



## Federal Regulations Govern Gifts to Service Members

Federal gift-giving rules apply to all service members and their families. In general, military personnel and their family members may accept unsolicited gifts as long as they are not offered because of their official position or from a "prohibited source."

A prohibited source is any person or group that: Seeks official action from the employee's agency; does or seeks to do business with his or her agency; conducts activities regulated by his or her agency; or has interests that may be substantially affected by the individual employee's official duties.

Federal rules define a gift as any gratuity, favor, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, or other item having monetary value. It also includes services such as training, transportation, local travel, lodging and meals.

Ethics officials point out that since the rules involve many exemptions and exceptions, military personnel should consult their local judge advocates, legal counsel or ethics officials before accepting gifts.

DoD personnel may not solicit gifts, even for others, unless the solicitation is part of an official fundraising program, such as the Combined Federal Campaign. Troops may, however, advise groups, or individuals seeking to assist service members, of their needs.

The families of deceased DoD personnel, assuming they are not federal employees themselves, are not bound by these rules.

