

Issues Requiring Legal Review

(non-exclusive)

If you run across any of the following issues you should speak with your ethics counselor before proceeding:

- * Request to inform personnel about a non-federal entity event (or to encourage participation).
- * Request to sign (or for your name to appear in) a letter to be sent by a non-federal entity.
- * Request to provide a quote for a non-federal entity publication or web site.
- * Request to write the forward for a book written by a non-federal employee.
- * Request to write an employment recommendation for an individual.

References:

5 CFR § 2635.702

DoD 5500.7-R CH-7; Joint Ethics Regulation,
17 November 2011

AFI 32-101 Public Affairs Operations
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This handout provides general information. It is not a substitute for obtaining advice from an ethics counselor on the application of the ethics laws and regulations to a specific set of facts and circumstances. Please contact us at:

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ENDORSEMENTS

"Integrity First"

ENDORSEMENTS

This pamphlet provides a brief overview of endorsement rules and guidelines by explaining the general rules and exceptions. Examples of endorsements are provided to illustrate major points.

The Basic Rule

You may not use or permit the use of your government position or title, or any authority associated with your public office, to endorse any product, service, or enterprise.

An **endorsement** is an action, such as a signature, letter or statement that supports, validates, sanctions, approbates, or approves the products, services, or enterprises of a non-federal entity or individual.

Activities That Don't Qualify

There are activities that do not fall under the category of endorsements. You may promote products, services or enterprises *if*

- * Your promotion is in the furtherance of statutory authority.
- * Your promotion is a result of documentation or compliance with agency requirements or standards.
- * Your promotion is a result of recognition for achievement given under an agency program or recognition for accomplishment in support of the agency's mission.

Permissible Activities

An acquisitions representative may sign a letter to a defense technology corporation indicating that its operations are in compliance with DOD contractor standards even though she knows that the company has routinely displayed letters of this type in television

commercials portraying it as “the largest provider of IT services, systems integration, and training to the United States government.”

An Air Force activity may promote a DOD-sponsored awards program by noting award details on their web site or promotional materials, including photos of award recipients or honorees.

Q: Can I include a link to the web site of an outside company offering similar or exemplary services that would benefit our web site visitors? Surely a simple link doesn't count as an endorsement!

A: While a link may not be considered actual praise or support of a non-DoD organization, there may be an appearance of endorsement. Links to non-DoD website resources must support the organization's mission. In addition, you must link to all generally available sites that have the same mission impact. Per the Joint Ethics Regulation, no product endorsements or preferential treatment shall be given on DAF websites. To avoid the perception of an endorsement, links to commercial organizations (including DoD contractors) must be avoided. However, if considering a link to a non-DoD website on a DAF public site, you must ensure a proper disclaimer is prominently displayed. Be sure to check with an ethics official to get approval on the links and the wording of the disclaimer.

Prohibited Activities

An Air Force representative may not appear in a television commercial in which she endorses an automobile produced by her former employer, stating that it has been found by the USAF to be the best in its class.

An Air Force officer may not use his official title, office, or position in a book jacket endorsement of a novel about the Air Force Academy written by an author whose work he admires. Neither may he do so in a book review published in a newspaper. However, he may use his rank and service with his name (i.e. Capt. Smith, USAF).

Air Force Uniform and Official Seal

Military Uniform

Since one of the most recognizable symbols of military service is the uniform, no one except a member of the armed forces may wear the uniform or part of the uniform.

Air Force members may not wear the uniform in the following circumstances:

- * To further political activities, private employment or commercial interests
- * When giving public speeches
- * In an interview where personal opinions are being expressed
- * In picket lines, marches, or rallies
- * While working in an off-duty capacity
- * When it would discredit the Air Force

Exceptions: The only exception in this area applies to actors in theatrical or motion picture productions. Requests by non-federal entities to use Air Force uniforms and insignias in commercial advertising or promotions should be referred for approval through SAF/PA to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs.

Official Seal

SAF/AA is the custodian of the Air Force Seal and is solely responsible for approving its use on official departmental documents and records.

Commanders of active units active control the use of unit emblems. Non-Air Force personnel and organizations may only use the unit's symbol with the commander's permission.