

House and Senate Gift Ban and Ethics Rules

The House and Senate each have updated ethics rules that could impact how you interact with Members of Congress and their staffs.

Both the House and Senate have banned gifts from registered lobbyists or private entities that retain or employ them. Non-lobbyists can give gifts valued at less than \$50, such as a meal at a briefing for a Member of Congress and their staff that is valued at less than \$50 per person.

While most HFAs do not retain or employ registered lobbyists, some Members of Congress may apply the gift ban to all entities with whom they do business.

Exceptions to the ban include, but are not limited to:

- informational materials;
- anything paid for by the federal government, or state or local governments;
- a plaque, trophy, or other item that is substantially commemorative in nature and that is intended for presentation;
- free attendance at a widely attended event—
 - if the Member or staffer participates in the event as a speaker or panel participant by presenting information related to Congress or matters before Congress, or by performing a ceremonial function; or
 - if attendance at the event is appropriate to the performance of official duties or representative functions of the Member or staffer;
- food or refreshments of a nominal value offered other than as part of a meal (for example, small bags of peanuts valued at less than \$10);
- donations of products from the district or state that the Member represents that are intended primarily for promotional purposes; and
- items of nominal value such as greeting cards, baseball caps, or t-shirts.

Comprehensive information about Congressional gift rules can be found on the [House Ethics Committee website](#), in Chapter 2 of the [House Ethics Manual](#) and in Chapter 2 of the [Senate Ethics Manual](#).