

ARKANSAS ETHICS COMMISSION

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ADVISORY OPINION NO. 99-EC-011

Issued August 27, 1999

ISSUE:

Whether it would be permissible for the Arkansas State Employees Association ("ASEA") to pay the cost of food, lodging and travel for the officers of its local chapters to attend a two (2) day workshop sponsored by the ASEA?

BRIEF ANSWER:

Yes. Although a number of the chapter officers are public servants, payment of the costs of food, lodging, and travel for them to attend the workshop would not constitute a gift or compensation.

DISCUSSION:

The ASEA is a non-profit organization formed for the purpose of improving state government and state employment. Membership in the ASEA is voluntary and is open to state employees, retired state employees and non-state employees.

The ASEA engages in lobbying on behalf of its members. The ASEA and four (4) of its staff members are registered as lobbyists.

The ASEA has planned a two (2) day workshop for the officers of its local chapters. The stated purpose of the workshop is to enhance leadership skills, increase involvement of members in their local chapters, and develop better communications within the ASEA.

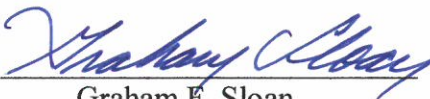
The ASEA has asked whether it would be permissible for it to pay the cost (estimated to be \$92.00 to \$140.00) of food, lodging and travel for chapter officers to attend the workshop. The ASEA is concerned because it is a registered lobbyist and some of the chapter officers are public servants.

It is the Commission's opinion that the payment of reasonable costs for ASEA members to attend the ASEA workshop would not constitute a gift or compensation since the chapter officers are giving their time and efforts in exchange to the ASEA. Moreover, the food, lodging and travel are not being conferred upon the individuals in question because of their status as public servants. Accordingly, payment of the cost of food, lodging and travel for the chapter officers to attend the ASEA workshop would not violate Ark. Code Ann. § 21-8-801(1).

Although the ASEA is a registered lobbyist, it is the Commission's opinion that paying the cost of food, lodging and travel for chapter officers to attend the ASEA workshop would not need to be disclosed on ASEA's Lobbyist Activity Report.

This advisory opinion is issued by the Commission pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 7-6-217(g)(2).

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By: 
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