Example: It has been common practice for your company to allow employees of a particular state agency to attend a regional training event free of charge. The event facilitates their state function by providing training applicable to their job duties.

Per the General Assembly's adoption of § 1-84 (q), and subsequently Advisory Opinion 2006-3, this is no longer permissible, as it is a gift to the state provided by a regulated donor.

(Non-regulated donors may still provide gifts to the state.)

HIRING STATE PERSONNEL

Post-state Employment (Revolving Door)

If you are considering hiring a *former* state employee, you should be aware of the Code's post-state employment, or revolving door, provisions.

Lifetime Bans

- Former state employees may **never** disclose any confidential information they learned during the course of their state service for anyone's financial gain. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84a.
- A former state official or employee may **never** represent anyone other than the state regarding a particular matter in which he or she was personally or substantially involved while in state service and in which the state has a substantial interest. This prevents side-switching. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84b (a).

One-year Bans

- If you hire or otherwise engage the services of a former state official or employee, he or she may not represent you before his or her former agency for a period of **one year** after leaving state service. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84b (b). (See Advisory Opinion 2003-3, which provides a limited exception to this provision if the employee is providing purely technical expertise, for example, to help implement a previously-awarded contract. This exception applies to extremely limited circumstances; contact the OSE for guidance.)
- You are prohibited from hiring a former state official or employee for a period of **one year** after he or she leaves state service if that individual was substantially involved in, or supervised, the negotiation or award of a contract (that you or your business was a party to) valued at \$50,000 or more, and the contract was signed within his or her last year of state service. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84b (f).
- Employees who held certain specifically-designated positions (with significant decision-making or supervisory responsibility) at certain state regulatory agencies are prohibited from seeking or accepting employment with any business subject to regulation by the individual's agency within **one year** of leaving the agency. Note that there is an exception for *ex-officio* board or commission members. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84b (c).

Post-state Employment

Example: You run a hospital regulated by the Office of Health Care Access (OHCA). You would like to offer a job to the former Commissioner of OHCA, who has been out of state service for 5 months.

Because the hospital is regulated by a state agency whose Commissioner is specifically designated in 1-84b (c), the former head of such agency would not be permitted to accept employment with you for one full year after leaving state service. See Advisory Opinion 2003-19.

Outside Employment for Current Public Officials and State Employees

If you are considering hiring a *current* state employee, especially from a state agency with which you do business or by which you are regulated, you should be aware of the following rules regarding the employment of current state employees.

- A current state employee may not accept outside employment that impairs his or her independence of judgment regarding his or her state duties, or that encourages him or her to disclose confidential information learned in his or her state job. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (b).
- A current state employee may not use his or her state position for financial gain, however inadvertent that use may be. For example, a current state employee who exercises any contractual, supervisory or regulatory authority over you or your business may not be able to work for you. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (c).

Other Considerations

Business entities engaged in Indian gaming activities in the state should be aware of specific provisions that apply to present or former Gaming Policy Board or Division of Special Revenue public officials or employees. See Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 1-84b (d) and (e).

Outside Employment

Example: Your small business occasionally receives grants or contracts from Agency X. You know that a particular contract manager with Agency X has the skills you need to help you grow your business. This employee has expressed interest in earning a little extra money for himself, while helping you with your business in the evenings and on weekends.

It would constitute an impermissible impairment of judgment for the employee of Agency X, who has contract management responsibilities, to accept outside employment with your business – a business that receives grants or contracts from Agency X.

OTHER PROVISIONS

Prohibited Activities for Consultants or Independent Contractors

If you are hired by the state as a consultant or independent contractor, you are prohibited from the following:

- Using your authority under the contract or any confidential information acquired during the course of the contract for your financial gain or the financial gain of your immediate family;
- Accepting another state contract that would impair your independence of judgment or your performance in your existing state contract;
- Accepting anything of value based on the understanding that your actions on behalf of the state would be influenced;

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-86e (1) – (3); see also Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-101nn.

Gift and/or Campaign Contribution Affidavits

Contractors seeking large state contracts must execute affidavits regarding gifts and/or campaign contributions made to certain state employees or public officials in the two-year period prior to the submission of a bid or proposal. Copies of these affidavits and other updated information regarding state contractors can be found on the Web sites of the Department of Administrative Services (www.das.state.ct.us) and the Office of Policy and Management (www.opm.state.ct.us).

Investment Services and the Office of the Treasurer

If you or your business provides investment services, as defined in the Code, and you make a political contribution in connection with the Office of the Treasurer, you may be prohibited from contracting with that office. See Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-84 (n).

Registering as a Lobbyist

If you or your business spends or receives over \$2,000 in a calendar year for activities that constitute lobbying under Part II of the Code of Ethics (whether to affect legislation or the actions of an administrative state agency), you/your business may have to register as a lobbyist with the Office of State Ethics. Lobbyist registration information is available at www.ct.gov/ethics.

Public Act 05-287

Public Act 05-287 prohibits anyone who is a party (or seeking to become a party) to a large state construction, procurement, or consultant services contract over \$500,000 from:

- Soliciting information from a public official or state employee that is not available to other bidders for that contract, with the intent to obtain a competitive advantage;
- Intentionally or recklessly charging a state agency for work not performed or goods or services not provided;
- Falsifying invoices or bills; or
- Intentionally violating or circumventing state competitive bidding and ethics laws.

This Act also requires any prospective state contractor to affirm in writing that he or she has received a summary of the state's ethics laws and that his or her key employees have read and understood the summary and agree to comply with the applicable provisions. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-101qq.

An affirmation form is available through the Department of Administrative Services.

Executive Orders

Executive Order 3

Under this Order, the Department of Administrative Services established and maintains on its Web site the State Contracting Portal for purposes of posting all contracting opportunities with state agencies and providing information on contracting processes and procedures.

Executive Order 7B

This Order established the State Contracting Standards Board to conduct a comprehensive review of existing procurement and contracting laws and prepare a uniform code to govern all aspects of procurement and contracting by January 1, 2007.

The full text of these Executive Orders can be found on the Governor's Web site, www.ct.gov/governorrell/site/default.asp.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This guide provides general information only. The descriptions of the law and the OSE are not intended to be exhaustive. For more information regarding the Code of Ethics as it pertains to current or potential state contractors, please contact the Office of State Ethics, Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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