

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics Inquiries

Birthday-Party Special

Scenario: The assistant county manager knew that he should not purchase a ticket to the county executive's birthday party, as it was clearly a fund-raising event for the county executive's reelection campaign. When he mentioned to one of his colleagues that he did not plan to attend because it was a political fund-raising event, his colleague told him he had found a way around the problem. He had received a complimentary ticket to attend the birthday party from a neighbor, so he didn't have to purchase it. The assistant wanted to know if there still were ethical issues involved in participating in the event if someone else had paid for the tickets.

Response: There still are ethical problems in attending the county executive's birthday campaign party, even if a neighbor buys the tickets. The bottom line is: this is a campaign activity, and the professional staff's attendance at the incumbent's event will give the public (and the county executive's opponents) the impression that the professional manager favors one candidate over another.