



# Limitations and Restrictions on Gifts, Honoraria, Travel and Loans

## *A Fact Sheet For*

- ♦ Local Elected Officers and Candidates for Local Elective Offices
- ♦ Local Officials Specified in Government Code Section 87200
- ♦ Judicial Candidates
- ♦ Designated Employees of Local Government Agencies

## California Fair Political Practices Commission

Toll-free advice line: 1 (866) ASK-FPPC

Email advice: [advice@fppc.ca.gov](mailto:advice@fppc.ca.gov)

Web site: [www.fppc.ca.gov](http://www.fppc.ca.gov)

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# Introduction

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The Political Reform Act<sup>1</sup> (the “Act”) imposes limits on gifts, prohibits honoraria payments, and imposes limits and other restrictions on the receipt of travel payments received by:

- Local elected officers and other local officials specified in Government Code Section 87200,<sup>2</sup> excluding judges;<sup>3</sup>
- Designated employees of local government agencies (i.e., individuals required to file statements of economic interests under a local agency’s conflict of interest code); and
- Candidates<sup>4</sup> for any of these offices or positions and judicial candidates. (Sections 89502 and 89503.)

The Act also imposes limits and other restrictions on personal loans received by certain local officials.

The gift limit increased to \$590 for calendar years 2023 and 2024. The gift limit in 2022 was \$520.

This fact sheet summarizes the major provisions of the Act concerning gifts, honoraria, travel, and loans. It contains highlights of the law, but does not carry the weight of law. For more information, contact the Fair Political Practices Commission at (866) 275-3772 or [advice@fppc.ca.gov](mailto:advice@fppc.ca.gov) or visit our website at [www.fppc.ca.gov](http://www.fppc.ca.gov). Commission advice letters are available on our website. Public officials may also be subject to local restrictions on gifts, honoraria, or travel.

## Enforcement

**Failure to comply with the laws related to gifts, honoraria, loans, and travel payments may, depending on the violation, result in criminal prosecution and substantial fines, or in administrative or civil monetary penalties for as much as \$5,000 per violation or three times the amount illegally obtained. (See Sections 83116, 89520, 89521, 91000, 91004 and 91005.5.)**

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<sup>1</sup> The Political Reform Act is contained in Government Code Sections 81000 through 91014. All statutory references are to the Government Code, unless otherwise indicated. The regulations of the Fair Political Practices Commission are contained in Sections 18110 through 18997 of Title 2 of the California Code of Regulations. All regulatory references are to Title 2, Division 6 of the California Code of Regulations, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Local officials specified in Government Code Section 87200 include: members of boards of supervisors and city councils, mayors, city/county planning commissioners, city/county chief administrative officers, city/county treasurers, district attorneys, county counsels, city managers, city attorneys, court commissioners and public officials who manage public investments.

<sup>3</sup> The gift limits and honoraria ban in the Political Reform Act do not apply to a person in their capacity as judge. However, candidates for judicial offices are subject to the restrictions contained in the Political Reform Act. (Sections 89502 and 89503.)

<sup>4</sup> For purposes of the gift limit and honoraria prohibition, an individual becomes a “candidate” when they file a statement of organization (Form 410) as a controlled committee for the purpose of seeking elective office, a candidate intention statement (Form 501), or a declaration of candidacy, whichever occurs first. If an individual is an unsuccessful candidate, they will no longer be subject to the gift limit and honoraria prohibition when they have terminated their campaign filing obligations, or after certification of election results, whichever is earlier. (Sections 89502(b) and 89503(b).)

# Gifts

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## Limitations

Local elected officers, candidates for local elective office, local officials specified in Government Code Section 87200, and judicial candidates, may not accept gifts from any single source totaling more than \$590 in a calendar year. (Section 89503.)<sup>5</sup>

Employees of a local government agency who are designated in the agency's conflict of interest code may not accept gifts from any single source totaling more than \$590 in a calendar year if the employee is required to report receiving income or gifts from that source on their statement of economic interests (Form 700). (Section 89503(c).)

## What is a "Gift"?

A "gift" is any payment or other benefit that confers a *personal* benefit for which a public official does not provide payment or services of equal or greater value. A gift includes a rebate or discount in the price of anything of value unless the rebate or discount is made in the regular course of business to members of the public. (Section 82028.) (See Regulation 18946 for valuation guidelines.)

Except as discussed below, a public official has "received" or "accepted" a gift when they have actual possession of the gift or when they take any action exercising direction or control over the gift, including discarding the gift or turning it over to another person. This includes gifts that are accepted by someone else on the official's behalf and gifts made to others at the direction of the official. (Regulation 18941.)

## Gifts to Family Members

Under certain circumstances, a gift to an official's family member\* is considered a gift to the official. (Regulation 18943.) When something of value is given to a family member it is presumed to be a gift to the official if: (1) there is no established relationship between the donor and the family member where it would generally be considered appropriate for the family member to receive the gift or; (2) the donor is someone who lobbies the official's agency, is involved in an action before the official's agency in which the official may foreseeably participate, or engage in business with the agency in which the official will foreseeably participate. (Wedding gifts are treated differently, see below.)

\*For purposes of this rule, an official's "family member" includes the official's spouse; registered domestic partner; any minor child of the official who the official can claim as a dependent for federal tax purposes; and a child of the official who is aged 18 to 23 years old, attends school, resides with the official when not attending school, and provides less than one-half of their own support.

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<sup>5</sup> The gift limit is adjusted biennially to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. For 2023-2024, the gift limit is \$590. (Section 89503; Regulation 18940.2.) Gifts from a single source aggregating to \$50 or more must be disclosed, and gifts aggregating to \$590 or more during any 12-month period may subject an official to disqualification with respect to the source. (Section 87103(e).) Designated employees should obtain a copy of their conflict of interest code from their agency. Some conflict of interest codes require very limited disclosure of income and gifts. Gifts from sources that are not required to be disclosed on the Form 700 are not subject to the \$590 gift limit but still may subject the public official to disqualification.

## Source of Gift

Under most circumstances, it is clear who the source of a gift is, but if the circumstances indicate that the gift is being provided by an intermediary, the public official must determine both the donor and the intermediary in reporting the gift. Regulation 18945 provides the rules for determining the source of the gift.

## Gifts from Multiple Sources

In determining the cumulative value of any reportable gifts, separate gifts from an individual and an entity that the individual controls must be aggregated as one source to comply with the reporting and limit requirements. For example, separate gifts from the owner of a company and from the company itself would be treated as if from one source if the owner has more than a 50 percent interest in the company, unless the making of the gift was determined by someone else in the company. In that case, the gift from the company would be aggregated with any gifts made by that determining individual. (Regulation 18945.1.)

Group gifts, where a public official receives a single gift from multiple donors (such as a retirement gift from coworkers), need not be reported unless any person contributes \$50 or more to the total cost of the gift. In that case, the public official would only report a gift from each of those persons. (Regulation 18945.2.)

## Valuing Gifts

The general rule for determining the value of a gift is to apply the fair market value at the time the gift is received. Fair market value can be determined by finding any local or internet advertisement for the item. Special exceptions to the fair market value rule are contained in Regulations 18946.1 through 18946.5 which covers admission to ticketed and invitation-only events, wedding gifts, attendance at nonprofit and political fundraisers, and air travel. (Regulation 18946.) For example, for ticketed events, the value is the face value of the ticket.

## General Gift Exceptions

Form 700 Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
No	No	No	No

The following payments are exceptions to the definition of gift and are not considered gifts or income.

- 1. Return or Reimbursement of Gift.** Items that are returned (unused) to the donor, or for which the public official reimburse the donor, within 30 days of receipt. (Section 82028(b)(2); Regulation 18941.)
- 2. Donation of Gift to Nonprofit Group.** Items that are donated (unused) to a non-profit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) organization in which the official (or immediate family member) does not hold a position, or to a government agency, within 30 days of receipt without claiming a deduction for tax purposes. (Section 82028(b)(2); Regulation 18941.)
- 3. Gifts from Family.** Gifts from the public official's spouse (or former spouse), child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, current or former parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, or first cousin or the spouse of any such person, unless they are acting as an agent or intermediary for another person who is the true source of the gift. (Section 82028(b)(3); Regulation 18942(a)(3).) This exception includes great grandparents, great uncles and aunts, great nieces and nephews, and first cousins once removed.
- 4. Informational Material.** Informational material provided to assist the public official in the performance of their official duties, including books, reports, pamphlets, calendars, periodicals, videotapes, or free admission or discounts to informational conferences or seminars.

“Informational material” may also include scale models, pictorial representations, maps, and other such items. However, if the item’s fair market value is more than \$590, the public official has the burden of demonstrating that the item is informational. In addition, on-site demonstrations, tours, or inspections, including air flights over an area that is the subject of the information and designed specifically for public officials, are considered informational material. However, this exception does not apply to meals or lodging. Furthermore, the exception generally does not apply to transportation to the site, except for any portion of the transportation that is not commercially available. (Section 82028(b)(1); Regulations 18942(a)(1) and 18942.1.)

5. **Inheritance.** A devise or inheritance. (Section 82028(b)(5); Regulation 18942(a)(5).)

6. **Campaign Contributions.** Campaign contributions to an official, including rebates or discounts received in connection with campaign activities (Section 82028(b)(4); Regulations 18942(a)(4), 18950(a) and 18950.3(a)) and permissible expenditures of campaign funds for campaign-related expenses, including payments for transportation, lodging or food (Regulations 18950(a) and 18950.3(b)), provided they comply and are properly reported in accordance with applicable campaign finance laws.

7. **Plaques.** Personalized plaques and trophies with an individual value of less than \$250. (Section 82028(b)(6); Regulation 18942(a)(6).)

8. **Ceremonial Role.** Free admission to a ticketed event (including any benefits included in the price of the ticket such as a free meal) for the official and one guest at an event where the official performs a ceremonial role, such as throwing out the first pitch at a Dodgers’ game, so long as the official’s agency complies with the posting provisions set forth in Regulation 18944.1(d). (Regulation 18942(a)(13); Regulation 18942.3; also see discussion of Form 802 below under “Gifts Exceptions Requiring Alternate Reporting.”)

9. **Event Where Official Makes a Speech.** Free admission, and food and nominal items (such as a pen, pencil, mouse pad, note pad or similar item) available to all attendees, at the event at which the official makes a speech (as defined in Regulation 18950(b)(2)), so long as the admission is provided by the person who organizes the event. (Regulation 18942(a)(11).)

10. **Attending Wedding Reception.** Benefits received as a guest attending a wedding reception where the benefits are the same as those received by the other guests at the reception. (Regulation 18942(a)(15).)

11. **Bereavement Offerings.** Bereavement offerings, such as flowers at a funeral received in memory of a close family member. (Regulation 18942(a)(16).)

12. **Acts of Neighborliness.** Benefits received as an act of neighborliness such as the loan of an item, an occasional ride, or help with a repair where the act is consistent with polite behavior in a civilized society and would not normally be part of an economic transaction between like participants under similar circumstances. (Regulation 18942(a)(17).)

13. **Campaign or Nonprofit Fundraiser.** Two tickets for admission, for use by only the official and one guest, to attend a fundraiser for a campaign committee or candidate, or to a fundraiser for an organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The ticket(s) must be received from the organization or committee holding the fundraiser. (Regulation 18946.4.)

14. **Unused Passes or Tickets.** Passes or tickets that provide admission or access to facilities, goods, services, or other benefits (either on a one-time or repeated basis) that the public official does not use and do not give to another person. (Regulation 18946.1.)

15. **Items Provided to Government Agency.** Subject to certain conditions, items provided to a government agency and used by public officials in the agency for agency business. This may include

passes or tickets to (see Regulation 18944.1) or payments for other types of items or activities (see Regulation 18944). An agency must disclose specified payments on a form provided by the FPPC and post the form on its website. (See discussion of Forms 801 and 802 below under “Gift Exceptions Requiring Alternate Reporting.”) Contact the FPPC for detailed information.

**16. Emergency Leave Credits.** Leave credits (e.g., sick leave or vacation credits) received under a bona fide catastrophic or emergency leave program established by the public official’s employer and available to all employees in the same job classification or position. Donations of cash are gifts and are subject to limits and disclosure. (Regulation 18942(a)(9).)

**17. Disaster Relief.** Food, shelter, or similar assistance received in connection with a disaster relief program. The benefits must be received from a governmental agency or charity and must be available to the general public. (Regulation 18942(a)(10).)

**18. Agency Raffle.** Items awarded in an agency raffle received by the agency from an employee who is not acting as an intermediary for another donor. This exception applies when an agency holds an employee raffle and the item awarded in the raffle has been obtained with agency funds, or is otherwise an asset of the agency and not donated to the agency by a non-agency source. This exception does not apply to passes or tickets of the type described in Regulation 18944.1. (Regulation 18944.2(a) and (b).)

**19. Employee Gift Exchange.** Items received by an employee during an employee gift exchange, so long as the items received are provided by another employee of the agency and the gifts are not substantially disproportionate in value. (Regulation 18944.2(c).)

**Limited Gift Exceptions**

Form 700 Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
No	No	No	No

**1. Home Hospitality.** Gifts of hospitality including food, drink or occasional lodging that an official receives in an individual’s home when the individual or a member of their family is present. (Regulation 18942(a)(7).) For this exception to apply, the official must have a relationship, connection or association with the individual providing the in-home hospitality that is unrelated to the official’s position and the hospitality must be provided as part of that relationship. Generally, this means functions like children’s birthday parties, soccer team parties, neighborhood barbeques, etc., where other guests attend who are not part of the lobbying process. (Regulation 18942.2.)

**2. Reciprocal Holiday Gifts.** Gifts commonly exchanged between an official and another individual on holidays, birthdays, or similar occasions to the extent that the gifts exchanged are not substantially disproportionate in value. (Regulation 18942(a)(8)(A).)

**3. Reciprocal Exchanges.** Reciprocal exchanges between an official and another individual that occur on an ongoing basis so long as the total value of payments received by the official within the calendar year is not substantially disproportionate to the amount paid by the official and no single payment is \$590 or more. For example, if two people get together regularly for lunches and rotate picking up the lunch tab so that each pays approximately half the total value over the course of the calendar year, no gift need be reported. (Regulation 18942(a)(8)(B).)

**4. Dating Relationship.** Personal benefits commonly received from a dating partner. These gifts are not disclosable or limited but are subject to disqualification under the conflict of interest laws if the dating partner has certain business before the official as set forth in Regulation 18942(a)(18)(D). (Regulation 18942(a)(18)(A).)

**5. Acts of Human Compassion.** Assistance, financial or otherwise, to offset family medical or living expenses that the official can no longer meet without private assistance because of an accident, illness, employment loss, death in the family, or other unexpected calamity; or to defray expenses associated with humanitarian efforts such as the adoption of an orphaned child, so long as the source of the donation is an individual who has a prior social relationship with the official of the type where it would be common to provide such assistance, or the payment is made without regard to official status under other circumstances in which it would be common to receive community outreach. (Regulation 18942(a)(18)(B).) This exception does not apply if the person providing the benefit to the official is an individual who otherwise has business before the official as set forth in Regulation 18942(a)(18)(D).

**6. Long-Time Friend.** Benefits received from a long-time personal friend where the gift is unrelated to the official's duties. The exception does not apply if the individual providing the benefit to the official is involved in some manner with business before the official. (Regulation 18942(a)(18)(C).) This exception does not apply if the person providing the benefit to the official is an individual who otherwise has business before the official as set forth in Regulation 18942(a)(18)(D).

**7. Existing Personal Relationship.** Benefits received from an individual where it is clear that the gift was made because of an existing personal or business relationship unrelated to the official's position and there is no evidence whatsoever at the time the gift is made that the official makes or participates in the type of governmental decisions that may have a reasonably foreseeable material financial effect on the individual who would otherwise be the source of the gift. (Regulation 18942(a)(19).)

**Very Limited Gift Exception**

Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
Yes - ½ value as gift	Yes	No	No

**Wedding Gifts.** Wedding gifts are not subject to the \$590 gift limit. However, wedding gifts are reportable, but for purposes of valuing wedding gifts, one-half of the value of each gift is attributable to each spouse. (Regulation 18946.3.)

**Gift Exceptions Requiring Alternate Reporting**

Form 700 Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
Yes - As Income	Yes	No	No

**Prize or Award.** A prize or award received in a bona fide contest or competition, or game of chance. **Note: Unlike the other exceptions, payments that fall into this exception must be reported as income if valued at \$500 or more.** To qualify for this exception the contest or competition must be unrelated to the official's duties. (Regulation 18942(a)(14).)

**Agency Reports**

Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
Yes - On 801 or 802	No	No	No

The following exceptions are also applicable to payments made to a government agency that are used by officials in the agency under certain conditions to conduct agency business. These types of payments are not treated as gifts or income to the officials who use them, so long as the payments meet certain conditions and they are reported by the officials' agency. These reports must appear on either a Form 801 or Form 802, instead of the official reporting the items on a statement of economic interests (Form 700).

**Form 801 – Payment to Agency Report:** This form covers gifts or donations made to an agency and used by one or more officials in the agency for agency business. This may include travel payments, reimbursements, or other uses by an official, but does not cover tickets or passes providing admission to an entertainment or sporting event, which are reported on the Form 802 (discussed below). If the payment meets the requirements of Regulations 18944 or 18950.1, the agency must report it on a Form 801 and the item is not reported on the individual’s statement of economic interests (Form 700). (Regulations 18944 and 18950.1.)

**Form 802 – Agency Report of Ceremonial Role Events and Ticket/Pass Distributions:** This form covers gifts or donations made to an agency that provide tickets or passes to an agency official for admission to an entertainment or sporting event. For the ticket or pass to be exempt from reporting on the individual’s statement of economic interests (Form 700), the agency must have a written policy stating the public purpose for distribution of the tickets. The ticket or pass cannot be earmarked by the original source for use by a particular agency official and the agency must determine, in its sole discretion, which official may use the ticket or pass. (Regulation 18944.1.) The Form 802 is also used to report tickets provided for officials who perform a ceremonial role on behalf of the agency.

**Behested Payments Reports**

Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
Yes - Form 803 Behested Payment	No*	No	No*

**Behested Payments.** Generally, payments made at the behest of an official that do not confer a personal benefit on an official, such as those made by a third party to co-sponsor an event, or that are principally legislative, governmental, or charitable in nature, are not gifts. However, when a local elected officer is making the behest, in some cases these payments may be considered “behested payments” under Section 82004.5 and require disclosure by that elected officer.

**\*Note:** when a behested payment *does confer a personal benefit on the official*, the gift limit and conflict of interest rules apply, and the official may have a reportable gift or income in addition to a behested payment reporting duty.

**Form 803 – Behested Payment Report**

- Behested payments are reportable if made principally for legislative, governmental, or charitable purposes. These payments are not for campaign purposes and any personal benefit may constitute a gift to the official subject to the applicable gift limit. For example, a local elected official may ask a third party to contribute funds to a school in her district, or to a job fair or health fair. A gift to the official may occur, for example, where the official attends the event and receives a meal without charge.
- Generally, a donation will be “made at the behest” if it is requested, solicited, or suggested by the elected officer or member of the Public Utilities Commission, or otherwise made to a person in cooperation, consultation, coordination with, or at the consent of, the elected officer or PUC member. This includes payments behested on behalf of the official by their agent or employee.
- A behested payment does not include payments to an official from a local, state, or federal government agency for use by the official to conduct agency business. For example, free parking provided by a governmental entity to an official for agency business is not a behested payment and is not subject to reporting.
- Behested payments totaling \$5,000 or more from a single source in a calendar year must be disclosed by the official on a Form 803, which is filed with the official’s agency within 30 days of the date of the payment(s). (Section 84224; see Regulations 18424-18424.3.)



# Honoraria

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## What is an “Honorarium”?

An “honorarium” is any payment made in consideration for any speech given, article published, or attendance at any public or private conference, convention, meeting, social event, meal, or like gathering. An honorarium includes gift cards or any gift of more than nominal benefit provided in connection with an activity described above. An honorarium does not include items of nominal value such as a pen, pencil, note pad, or similar item. (Section 89501; Regulation 18932.4(e).)

A “speech given” means a public address, oration, or other form of oral presentation, including participation in a panel, seminar, or debate. (Regulation 18931.1.)

An “article published” means a nonfictional written work: 1) that is produced in connection with any activity other than the practice of a bona fide business, trade, or profession; and 2) that is published in a periodical, journal, newspaper, newsletter, magazine, pamphlet, or similar publication. (Regulation 18931.2.)

“Attendance” means being present during, making an appearance at, or serving as host or master of ceremonies for any public or private conference, convention, meeting, social event, meal, or like gathering. (Regulation 18931.3.)

The Act and Commission regulations provide certain exceptions to the prohibition on honoraria. (Section 89501(b); Regulations 18932 –18933.)

## The Prohibition

Local officials specified in Section 87200 (see page 2) are prohibited from receiving any honoraria payments. Officials and employees of local agencies who file statements of economic interests (Form 700) under the agency’s conflict of interest code (“designated employees”) may not receive honoraria payments from any source if the employee would be required to report income or gifts from that source on the Form 700, as outlined in the “disclosure category” portion of the conflict of interest code. (Section 89502.)

## Honoraria Exceptions that also apply to gifts and income

1. **Returned.** An honorarium that the public official returns (unused) to the donor or the donor’s agent or intermediary within 30 days. (Section 89501(b); Regulation 18933.)
2. **Donated to General Fund.** An honorarium that is delivered to the official’s local agency within 30 days for donation to the agency’s general fund and for which the public official does not claim a deduction for income tax purposes. (Section 89501(b); Regulation 18933.)
3. **Made to Nonprofit Organization.** A payment that is not delivered to the public official but is made directly to a bona fide charitable, educational, civic, religious, or similar tax-exempt, non-profit organization. However:
  - The official may not make the donation a condition for their speech, article, or attendance;
  - The official may not claim the donation as a deduction for income tax purposes.
  - The official may not be identified to the non-profit organization in connection with the donation; and
  - The donation may have no reasonably foreseeable financial effect on the public official or on any member of their immediate family. (Regulation 18932.5.)

**4. Payment from Family Member.** A payment received from the public official's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin, or the spouse of any such person. However, a payment that would be considered an honorarium is prohibited if one of these persons is acting as an agent or intermediary for someone else. (Regulation 18932.4(b).)

**5. Payment for Performance or Book.** Payments received for a comedic, dramatic, musical, or other similar artistic performance, and payments received for the publication of books, plays, or screenplays. (Regulations 18931.1 and 18931.2.)

**6. Reimbursement for Travel Where Official Provides Consideration.** Reimbursements for reasonable travel expenses provided to the public official by a bona fide non-profit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) entity for which the public official provides equal or greater consideration. The payment would also be exempt from the definition of income under Section 82030(b)(2). (See discussion under "Travel Payments" below.)

**Honoraria Exceptions where the payment may still be considered income (or a gift, if consideration of equal or greater value is not provided by the official)**

**1. Admission to Event Where Official Gives Speech.** Free admission, and refreshments and similar non-cash nominal benefits, provided to an official during the entire event at which they give a speech, participates in a panel or provides a similar service, and in-California transportation and necessary lodging and subsistence provided directly in connection with the speech, panel or service, including meals and beverages on the day of the activity. (Regulation 18932.4(e).)

**2. Earned Income from a Business.** Income earned and payments for travel made in connection with personal services rendered by the official if the services are provided in connection with a bona fide business, trade, or profession — such as teaching, practicing law, medicine, insurance, real estate, banking, or building contracting — and the services are customarily provided in connection with the business, trade, or profession. (Section 89506(d)(3) and Regulations 18950(a) and 18950.2.)

This exception does not apply if the sole or predominant activity of the business, trade, or profession is making speeches. In addition, the public official must meet certain criteria to establish that they are conducting or in a bona fide business, trade, or profession (such as maintenance of business records, licensure, proof of teaching position) before a payment received for personal services which may meet the definition of honorarium would be considered earned income and not an honorarium. (Section 89501(b); Regulations 18932 –18932.3.) Earned income is required to be reported. Contact the FPPC for detailed information.

**3. Travel from a Government Agency.** Travel payments provided to the public official by their government agency or by any state, local, or federal government agency which would be considered income and not a gift. (Section 89506(d)(2).) See discussion under "Travel Payments" below.

# Travel Payments Exceptions

Generally, when an official receives a payment (including reimbursement) for their travel, that payment is a reportable gift or income under the Act. The term “travel payment” includes payments, advances, or reimbursements for travel, including actual transportation, parking and related lodging and subsistence. (Section 89506(a).)

If the payment is a gift, it is also normally subject to the Act’s \$590 gift limit. If the payment is income, it may, in some cases, be an honorarium. Whether a payment is a gift or income, the official may be required to disqualify themselves from any decision that will have a foreseeable materially financial effect on the source.

## Certain Travel Payments are not a Gift, Income or Honorarium

Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
No	No	No	No

The following travel payments are not a gift, income or honorarium under the Act and Commission regulations and are thus not reportable, potentially disqualifying, or subject to any of the Act’s gift limits or the honorarium ban.

- 1. Travel from a Non-Reportable Source.** A payment for travel from a source that is not reportable on the official’s statement of economic interests (Form 700) based on the provisions of the conflict of interest code of the official’s agency.
- 2. Travel from Government Agency for Training.** A payment for travel from another local, state, or federal government agency and related per diem expenses when the travel is for education, training or other inter-agency programs or purposes. (Regulation 18950(a) and (c)(2).)
- 3. Sharing a Ride with Another Official.** A payment for travel provided to the official in a vehicle or aircraft owned by another official or agency when each official is traveling to or from the same location for an event as a representative of their respective offices. (Regulation 18950(a) and (c)(3).)
- 4. Certain Travel from a Government Agency or 501(c)(3).** Travel payments provided to the official by any state, local, or federal government agency as part of the official’s employment with that agency or provided to the official by a bona fide non-profit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) entity for which the official provides equal or greater consideration. (Section 82030(b)(2).) Any person who claims to have provided consideration has the burden of proving that the consideration received is of equal or greater value.
- 5. Travel for Official Agency Business.** Certain payments made to an agency to cover the travel expenses of an employee who travels in the course of carrying out agency business are not gifts to the official because these payments do not provide a “personal benefit” to the official. For this exception to apply, the agency must report the payment on a Form 801 and the amount and purpose for using the payments are restricted by the provisions set forth in Regulation 18950.1.
- 6. Campaign Contribution.** A payment for travel that constitutes a campaign contribution to an official (Sections 82015, 82028(b)(4); Regulations 18215, 18942(a)(4), 18950(a) and 18950.3(a)), and permissible expenditures of campaign funds for campaign-related travel (Regulations 18950(a) and 18950.3(b)), provided they comply and are properly reported in accordance with applicable campaign finance laws.

**7. Travel Payments Fulfilling Terms of Contract.** Payments made to a governmental entity for travel expenses that are required to fulfill the terms of a contract. Neither the governmental entity nor the public official has a reporting obligation because consideration has been provided. (Section 82028; *Ratto* Advice Letter, No. I-14-057.)

**Certain Travel Payments are Reportable and may Subject the Official to Possible Conflicts of Interest, but are not Subject to the \$590 Gift Limit or Honoraria Ban of the Act.**

Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
Yes	Yes	No	No

**Travel for a Public Purpose Under Section 89506(a).** Any payments for actual transportation expenses and related lodging and subsistence that are made for a purpose reasonably related to: (1) A legislative or governmental purpose, or (2) An issue of state, national, or international policy so long as the travel is either:

(a) *Travel for Speech.* In connection with a speech given by the official and the lodging and subsistence expenses are limited to the day immediately proceeding, the day of, and the day immediately following the speech and the travel is within the United States, or

(b) *Travel paid for by government agency or 501(c)(3) organization.* Provided by a government agency or authority, (including a foreign government), a bona fide public or private educational institution as defined in Section 203 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, or a nonprofit organization that qualifies under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or a foreign organization that substantially satisfies the criteria of that section.

These payments are still reportable on the Form 700 and may create a conflict of interest issue for the official.

**Payments for Travel in Connection with a Business**

Reporting	C/I § 87100	Honoraria Ban	\$590 Gift Limit
Yes - as Income	Yes	No	No

Payments for travel made in connection with personal services rendered by the official if the services are provided in connection with a bona fide business, trade, or profession — such as teaching, practicing law, medicine, insurance, real estate, banking, or building contracting — and the services are customarily provided in connection with the business, trade, or profession. (Section 89506(d)(3) and Regulations 18950(a) and 18950.2.)

# Loans

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Personal loans received by certain local officials are subject to limits and other restrictions, and in some circumstances, a personal loan that is not being repaid or is being repaid below certain amounts may become a gift to the official who received it.

## Limitations on Loans from Agency Officials, Consultants, and Contractors

**Officials Must Not Receive Loans from Agency Staff.** If the public official is a local elected officer or an official specified in Section 87200 (see page 2), they may not receive a personal loan that exceeds \$250 at any given time from an officer, employee, member, or consultant of their government agency or an agency over which their agency exercises direction and control. (Section 87460(a) and (b).)

**Officials Must Not Receive Loans from Agency Contractors.** In addition, the public official may not receive a personal loan that exceeds \$250 at any given time from any individual or entity that has a contract with their government agency or an agency over which their agency exercises direction and control. This limitation does not apply to loans received from banks or other financial institutions, and retail or credit card transactions, made in the normal course of business on terms available to members of the public without regard to their official status. (Section 87460(c) and (d).)

## Loans to Elected Officials Must be in Writing

In addition to the limitations above, if the public official is elected, they may not receive a personal loan of \$500 or more unless the loan is made in writing and clearly states the terms of the loan. The loan document must include the names of the parties to the loan agreement, as well as the date, amount, interest rate, and term of the loan. The loan document must also include the date or dates when payments are due and the amount of the payments. (Section 87461.)

## The following loans are not subject to these limits and documentation requirements:

1. **Campaign Loans.** Loans received by an elected officer's or candidate's campaign committee.
2. **Loans from Family Members.** Loans received from the public official's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin, or the spouse of any such person unless they are acting as an agent or intermediary for another person not covered by this exemption.

## Loans as Gifts

Under the following circumstances, a personal loan received by **any** public official (elected and other officials specified in Section 87200, as well as any other local official or employee required to file statements of economic interests) may become a gift and subject to gift reporting and limitations:

1. If the loan has a defined date or dates for repayment and has not been repaid, the loan will become a gift when the statute of limitations for filing an action for default has expired.
2. If the loan has no defined date or dates for repayment, the loan will become a gift if it remains unpaid when one year has elapsed from the later of:
  - The date the loan was made;
  - The date the last payment of \$100 or more was made on the loan; or
  - The date upon which the public official has made payments aggregating to less than \$250 during the previous 12 months. (Section 87462.)

**The following loans will not become gifts:**

- A loan made to an elected officer's or candidate's campaign committee. This loan would, however, be a campaign contribution and must be reported accordingly.
- A loan described above on which the creditor has taken reasonable action to collect the balance due.
- A loan described above on which the creditor, based on reasonable business considerations, has not undertaken collection action. (However, except in a criminal action, the creditor has the burden of proving that the decision not to take collection action was based on reasonable business considerations.)
- A loan made to an official who has filed for bankruptcy and the loan is ultimately discharged in bankruptcy.