



Ethics in the News

Example One – Gift Ban

Leslie is the business licensing manager for a local municipality. The municipality uses an outside vendor as part of the business licensing process. The vendor, Pawnee Parks and Investigations, conducts background checks on license applicants.

Andy, a Customer Service Representative for Pawnee Parks and Investigations, is assigned to the municipality. During the holidays, Andy sends Leslie a \$250 gift card to a local golf course as gratitude for the Municipality's continued business.

What should Leslie do? Discuss.

Example Two – Gift Ban

Rebecca is a member of the Richmond City Council. Rebecca has been friends with Keely for 10 years after the two met at a political fundraiser.

Keely is a lobbyist for Richmond Supply Co., an office supply company with a contract with the City of Richmond. Richmond's contract with the City expires in 18 months.

After hearing that Rebecca is having a medical procedure, Keely gives Rebecca an interest free loan in the amount of \$1,100 to pay for medical expenses not covered by Rebecca's medical insurance. Rebecca has not repaid Keely for the loan.

Has Rebecca violated the City's Gift Ban? Discuss.

Example Three – Gift Ban

Mayor Quimby is the Mayor of the fictional city of Springfield. Springfield is home to the Isotopes Baseball Club.

In the first game of the playoffs, the Isotopes play their rivals the Shelbyville Snakes. Tickets for the game are sold out. However, Mayor Quimby would like to take his children to the game.

Mayor Quimby calls the VP of Governmental Affairs for the Isotopes and secures four free tickets usually worth \$200 each. Mayor Quimby and the Isotopes' VP know each other through Isotopes' lobbying of the Mayor's Office and the City Council.

Mayor Quimby worries that he may have violated the City's Gift Ban. What should he do? Discuss.

Example One – Prohibited Political Activity

Alicia is a professor of law at State College. Her husband Peter is currently running for State's Attorney.

In the lead up to the election, Alicia posts to her social media profile endorsing her husband's candidacy. These posts are made outside of business hours using her personal computer but are viewable by the public, including her students and colleagues.

Alicia also supervises a number of teaching assistants. She offers her teaching assistants a flexible work schedule, if they volunteer on her husband's campaign.

Has Alicia violated the prohibition on political activity? If so, how? Discuss.

Example One – Lobbying Restriction

"State Rep. Luis Arroyo was supposed to be with his fellow lawmakers in Springfield on Monday for the first day of the busy fall veto session.

Instead, the Chicago Democrat was ducking reporters as he left the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago, where he was the latest elected official to be charged in what has become a sprawling federal public corruption investigation.

Arroyo, 65, an assistant majority leader who has been in office since 2006, was charged with one count of federal program bribery alleging he agreed to pay a state senator \$2,500 a month in kickbacks in exchange for the senator's support on legislation involving video gambling sweepstakes games that would benefit one of Arroyo's lobbying clients...."

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/criminal-justice/ct-state-representative-corruption-charge-20191028-rcrvx2tc6vh4veengdni47zspe-story.html>

Example One - Open Meetings Act

“For the third time in less than three years, the Illinois Attorney General's Office has concluded that the Aurora Public Library Board has violated the Open Meetings Act.

Leah Bartelt, an assistant attorney general in the Public Access Bureau, said in a letter written Tuesday that the board violated the act in four separate meetings during 2018.

She said it appeared that during all four meetings, the board adjourned into closed session for legitimate reasons, but “for short portions of each of the four meetings at issue,” the discussion veered off the subject that allowed the meeting to be closed.

At that point, things were discussed that should not have been in a closed session, she said.”

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/aurora-beacon-news/ct-abn-aurora-library-st-0407-story.html>

Example One – Records Retention and FOIA

“Several senior employees within the police department and the city attorney’s office hastily struck a deal with the police union to shred the records to avoid making public embarrassing revelations about Buscher’s conduct and arrest during a 2008 Missouri fishing trip.

Rob Williams, who was police chief at the time, signed an agreement – a memorandum of understanding – to have the files destroyed after four years instead of five. Ex-city attorney Mark Cullen gave the legal OK for the deal. Documents show that several other high-level city employees were in on the secret, too; Houston apparently was kept out of the loop.

The night the files were to be shredded, the lieutenant in charge of the internal affairs division protested; Williams issued a direct order that he proceed with the shredding.

Once the shredding was complete, city lawyers told Christian the city did not have the records he was seeking.

Later, after the shady deal and the illegal file destruction became public, Williams abruptly retired from his post, and Cullen eventually resigned.

The city subsequently settled a federal lawsuit with Christian over the matter for \$100,000 – a tidy sum for a cash-strapped local government.”

<https://www.sj-r.com/article/20150212/OPINION/150219779>

Example One – Official Misconduct

“Winnebago County Coroner Bill Hintz faces several new felony counts of theft and official misconduct after being charged back in October 2020 for forgery, stealing government funds and official misconduct....

The Illinois State Police (ISP) initially began investigating Hintz over the alleged fraudulent use of a Winnebago County gasoline card and credit card. Following the 2020 indictment, the ISP received additional information that Hintz had stolen around \$2,500 paid by the families of people who had been cremated at the county’s expense.”

<https://www.wifr.com/2021/09/02/winnebago-co-coroner-faces-new-charges-accused-stealing-14500-dead/>