

GIFTS TO EMPLOYEES

Employees may receive a gift on behalf of the school district, but it becomes District property if obtained for use in an instructional setting as an employee of the District, in part because of the tax sheltered status of the District. Employees shall not, either directly or indirectly, solicit, accept, or receive any gift, series of gifts, or honorarium from a “restricted donor” as defined below. The definition of “gift” or “honorarium” and permissible exceptions to this prohibition are stated below.

A “restricted donor” is defined as a person or other entity which:

- Is seeking to be, or is a party to, any one or any combination of sales, purchases, leases, or contracts to, from, or with the school district;
- Will be directly and substantially affected financially by the performance or nonperformance of the employee’s official duty in a way that is greater than the effect on the public generally or on a substantial class of persons to which the person belongs as a member of a profession, occupation, industry, or region; or
- Is a lobbyist or a client of a lobbyist with respect to matters within the school district’s jurisdiction.

A “gift” is the giving of anything of value in return for which something of equal or greater value is not given or received. However, “gift” does not include any of the following, and it is permissible for an employee to accept:

- Contributions to a candidate or a candidate’s committee;
- Informational material relevant to an employee’s official function, such as books, pamphlets, reports, documents, periodicals, or other information that is recorded in a written, audio, or visual format;
- Anything received from a person related within the fourth degree by kinship or marriage, unless the donor is acting as an agent or intermediary for another person not so related;
- An inheritance;
- Anything available or distributed to the general public free of charge without regard to the official status of the employee;
- Items received from a charitable, professional, educational, or business organization to which the employee belongs as a dues paying member if the items are given to all members of the organization without regard to an individual member’s status or positions held outside of the organization and if the dues paid are not inconsequential when compared to the items received;
- Actual expenses of an employee for food, beverages, travel, and lodging for a meeting, which is given in return for participation in a panel or speaking engagement at the meeting when the expenses relate directly to the day or days on which the employee has participation or presentation responsibilities;
- Plaques or items of negligible resale value given as recognition for public service;
- Nonmonetary items with a value of less than three dollars that are received from any one donor during one calendar day;
- Items or services solicited or given to a state, national, or regional organization in which the state of Iowa or a school district is a member for purposes of a business or educational conference, seminar, or other meeting or solicited by or given for

the same purposes to state, national, or regional government organizations whose memberships and officers are primarily composed of state or local government officials or employees for purposes of a business or educational conference, seminar, or other meeting;

- Items or services received by members or representatives of members as part of a regularly scheduled event that is part of a business or educational conference, seminar, or other meeting that is sponsored and directed by any state, national, or regional government organization in which the state of Iowa or a political subdivision of the state of Iowa is a member or received at such an event by members or representatives of members of state, national, or regional government organizations whose memberships and officers are primarily composed of state or local government officials or employees;
- Funeral flowers or memorials to a church or nonprofit organization;
- Gifts which are given to an employee for the employee's wedding anniversary;
- Payment of salary or expenses by the school district for the cost of attending a meeting of a subunit of an agency when the employee whose expenses are being paid serves on a board, commission, committee, council, or other subunit of the agency and the employee is not entitled to receive compensation or reimbursement of expenses from the school district for attending the meeting; or
- Gifts other than food, beverages, travel, and lodging received by an employee which are received from a person who is a citizen of a country other than the United States and is given during a ceremonial presentation or as a result of a custom of the other country and is of personal value only to the employee;
- Actual registration costs for informational meetings or sessions which assist a public official or public employee in the performance of the person's official functions. The costs of food, drink, lodging, and travel are not "registration costs" under this paragraph. Meetings or sessions which a public official or public employee attends for personal or professional licensing purposes are not "informational meetings or sessions which assist a public official or public employee in the performance of the person's official functions" under this paragraph.

An "honorarium" is anything of value that is accepted by, or on behalf of, an employee as consideration for an appearance, speech or article. An honorarium does not include any of the following, and it is permissible for an employee to accept:

- Actual expenses of an employee for registration, food, beverages, travel, or lodging for a meeting, which is given in return for participation in a panel or speaking engagement at a meeting when the expenses relate directly to the day or days on which the employee has participation or presentation responsibilities;
- A nonmonetary gift or series of nonmonetary gifts donated within thirty days to a public body, an educational or charitable organization or the Iowa department of general services; or
- A payment made to an employee for services rendered as part of a private business, trade or profession in which the employee is engaged if the payment is commensurate with the actual services rendered and is not being made because of the person's status as an employee of the district, but, rather, because of some special expertise or other qualification.

It shall be the responsibility of each employee to know when it is appropriate to accept or reject gifts or an honorarium.

Legal Ref.: Iowa Code ch. 68B (2013).
1972 Op. Att'y Gen. 276.
1970 Op. Att'y Gen. 319.

Cross Ref.: 204.5 Gifts to Board of Education Members
701.9 Gifts to the District

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