



Holiday gifts for public officials: Check your list twice

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If you've been out shopping, you've likely noticed stores are decking their halls and preparing for the holidays (holiday creep is a topic for another time). Many companies like to send small holiday gifts or tokens of appreciation to valued customers, clients and contacts. The question is, does your company's list of recipients include any public officials or employees? Then you better watch out (and maybe consider checking that list twice).

Ohio law prohibits giving a gift of "substantial value" to a public official or employee if the giver is a "prohibited source." A prohibited source is anyone that is regulated by, doing business with or seeking to do business with/interested in matters before the official/employee's agency or political subdivision. While substantial value is not defined, the Ohio Ethics Commission has provided guidance that acceptable gifts should be of a nominal value. Think of promotional items or small food items and snacks. The Ohio Ethics Commission provides [helpful guidance](#) and you can always consult with your legal counsel for advice. That way you don't end up on the naughty list.

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