

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Holiday Activities and "**Good Judgment!**" Part I

1. The time of year for holiday celebrations is approaching. I encourage each of you to enjoy the season with your friends, family and co-workers. In order to keep these events enjoyable, there are some workplace ground rules that should be observed.

2. **Use of Government time**. Some holiday celebrations may occur on Government time, but only up to a point. Time taken for an actual event--perhaps a "pot luck" in the office, or a luncheon at a restaurant--is not typically an issue. However, preparation for these events can create issues. The key here is "**Good Judgment!**" Supervisors may permit some use of duty time for preparations. However, preparing holiday events should not become a significant part of any employee's duties. Examples:

- A committee of employees should not spend two duty days visiting potential restaurants to explore facilities and menus, followed by another two days worth of time to inform the group, obtain votes, and develop consensus, followed by another trip to make final arrangements. On the other hand a few telephone calls during the day requesting fax'es from restaurants, a couple of short planning discussions in the office, and visiting one or two restaurants during lunch would be permissible. **Good Judgment!**
- A decorations committee should not spend a duty day visiting party shops, followed by another work day organizing decorations. (Also, appropriated funds may not be used to purchase decorations.) However, a brief planning session on Government time, followed by a few telephone calls to party shops, with visits and purchases made after duty hours, and with decorations made during lunch periods or after the duty day, would be permissible. **Good Judgment!**

3. **Fundraising**. Your office may decide they want to raise money to reduce the cost of a holiday event. The general rule is "no fundraising in the Federal workplace." However, there is an exception for office events:

- The DoD *Joint Ethics Regulation*, 5500.7-R, permits employees to raise money among their members for their own benefit when approved by the head of the organization and the Ethics Counselor. For example, employees could have a bake sale to reduce the cost of tickets for the office holiday celebration. Use the following checklist for such events:

√ Keep it low key.

√ Use minimal Government time. No duty time should be used to bake or purchase cookies. Some minimal time during the day may be used to plan the sale. Employees conducting the sale should do so on their personal time.

√ Government equipment, such as computers and printers, may be used at no cost to the Government. Items, such as placards and announcements, may not be ordered from the audio-visual office. Use of Government resources requires **Good Judgment!**

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√ Do not solicit outside sources (such as employees of support contractors) to contribute baked goods.

√ Contractor employees and visitors who become aware of the bake sale may purchase items. The important thing is that we do not personally solicit them, or engage in solicitation that targets them.

- Outside sources (local restaurants, car dealerships, department stores, professional associations, and contractors) may not be solicited for donations, to include door prizes.
- Raffles may not be used to raise money for office functions.

4. **Conclusion.** Employees may plan and participate in holiday events. And, while some limited use of Government resources and time is permitted, we must use common sense and **Good Judgment!** I hope you have a happy and safe holiday season. If you have any questions, contact your Ethics Counselor, Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, at 221-2373/0485.

Ethics Counselor/1-2373/0485