

January 9, 2001
Re: IO-00-195

You inquired whether the Board may accept 24 one-time passes to the race track from the race track office at the Laurel Race Track. You stated that each pass is worth five dollars to a purchaser, although the cost to the race track is negligible. You also indicated that these passes are offered to the liquor board once annually.

The Laurel Race Track is subject to the authority and regulation of the liquor board, and is therefore a controlled donor under §3-106(b) of the Public Ethics Law. Gifts from controlled donors to county employees are generally prohibited under this section. However, a five dollar pass to attend a race track event is a gift of nominal value and may be accepted under §3-106(c)(3) unless the gift would impair the impartial or independent judgment of the recipient employee or appears designed to do so. Absent any factors, such as the existence of a pending dispute between the track and the liquor board, which would indicate a design to influence or impair the recipients of the passes, the ethics commission advises that the annual passes may be accepted.

Thank you for your inquiry. If you have other questions, please call any time.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director