



D17 FURLOUGH/LAPSE IN APPROPRIATIONS ETHICS GUIDANCE

While not a replacement for individualized legal advice, the below guidance is meant to help address some common scenarios that have arisen as a result of the federal government lapse in appropriations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Seventeenth District legal office at (907) 463-2050. Additional information is provided on the [D17 legal website](#).

Acceptance of Food/Household Good Offers to Coast Guard Families and Units:

Units and individual Coast Guard members are prohibited from soliciting, either directly or indirectly, for free food, items, or other donations. Free food or household goods provided to Coast Guard members because of their official position are considered gifts under Federal ethics rules. Individual Coast Guard members may accept unsolicited gifts (including food) that are under \$20 per occasion and do not exceed \$50 per year, per source. Individual Coast Guard members may also accept discounted or free food from restaurants and caterers (that are not prohibited sources) as long as the offer is available to all members of the armed forces and is not limited based on rank or position (i.e. military discounts).

Commanding Officers/Officers-in-Charge (O-5 and below) may accept gifts, not exceeding \$200, (including free food) on behalf of the Coast Guard. Gifts exceeding \$200, but less than \$2000, must be accepted by O-6 Commanding Officers. COs/OiCs may refuse gift offers of free food or household goods to CG members.

CG members must be careful to avoid showing preference to restaurants/caterers/sources of food or gifts (i.e. posing for pictures in uniform at the restaurant, posting support on social media accounts, etc.). If donations are accepted, it is important to keep your thank you messages simple and avoid any language that could be interpreted as an endorsement of the donor's organization, fundraising for the organization, or making an endorsement or political statement for or against any political party, elected member or proposed legislation.

Gift Cards or Other Donations:

Gifts of cash or general-use prepaid cards may not be accepted by individual Coast Guard members regardless of their value. These cards generally bear the logo of a payment network, such as Visa, MasterCard, or American Express, and are accepted by any merchant that accepts those credit or debit cards as payment. Gift cards that are merchant specific, (e.g. Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Costco) may be accepted, but are subject to the same gift rules as discussed above, such that individual Coast Guard members may accept unsolicited gifts that are under \$20 per occasion and do not exceed \$50 per year, per source. Alternatively, members can direct prospective donors to active charitable organizations who support Coast Guard members (see Coast Guard Friendly Organizations below). If you accept a gift card on behalf of a charitable organization, please contact your local silver-badge who has received guidance on how to make use of the gift.

Crowdfunding:

Coast Guard employees may not use their public office for private gain, or solicit a gift to be given because of their official position. In the context of online crowdfunding services, this includes the use of a USCG member's rate, rank, job position, service affiliation, or the wear of the USCG uniform. Moreover, Coast Guard members may not allow other persons to solicit a gift on their behalf as a Coast Guard member. Accordingly, the use of crowdfunding under the guise of being a Coast Guard member affected by the shutdown, or permitting a family member or friend to do so or otherwise solicit on a Coast Guard member's behalf is prohibited. Use of crowdfunding services in a personal capacity is permissible under applicable ethics guidance, however there can be no mention or indicia of Coast Guard or Federal affiliation associated with the campaign.

Coast Guard Friendly Organizations:

Members of the community who wish to support the Coast Guard or its members can be directed to active charitable organizations who are not prohibited sources and available to all Coast Guard members regardless of rank or rate. Members are encouraged to direct inquiries about making donations to the Coast Guard or its members to these types of organizations. Members should not indicate preference or indicate that the Coast Guard endorses or supports any of these organizations. Examples of these organizations include:

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance: <http://www.cgmahq.org/>

Coast Guard Foundation: <https://coastguardfoundation.org/>

Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association: <https://www.uscgcpoa.org/>

Coast Guard Spouse's Club: <http://www.nationalcouncilofcgsc.org/index.html>

Outside Employment:

Coast Guard members are permitted to engage in off-duty employment with command approval provided that such outside activities do not interfere or create a conflict with a member's Coast Guard duties. A form requesting approval for outside employment can be found on the [D17 legal website](#).

If You Are a Coast Guard Member in Need:

Members are encouraged to advise their chain of command, ombudsman, or Chaplain of their individual situations if they are financially struggling due to the lapse in appropriations. Military aid and relief societies, including CGMA, Army Emergency Relief, Air Force Aid Society, Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society and the American Red Cross all stand ready to assist. In addition to providing some degree of lapse assistance, these entities can also provide routine assistance for emergency vehicle repairs and emergency home repairs that are not dire.

Additionally, several banking institutions are providing assistance to affected service members in the form of zero or low interest loans to help cover expenses during the lapse in appropriations. Members are also encouraged to work with their creditors and service providers to check on the availability of forbearance or grace periods during the lapse to avoid missing payments on outstanding debts or services. CG-1's "Letter to Creditors," available on the [D17 legal website](#), can assist with these communications.