



WEST VIRGINIA ETHICS COMMISSION GUIDELINE

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION EVENTS

The West Virginia Ethics Commission hereby finds that the expenditure of public funds to recognize public employees serves a public purpose by promoting employee morale through recognizing achievement. In accordance with this finding, the Ethics Commission finds that expenditures for this purpose do not violate the Ethics Act's prohibition against use of office for private gain.

The Ethics Commission has received numerous inquiries seeking guidance in regards to what amount of public funds, if any, may be used for this purpose. The Ethics Commission believes that the responsibility for deciding whether public funds should be expended for this purpose ultimately lies with the head of an agency or the elected official or appointed board to whom the head of an agency reports.

In order to provide uniform guidance as to what level of spending for this purpose complies with the Ethics Act, the Ethics Commission hereby finds that the expenditure of public funds for all events to recognize employees does not violate the Ethics Act if an agency expends no more than \$25.00 per employee per fiscal year. This money may be allocated between one or more events or activities which are held to recognize employees and promote employee morale. It may be used to purchase light refreshments, meals or mementos of appreciation.

This guideline recognizes a spending threshold which the Ethics Commission has determined to be acceptable under the general limitations in the Ethics Act against use of public office for private gain. This guidance does not establish or confer any employee benefit. The head of an agency or its governing body must determine whether any such expenditure is consistent with fiscal responsibility and whether appropriated funds are authorized for this purpose.

This information is intended to be a general guideline for the interpretation and application of the Ethics Act. Public agencies, including county and municipal entities, are free to adopt more restrictive guidelines.

For additional guidance contact the West Virginia Ethics Commission at (304) 558-0664 or toll free 1-866-558-0664 or visit our website at www.wvethicscommission.org.