

**PRINCETON** UNIVERSITY Office of Government Affairs

**TO:** Academic Department Chairs, Academic Program Directors and  
Administrative Office Heads

**FROM:** Joyce Rechtschaffen

**SUBJECT:** Federal Ethics Laws

Federal law places restrictions on federal lawmakers and staff and outside entities, including Princeton University, relating to gifts, travel compensation and other transactions directed towards lawmakers and staff. I briefly outline these restrictions below and ask you to share this information with your faculty and staff. Any questions or concerns regarding these matters should be directed to me, Joyce Rechtschaffen, Director of Government Affairs. Violations of the law are subject to both civil and criminal penalties.

**Gifts and Travel: Congress and Congressional Staff and Executive Branch Employees**

The law prohibits federal lawmakers and staff from accepting any gifts (including meals) from an organization, such as Princeton University that employs a lobbyist. This means no one employed by Princeton University can give anything to a member of Congress or Congressional staff, even if you pay for the gift with personal funds.

There are certain limited exceptions to the gift ban. These may include: acceptance of free attendance and food at conferences and educational lectures and programs, depending upon a number of circumstances related to the event and the attendees at the event; and gifts based on personal friendship, if certain factors are met. The best procedure is to let me know as you are organizing an event, and I will discuss the circumstances with the House and Senate ethics committees.

The law also includes prohibitions on lawmakers and staff accepting compensation for travel expenses, with different rules applying in the House and Senate. The approval processes are lengthy, so if you are considering paying for travel for a member of Congress or Congressional staff, please contact me at least 30 days before the event so I can work with you to ensure that Princeton's activities are in compliance with the law and ethics rules.

There are also limits on gifts and travel for executive branch officials. In dealing with events involving any executive branch official, please notify our office so we can help determine which, if any, gifts are permissible.

**Semi-annual Disclosures: Congress and the Executive Branch**

The law requires Princeton to report, on a semi-annual basis, the amount of funds contributed or disbursed by Princeton: 1) to pay the costs associated with an event to honor or recognize a legislative branch official or high level executive branch official; 2) to an entity that is named for such official or to a person or entity in recognition of such official; 3) to an entity established, financed or controlled by such entity or an entity designated by such official; 4) for the costs of a meeting, conference, retreat

or similar event held by or in the name of a legislative branch or high level executive branch official. Please inform me of events involving legislative branch or federal executive branch officials so I can determine if they trigger the University's reporting obligations.

To help ensure that Princeton meets its responsibilities under federal law, please circulate this information to all staff and faculty within your department. Thank you for your cooperation.

Joyce Rechtschaffen, Director, Government Affairs  
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