



**ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
ETHICS COMMISSION**

September 9, 2008

By Electronic Mail Only

Re: AO-08-57

You inquired whether, as an elected official, you may accept an invitation from the chairman of the board of directors of the BWI Business Partnership, Inc., to participate in a foursome he is sponsoring at the second annual USO/BWI Business Partnership Golf Classic. The ethics commission advises that you may accept this invitation.

According to its website, the BWI Business Partnership, Inc.:

is a membership organization of major local and regional businesses and government agencies, whose interests depend on a thriving airport and sound transportation infrastructure. The BWI area, with the Airport, NSA, Ft. Meade and Arundel Mills Mall as its economic engines, leads the state in job growth over the last five years. This growth will continue with the expansion at Ft. Meade, as part of the BRAC decisions of 2005. We are the collective voice of the BWI area, a hub in Central Maryland for business, government, tourism and transportation.

Established in 1985 with six Charter Members, our ranks have swelled to nearly 175 businesses and government agencies, actively involved in growing this area's vital significance.

Since many of the members of the organization are controlled donors, the gift provisions of the ethics law are applicable to your inquiry. The donor entity offering you the gift is both a controlled donor and one of the two entities conducting or sponsoring the golf tournament.

Section §7-6-106(c)(2)(vii) provides a specific exception to the gift prohibitions of the ethics law, permitting an elected official to accept "tickets or free admission extended to an elected employee from the person sponsoring or conducting a charitable, cultural, or political event, as a courtesy or ceremony to the office to attend the event."

A foursome in this event costs \$1,250.00, so the value to you is slightly over \$400.00. Being part of a foursome includes a round of golf, breakfast, lunch, and an award banquet. The golf classic is advertised as a "Tee off for the Troops" and a raffle

will be held to raise money for the USO. Last year's inaugural event netted \$44,158.30 to support USO activities.

This golf tournament is a charitable event. Although it does not appear that any other council members were invited, this invitation was extended to you as a "courtesy" to your office by one of the sponsors of the event. For these reasons, you may accept the invitation. You should be aware however, that the commission also believes that your acceptance of the gift would tend to create an appearance of impropriety because of the close business ties that exist between the county and various members and supporters of the BWI Business Partnership.

Thank you for your inquiry. If you have any additional questions, please call the ethics commission office.

The Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission

/s/

By: _____
Betsy K. Dawson, Executive Director