

SUBJECT: PAYMENT OF EXPENSES BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, SISTER STATES  
OR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

SUMMARY:

Employees of the Forestry Commission may receive travel and training provided by the Federal government, sister states, or a national association provided such expenses incurred by employees participating in the meetings are in accordance with state travel reimbursement policies.

QUESTION:

The State Forester has questioned participation in travel funded by the Federal Government and by sister states' forestry agency. There is no expenditure and all travel arrangements are prearranged. He questions whether acceptance of such travel and meals and/or lodging from the Federal Government or sister states is allowed. He also questions whether acceptance of travel from the National Association of State Foresters, which receives financial support from the Federal Government, is allowed.

DISCUSSION:

This opinion is rendered in response to a letter dated December 30, 1991 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.

In Advisory Opinion SEC AO92-037, the State Ethics Commission advised that costs associated with attendance at committee meetings handled by a Federal agency could be provided since there is no financial benefit being provided to the employee if in accordance with state travel reimbursement policies and procedures. The State Ethics Commission would advise that Forestry Commission employees could attend meetings sponsored by the Federal government, sister states, or a national association with travel, lodging and meals arranged by or reimbursed by the sponsor without violating the Ethics Reform Act, provided such travel is in accordance with state travel policies and procedures.