



January 13, 2025

Reply to Attn of: General Law Practice Group

TO: Distribution

FROM: Chief Counsel

SUBJECT: Determination Regarding Attendance by NASA employees at the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research Reception on January 13, 2025

On January 13, 2025, the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), a nonprofit organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, will host a community reception, at the Creole Queen, 1 Poydras, New Orleans, LA, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The event will engage those affiliated with UCAR in a networking/celebratory reception.

Approximately 2349 people have been invited to attend. Attendees will have a diversity of views or interests and will include representatives from the legislative branch, state and local government officials, representatives from industry, employees of Federal agencies, and members from the foreign government space agencies. The estimated cost of the event, including all food and beverages, is \$92 per person. The Space Foundation is in control of the organizing, planning and invitations for this event. Attendance at this event will allow NASA attendees to exchange information regarding various NASA programs. I find that the event meets the requirements of a "widely attended gathering" as defined in 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(g)(2).

I further determine that there is an Agency interest in having NASA personnel attend the event because it will provide an opportunity for the invited persons to exchange ideas and views pertaining to NASA's policies, programs, and operations.

NASA employees, including NASA employees in non-career positions who are required to sign the ethics pledge under Executive Order 13989, who do not have a significant role in a matter affecting the interests of the sponsor may accept an invitation for free attendance to the event. In those circumstances, I find that the Agency's interest in attendance outweighs any concern that the individual may be, or may appear to be, improperly influenced in the performance of their duties.

You are reminded of the \$20 gift exception at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(a), which provides that

you may accept gifts valued at no more than \$20 per occasion (and no more than \$50 from one source in a calendar year). We understand that UCAR will be handing out tabasco sauce valued at \$2.50/bottle which NASA attendees, including NASA employees in non-career positions who have signed the ethics pledge, may accept.

However, NASA employees who have a significant role in any pending matter affecting the interests of the Space Foundation, such as procurement duties, program management, or negotiating or administering a Space Act Agreement, should seek a separate determination from their local ethics counselor as to whether they may accept the invitation.

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