



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 3265, HARRISBURG, PA 17105-3265

**Professional Code of Conduct  
Employee Gifts and Favors Ban**

**May 2015**

The citizens of the Commonwealth are entitled to transparency and confidence in the integrity of the government, including the process by which decisions are made. As such, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) hereby re-affirms and revises its policy regarding the Employee Gifts and Favors Ban as follows:

**Gifts and Favors**

Employees and the families of employees shall not solicit or accept gifts or favors for personal benefit under any circumstances which would influence the manner in which the employees perform their work, make their decisions or otherwise perform their duties. Commission employees may not accept gifts or favors from the following: (1) PUC-regulated entities, (2) representatives of PUC-regulated entities (i.e., lawyers and lobbyists), (3) government contractors and (4) entities "that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the official duty of the employee."

The following activities are specifically prohibited unless they fall into one of the limited exceptions listed hereafter:

- (1) No acceptance of food and refreshment at a private meal or reception hosted by a public utility, an organization of public utilities or any other entity that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the official duty of the employee. The event is private if it is by invitation only to a limited group. If the employee attends such functions, the employee must pay market value for the food and refreshment.
- (2) No acceptance of gifts of tickets, golf outings, trips or other items of value, regardless of market value. If the employee receives such items, the employee must pay market value for the items.
- (3) No acceptance of travel, lodging and hospitality or free attendance or stipends for attendance at an event hosted by a public utility, an organization of public utilities or any other entity that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the official duty of the employee.

- (4) No acceptance of gifts including calendars, pens, confections and the like, regardless of market value.

The following are limited exceptions to the Employee Gifts and Favors Ban:

- (1) The solicitation or acceptance of something of monetary value from a friend, parent, spouse, child or other close relative under circumstances which make it clear that the gift is motivated by a family relationship or personal relationship, rather than the position of the employee. Relevant factors in making such a determination include the history of the relationship (for example, does the friendship pre-date employment by the Commonwealth?) and whether the family member or friend pays for the gift.
- (2) The acceptance of loans from banks or other financial institutions on customary terms of finance for proper and usual activities, such as home mortgage loans.
- (3) Attendance, as well as food and refreshment of nominal value (\$50 or less), at a “widely attended gathering;” that is, a gathering that is open to all persons interested or associated with the subject matter of the gathering.
- (4) A participant in his or her official capacity as a speaker or panel member at a conference or other event may accept free attendance (including meals and refreshments) for the day of the presentation.
- (5) Acceptance of food and refreshment of nominal value (\$50 or less) in the ordinary course of a working meeting, or during an off-site investigation or tour of facilities. Organized travel arrangements may also be accepted for off-site investigations and tours of regulated facilities.
- (6) Acceptance of a pin, plaque, memento or other gift of nominal value (\$50 or less) offered as token of esteem or appearance on the occasion of a public appearance in the employee’s official capacity.
- (7) Acceptance of food and refreshments not part of a meal, such as coffee and donuts and the like.