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State of South Carolina

State Ethics Commission

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SEC AO92-125

March 25, 1992

SUBJECT: COUNTY MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION SPONSORING DINNER MEETINGS

SUMMARY:

A City would not be prohibited by the Ethics Reform Act from utilizing city funds to host a dinner meeting of the County Municipal Association.

QUESTION:

The Attorney for the City of Seneca requests an opinion as to whether the city may use public funds to pay for a dinner meeting as host to the County Municipal Association. Four dinner meetings are held each year, sponsored alternately by three cities. The host city pays for the meals for invitees who include elected officials, department heads, and some appointed officials. Members of the Legislative Delegation and various County officials and their spouses are invited.

DISCUSSION:

This opinion is rendered in response to a letter dated February 12, 1992 requesting an opinion from the State Ethics Commission. The Commission's jurisdiction is limited to the applicability of the Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act of 1991 (Act No. 248 of 1991; Section 8-13-100 et. seq., as amended, 1976 Code of Laws). This opinion does not supersede any other statutory or regulatory restrictions or procedures which may apply to this situation.

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The Ethics Reform Act does not address the question of the proper use of public funds, but instead, restricts public officeholders utilizing their public positions for financial gain. It does not appear that a city would be precluded from paying for meals for the public officeholders mentioned. Neither would the public officeholders mentioned be precluded from accepting such meals.

The Commission advises that the Senate Ethics Committee and House of Representatives Ethics Committee be contacted concerning invitations to members of the General Assembly.