



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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A Message from the Director

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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.

Title 6B of the DCMR

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



Ashley D. Cooks
Director of Government Ethics

problems for me.

If my job prompts the giving -- my position, you see.

But lucky for me,

Some exceptions exist.

They're in DPM 1803.5 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 tenor less then the gift can be mine.

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.

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

Upcoming Events

General Ethics Training

1/11/23 - 1:00 pm

2/8/23 - 1:00 pm

Boards & Commissions Training

1/25/23—11:00 am

Ethics Counselor Brown Bag

1/30/23 - 1:00 pm

Latest Advisory Opinions and Dispositions

Meet the Team – Attorneys

In the next few newsletters, we will introduce the staff who make up different divisions of OGE to give you insight into our office and who is on the other end of the phone or email when you contact us. In this first installment, we invite you to meet OGE's attorneys:

ASHLEY COOKS, DIRECTOR

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT BEGA? I started in October 2015 so 7 years.

BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? I really like that I make an impact on way the government operates by administering the ethics rules. And I love the BEGA staff.

FAVORITE THING TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK? Watching movies, tasting wines, and family time.

FAVORITE ETHICS RESOURCE? I often refer to the federal ethics regulations.

ASIA STEWART-MITCHELL, SUPERVISORY ATTORNEY

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT BEGA? I started in December of 2016, so 6 years.

BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? Teaching people; its very rewarding when someone tells me I clarified something that was unclear or made them think in a different way.

FAVORITE THING TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK? Hang with my husband and shop.

FAVORITE ETHICS RESOURCE? BEGA's Learning Management System; we have over 20 courses on various ethics topics and any public official or District government can go on and learn about ethics!

RASHEE RAJ, GENERAL COUNSEL

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT BEGA? Almost 3 years. I started March 2020, a strange time for everyone.

BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? I enjoy finding new and entertaining ways to make ethics memorable. Close second are the excellent coworkers.

FAVORITE THING TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK? All things comedy – watching, producing, creating, and laughing.

FAVORITE ETHICS RESOURCE? I like the job aids and resources found on the [BEGA website](#). They make difficult topics digestible and easy to understand.

LYNN TRAN, SENIOR ATTORNEY ADVISOR

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT BEGA? Over a year. I started in August 2021.

BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? Working through complicated advice questions. I love an interesting fact pattern.

FAVORITE THING TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK? After several years of staying home, I'm excited to be traveling again.

FAVORITE ETHICS RESOURCE? I follow various blogs on ethics and political law issues to keep up with developments around the country.

MAURICE ECHOLS, ATTORNEY ADVISOR

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT BEGA? 1.5 Years

BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? Being able to teach.

FAVORITE THING TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK? Spend time with my family.

FAVORITE ETHICS RESOURCE? Our Learning Management System. The other attorneys at BEGA.

MILLICENT JONES, ATTORNEY ADVISOR

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT BEGA? I started in January 2022, so almost one year

BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB? I enjoy giving trainings and interacting with the folks that we advise and counsel.

FAVORITE THING TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK? I love decorating and redecorating. Also, spending time with family.

FAVORITE ETHICS RESOURCE? I think the advisory opinions posted on our website are great resources with thorough explanations of various ethics issues.

Ethics in the News



The House Judiciary Committee held a hearing earlier this month on “Undue Influence: Operation Higher Court and Politicking at SCOTUS.” Unlike other Article III judges, the Supreme Court Justices are

not subject to a written code of conduct or to the complaint and disciplinary procedures of other federal judges. While the Justices must recuse themselves in certain situations, there is no review of these decisions.

The hearing occurred after Members of the House and Senate expressed concerns about the lack of ethics rules for the Court after the leak of a draft ruling, reports of other leaked decisions and allegations of improper outside influence on the Court’s decision-making.

Legal counsel for the Supreme Court has already had to respond Members of Congress about allegations that Justice Alito disclosed a 2014 ruling on contraception prior the decision becoming public.

You can watch the House Judiciary Hearing and read the testimony and supporting documents [here](#). Additional reporting on this issue is available [here](#).

State and Local Ethics

The Alabama Attorney General filed a lawsuit against the Alabama Ethics Commission after the Commission issued an advisory opinion stating that it had no responsibility to disclose exculpatory information to individuals under investigation. The AG argues that this violates the Brady rule and undermines any cases that may be referred to his office. Read more [here](#).

The New York Democratic party had to step in and distribute 4,000 turkeys after new ethics laws prohibited the governor from accepting donations for the traditional Thanksgiving giveaway. In prior years the governor’s office accepted donated turkeys as well as trucks and other resources to distribute the turkeys from various corporations in the state. Read more [here](#).

The Hawaii Legislature is due to take up recommendations for new ethics and lobbying rules, including requiring lawmakers to disclose business relationships with lobbyists, making it harder to vote on bills when there is a conflict of interest, mandating lobbyist training, and prohibiting gifts from lobbyists. Read more about the recommendations [here](#).

Enforcement Updates

The Board has not approved any negotiated dispositions since the last newsletter.





Board of Ethics and Government Accountability

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For more information about BEGA you can find us at:



To subscribe to this newsletter, email us at bega@dc.gov.

Ask BEGA

Question: What is the Pro Bono Legal Representation Expansion Amendment Act?

On June 28, 2022, the Mayor signed the Pro Bono Legal Representation Expansion Amendment Act of 2021. This legislation allows employees to provide pro bono legal representation before District and federal courts and agencies, subject to certain limitations. The Act was approved by Congress on July 5th and became effective on August 16, 2022. The Act serves as a carve out to the Code of Conduct's representation rules which prohibited District employees from serving in a representative capacity for any

outside entity involving any matter before the District with exceptions for employees representing specific family members



and individuals who are the subject of a personnel action. The Act makes legal representation more accessible to District residents by eliminating ethical bars to pro-bono service by govern-

ment lawyers. The Act contains limitations to representation to address conflicts of interest, such as: the matter cannot involve claims against the District, the District cannot be a party to, or have a direct or substantial interest in the matter; employees cannot have participated personally and substantially in the matter; and, the representation must be expressly authorized by the employee's personnel authority and cannot violate any laws. See the full text of the Act [here](#).