

TONI PRECKWINKLE
PRESIDENT, COOK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MARYNIC U. FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



BOARD OF ETHICS MEMBERS

ROSEANN OLIVER
PASTOR SAMUEL E. HINKLE III
ANNE I. SHAW
JUAN CALIXTO

COOK COUNTY BOARD OF ETHICS

69 W. WASHINGTON STREET, SUITE 3040
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602
312/603-4304 OFFICE
312/603-3760 FAX 312/603-1011 TT/TDD

COOK COUNTY GIFT BAN

The General Rule

Section 2-574(a) of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance bans any Cook County official or employee from soliciting or accepting any “gift” from any “prohibited source” or in violation of any federal or state statute, rule, or regulation, or any County ordinance, rule or regulation. This bans applies to and includes spouses and immediate family members living with the official or employee. Further, no “prohibited source” shall offer or make a gift to any Cook County official or employee, or the spouse of, or immediate family members living with, any official or employee.

Exceptions to the General Rule

- Opportunities and benefits that are available to the general public.
- Any gift for which the recipient pays the market value.
- Political contributions or activities associated with a fundraising event.
- Educational materials and missions.
- Travel expenses for a meeting to discuss County business.
- A gift from a relative.
- A gift based on personal friendship, unless there is a belief the gift was given because of the official position or employment of the recipient.
- Food or refreshments not exceeding \$75/person/day that are consumed on premises from which they were purchased, prepared, or catered.
- Food, refreshments, lodging, transportation and other benefits resulting from outside business or employment activities not connected to official duties if customarily provided in connection with bona fide employment discussions.
- Intra-office and inter-office gifts.
- Bequests, inheritances and death benefits.
- Any item or items from any one prohibited source during any calendar year having a cumulative total value less than \$100.

How is “Gift” Defined?

Any gratuity, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, or other tangible or intangible item having monetary value including, but not limited to, cash, food and drink, and honoraria for speaking engagements related to or attributable to government employment or the official position of an official or employee.

Who is a “Prohibited Source”?

- A person/entity who is seeking official action by the official or employee who receives the gift or by the official or agency for whom the employee works; or
- A person/entity who does business or is seeking to do business with the official or employee who receives the gift or the official or agency for whom the employee works; or
- A person/entity who conducts activities regulated by the official or employee who receives the gift or by the official or agency for whom the employee works; or
- A person/entity who has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of the official duties of the official or employee; or
- A person/entity who is registered or required to be registered pursuant to the County Lobbyist Ordinance.

What Should I Do If I Receive an Improper Gift?

An official or employee does not violate the Ordinance if the official or employee promptly takes reasonable action to:

- Return the prohibited gift to its source; or
- Donate the prohibited gift, or an amount equal to the gift’s value, to a charity exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; AND
- File a gift disclosure form with the Board of Ethics within 10 days of receipt of the gift.

What Are the Penalties for Violation of the Gift Ban?

Any person found by a court to have knowingly violated the gift ban provisions of the Ordinance is guilty of a business offense and subject upon conviction to a fine of at least \$1,001 and up to \$5,000. Further, persons doing business with the County who knowingly violate the Ordinance may have their contracts with the County voided.

Any questions regarding campaign contributions should be addressed to the Cook County Board of Ethics. Copies of the Cook County Ethics Ordinance are available online at www.cookcountygov.com (follow links to Board of Ethics page) or by request to the Board of Ethics, 69 West Washington Street, Suite 3040, Chicago, Illinois, 60602, (312) 603-4304.