

May 23, 2006

By Electronic and Interoffice Mail

Re: IO-06-34

You inquired whether, as an employee in the county's Office of Finance, you may accept free registration offered to the first 200 people who sign up to attend a conference. The free registration, valued at \$200, is being offered by the sponsors of the conference. The sponsors are controlled donors- they are doing business or seeking to do business with your agency. The ethics commission advises that you may not accept free registration from a controlled donor.

The conference, which lasts a day and a half, is sponsored by financial managers, planners, and other entities that are clearly interested in doing business with the county's financial agencies. Although at first glance it appears that the gift involves an element of chance and is not therefore directed toward you, the fact is that most, if not all, of the conference attendees are persons with whom the sponsors do business or hope to do business, and the gift is clearly directed to such persons. Since it is not a gift of chance that is generally available to the public, and since it exceeds a nominal value, it is not a gift that may be accepted, unless you are a featured speaker at the conference. §7-5-106(c)(2)(vi) of the Public Ethics Law. *See, for e.g.*, IO-01-31, AO-98-31. *Also, cf.*, IO-02-152 (free registration permitted where sponsor was not a controlled donor.)

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director