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**2005 Wis Eth Bd 09**  
**FEES AND HONORARIUMS**

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The Ethics Board advises that a crystal bowl, valued at \$125, is reasonable compensation for an elected official who spent eight to nine hours preparing a talk and presented a keynote address related to state government issues to an out-of-state organization.

¶1 You asked whether a crystal bowl, valued at \$125, which an out-of-state organization presented to you is reasonable compensation for your having delivered the keynote speech at a program that the organization sponsored and that pertained to issues confronting state agencies such as yours. The compensation is reasonable.

¶2 Section 19.56 (3) (a), *Wisconsin Statutes*, provides, in relevant part, “an elected official may retain reasonable compensation, for a published work or for the presentation of a talk or participation in a meeting related to a topic specified in sub. (1) if the payment or reimbursement is paid or arranged by the organizer of the event or the publisher of the work.” The topics to which 19.56 (1), *Wisconsin Statutes*, refers include the discussion and interpretation of state government processes and proposals and issues affecting the judicial branch.

¶3 You have presented a talk related to a topic specified in 19.56 (1).

¶4 In prior opinions, the Ethics Board has stated that a payment’s reasonableness is determined by the totality of the circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Relevant factors include the payer’s relationship to the official’s public position; the amount of preparation required for the presentation; the compensation the sponsoring organization provided to other participants who were not state officials; the relative importance of the presentation; and the official’s history of commanding speaking fees prior to taking public office.<sup>2</sup>

¶5 You have indicated that you spent eight or nine hours preparing your speech. The organization has no connection with your official position. The crystal bowl appears eminently reasonable compensation for your talk.

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<sup>1</sup> 1998 Wis Eth Bd 12, ¶7; 1996 Wis Eth Bd 04, ¶7; 8 Op. Eth. Bd. 51 (1985); 8 Op. Eth. Bd. 43 (1985).

<sup>2</sup> 9 Op. Eth. Bd. 27, 28, (1986); 8 Op. Eth. Bd. 51 (1985); 8 Op. Eth. Bd. 44, *supra*; 2 Op. Eth. Bd. 119 (1979), 84 (1978).