

April 1, 2003
Re: IO-03-26

You inquired whether you may accept an invitation to attend the Roedown races and have lunch as the guest of Comcast. The answer is that you may accept the free admission only if there will be a ceremony involving your office - a public introduction or some other acknowledgment of your office. The ethics law, §3-106(c) permits acceptance of free tickets of admission to sporting or cultural events by elected officials, only if the gift is given for the purpose of taking part in a ceremony involving the office. Lunch may be accepted from Comcast under §3-106(c)(1), as a permitted exception to the gift prohibition for "occasional meals or beverages of modest value (under \$25 for an individual, or \$50 if your spouse is included.)"

You also asked whether you may use your official county stationary to write a letter of reference for a friend who has applied for a job with the State of Maryland. The answer is that you may only use your county stationary for official purposes. Section 3-104 (a) of the ethics law prohibits the use of the title, prestige, or authority of your office for your private gain, or for the gain of another. If your friendship with the job applicant is purely personal, your letter should be personal as well. If your friendship is based upon county government - related activities, you may certainly use your county stationary.

Thank you for your inquiries. If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Ethics Commission