

SELECT COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE ETHICS
Alaska State Legislature

THE ADVISOR

December 2003

Committee Members: Chair: Dennis “Skip” Cook, Senator Ben Stevens, Senator Kim Elton, Representative Norman Rokeberg, Representative Mary Kapsner, H. Conner Thomas, Bonnie Mehner, Herman G. Walker Jr. and Marianne Stillner.

Staff: Joyce Anderson

Office Hours: Monday through Thursday

QUOTE OF THE MONTH: “Knowledge is the key to ethical behavior.” Plato

WHERE CAN I FIND A COPY OF THE ETHICS CODE?

The entire code, AS 24.60, is listed on the Ethics web site. The site can be accessed through <http://ethics.legis.state.ak.us> or by logging on to the legislature home page and clicking on “Ethics.”

WHEN DO YOU NEED ETHICS ADVICE?

You’ve heard it before – call the Ethics Office if you have a question about ethics. We provide confidential ethics advice to all legislators and legislative employees. Can you recognize situations that are likely to raise questions about ethics? Here are some suggested times to contact the office for advice.

GIFTS If you receive gift(s) from a person or business that has business with the legislature. If a family member receives gift(s) because of the family member’s connection to the legislator or legislative employee.

TRIPS If any person or business offers to pay for your travel expenses on a legislative related matter. If any person or business offers to pay for your travel expenses on a trip that is not connected to a legislative matters.

EXTRA COMPENSATION If you are offered an honorarium, extra compensation, or anything of value (other than your regular salary) for performing your official duties.

USE OF STATE RESOURCES FOR PRIVATE USE If you are questioning whether an activity has a legislative purpose and thus allows for the use of state time, equipment, facilities, stationery, or other state resources.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST INVOLVING A LEGISLATOR'S FINANCIAL INTEREST If you may be taking official action affecting your own financial interests or a business in which you have a financial interest.

STATE CONTRACTS, LEASES OR GRANTS If you plan to enter into a contract, lease, or grant with the state.

CAMPAIGN RELATED ACTIVITIES If you are unsure an activity that involves the use of state resources is campaign in nature.

CANDIDACIES OF LEGISLATIVE EMPLOYEES If you are contemplating running for an elected office.

CLOSE ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION If you are considering a financial relationship with someone who is covered by the ethics code or someone who must file a financial report with the Alaska Public Offices Commission.

If you find yourself in any of these situations, do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office for advice. Of course, if at any time you have an ethics questions, call the office!

ETHICS QUIZ

Do you know the answers to these questions concerning campaign issues?

Question: May a legislator, or someone on behalf of the legislator, mail campaign literature or campaign invitations to state addresses?

Answer: Yes, the committee has determined this practice does not violate the code. However, the committee does not encourage a mailing of this type as some public employees and officials have expressed dismay about receiving political literature at their offices.

Question: What if a campaign-related call comes into the legislative office?

Answer: The caller should be politely referred to the telephone number of the campaign office or the home of the legislator.

Question: What if an unsolicited campaign contribution arrives in the office mail during the legislative interim?

Answer: The legislator, and not staff, should take the contribution to the campaign headquarters or home for processing. It is inappropriate for staff to be doing campaign

related activities while receiving a legislative salary. Campaign contributors should be provided the legislator's campaign or home address.

FIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR ETHICS I Q

1. Visit the Alaska Legislature's Ethics Web Site at <http://ethics.legis.state.ak.us>. You can browse through information about the ethics code and access a Q&A of ethics advisory opinions. Disclosure forms are available on the site.
2. Read previous ADVISOR newsletters posted on the web site for the latest information about ethics.
3. Reference the Standards of Conduct Handbook for guidance. The handbook includes situational examples for each section of the code and other informational material on ethics. (NOTE: The handbook is distributed at the beginning of each legislative session. If you do not have a handbook, call the office and one will be mailed to you.)
4. Call the ethics office for advice.
5. Suggest items/issues to include in future newsletters.

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