

## A WORD ABOUT ETHICS

# SERVING WITH OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

**May a Federal employee be active in a non-Federal organization, such as a professional society, industry association, or civic group?**

○ Yes, under most circumstances.

**Under what circumstances would activity in a non-Federal organization pose a problem?**

○ When the organization has agreements, contracts, issues, projects, or other matters before the employee's office and the employee holds a position or is "actively involved" with the organization in a "private capacity."

**What does it mean for an employee to be "actively involved" in a non-Federal organization in a "private capacity?"**

○ "Actively involved" means that the employee is doing more than merely paying dues or attending meetings, such as working on projects for the organization.

○ "Private capacity" means that activities for the organization are performed on personal time and not as part of Government duties, a performance plan, or under a supervisor's direction.

**How could an employee's activities in a non-Federal organization conflict with the employee's Government position?**

○ In most situations the employee may not work on anything as an agency employee in which the organization is before the agency, such as:

- recommending or approving staff to attend the organization's conference;
- work on or assign a project or task involving the organization; or
- attend an organization conference on Government time or submit a paper to the organization from the agency (or direct a subordinate to do so).

**Are there any exceptions?**

○ Yes. If the needs of the agency outweigh appearance concerns an exception may be available. The employee should contact the Ethics Law and Programs Division in such cases.

**Are there any limits on private activities with a non-Federal organization?**

○ Yes. A Federal employee may not:

- use his or her agency title or affiliation in organization materials, or
- disclose nonpublic Government information.



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