

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

For elected state officials, candidates for election to state offices, legislative employees, and agency officials with rulemaking responsibilities

Attending events at a political party's national convention

A Guide to Wisconsin's Law

This guideline provides general advice about an official's¹ attending an event held in conjunction with a political party's national convention.

IF EVENT'S SPONSOR EMPLOYS A LOBBYIST

A state elected official, candidate for election to state office, legislative employee, or appointed official whose responsibilities include rulemaking, may *not* attend an event sponsored by an organization that employs a lobbyist in Wisconsin, unless the event is open to the general public and, then, only under the same terms and conditions available to the public. [§13.625, *Wisconsin Statutes*].² An event is open to the general public if:

1. anyone who wants to attend the event may do so;
2. the organization can demonstrate its genuine attempt to attract the general public to the event; and
3. there is no offer or notice of the event directed to an official that would confer an advantage to the official.³

IF EVENT'S SPONSOR DOES NOT EMPLOY A LOBBYIST

A state official should not attend an event, or should pay the full value of an event, if the official is invited to the event because he or she is a state official, even if others are also invited. [§§19.45 (2) and (3m), 19.56 (3), *Wisconsin Statutes*].⁴

A state official may attend a reception, meal, hospitality suite, or the like sponsored by an organization that does not employ a lobbyist if the invitation is unrelated to the official's holding a government position – for example, an event:

1. for all delegates to the convention;
2. for all delegates from Wisconsin or from the Midwest; or
3. for all delegates pledged to a particular candidate.

¹ This guide applies to elected state officials, candidates for elective state offices, legislative employees, and to other state officials and employees who have rule-making responsibilities. See §§13.62(3) and 19.42(13), *Wisconsin Statutes*.

² Wisconsin's lobbying law prohibits a state official to accept anything of pecuniary value from a business or organization that employs a lobbyist unless the item is also made available to the general public. §13.625, *Wisconsin Statutes*.

³ 80 Op. Att'y Gen. 205 (1992); 97 Wis Eth Bd 12.

⁴ Wisconsin's Ethics Code for State Public Officials prohibits a state public official to accept food, beverages, or anything of more than inconsequential value for private benefit unless the official can clearly and convincingly demonstrate that the item is offered for reasons unrelated to the official holding a state public office. §§19.45 (2) and (3), 19.56 (3), *Wisconsin Statutes*.

This is a guide. For authoritative information consult Wisconsin Statutes.