

travel. The fact that you may prefer to use a personal credit card to earn more miles or other incentives is irrelevant to this requirement.

*Example:* A traveler who has a personal credit card that would generate better travel benefits on official travel may not use that personal credit card in lieu of the government travel card.

### Contract Carriers

While on official travel, you may not use an airline of your choice. You must use the GSA contract carrier flights on routes where GSA has negotiated a contract fare unless an exception applies. If your preferred airline so happens to be the GSA contract carrier, then you may use that airline.

Exceptions to this rule focus on situations that lead to government cost savings or a clear mission that requires alternative travel plans. Please consult your ethics counselor if you have questions.

### References:

31 USC § 1353  
41 CFR Chapter 304  
DoD 5500.07-R, CH-7, 17 November 2011  
NDAA for FY02, P.L. 107-107, Section 1116  
Joint Travel Regulations



### Published by the DAF Ethics Office

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# OFFICIAL TRAVEL

*“Excellence in All We Do”*

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This pamphlet provides a brief overview of the rules on the acceptance of travel and travel-related expenses from non-federal sources. It also covers the acceptance of travel benefits when performing official travel.

## Acceptance of Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source

With the approval of your travel official, and concurrence of an ethics official, you may accept, on behalf of the Department of the Air Force, a travel payment from a non-Federal source under the following conditions:

- \* To attend a meeting, conference, seminar, or similar function, related to your official duties:
- \* The travel is determined to be in the interest of the Government;
- \* The non-Federal source is not disqualified due to a conflict of interest; and
- \* Acceptance of the gift of travel is approved **before** the travel.

Acceptance may be authorized after the travel has begun if the above criteria are met **and** the following additional criteria are met:

- \* If the Department of the Air Force (DAF) already authorized acceptance of payment for some travel-related expenses, then you may accept payment for any additional expenses from the same source provided that:
  - The expenses are paid in kind are comparable in value to those offered to or purchased by other similarly situated meeting attendees; and
  - The DAF did not decline to accept payment for those types of expenses in advance of travel.
- \* If the DAF did not authorize acceptance of any payment from a non-Federal source prior to travel then:
  - You may accept, on behalf of the DAF, only the following payments from a non-Federal source:
    - Only the types of travel expenses authorized by

- the travel authorization; and
  - Only travel expenses that are within the maximum allowances provided by your travel orders (e.g., if your orders authorize you \$100 per night for lodging, then you may not accept payment for \$200 per night for lodging).
- You must request authorization for acceptance within **seven working days** after the trip ends; and
- If the DAF declines to accept the payment, then the agency must:
- Reimburse the non-Federal source; or
  - Require you to reimburse the non-federal source.

## Definitions

**Meeting, conference, or similar function** includes seminars, speaking engagements, symposium, training courses and is co-sponsored by a non-Federal source. It does not need to be widely attended. **It does not include** promotional vendor training or other meetings held for the primary purpose of marketing the non-Federal source's products or services. Nor does it include an event required to carry out an agency's statutory or regulatory function such as investigations, inspections, audits, etc.

**Travel** means you must be on official travel to accept a gift of travel. That means you cannot be in a permissive temporary duty status.

## Frequent Flyer Miles and Other Benefits

Frequent-flyer miles, airline and hotel promotions, rewards, etc., now belong to you if the same promotional items are available to the public under the same terms and the benefits can be accepted at no additional cost to the government. You **cannot** select specific flights or hotels to earn points if it will cost the Government more money.

In some situations, the government owns the benefits and they must be turned over.

## What Belongs to the Government

**The Involuntary Bump** – if you are involuntarily bumped from an overbooked flight while on official travel, any compensation you receive (e.g., a check, complimentary ticket) belongs to the Government as liquidated damages.

If you are involuntary bumped, you must contact your authorizing official or the travel management company (TMC) for guidance concerning lodging or other arrangements. The Government will cover the additional travel expenses due to an involuntary bump.

## What Belongs to You

**The Voluntary Bump** – If you are on official travel, the flight is overbooked, and the airline is looking for volunteers to give up their seat for a later flight, you may volunteer so long as doing so would not interfere with the mission. You can keep any benefits or compensation earned because of volunteering. However, taking a later flight cannot result in any additional cost to the government. For example, if it requires you stay overnight, that becomes a personal expense.

For OGE Form 278e and OGE Form 450 filers, you must report the compensation received for the voluntary bump if it has a value greater than \$200. This is not a gift since the compensation was in return for agreeing to the bump. Therefore, you report it under income.

**On-the-Spot Upgrade** – you may accept an upgrade to first or business class on official travel if the on-the-spot upgrade is generally available to the public or at least to all federal employees or all military members. At no time may you accept an upgrade if it is offered to you because of your rank or your official position. This also applies to a rental car or hotel room upgrade.

## Miscellaneous

### Double Reimbursement

Travelers may not be reimbursed twice for the same travel expenses.

*Example:* If a meal is provided to a traveler as part of a conference or training fee, the traveler may not receive per diem for the same meal.

### The Government Travel Card

Official travelers are required to use their government travel card to cover official expenses associated with