

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics

Driving Ms. Legislator

Scenario: A state legislator needs a driver for the upcoming county-fair parade and has contacted the fair board for assistance. It turns out that the town manager is a member of the fair board and is also the one who is in the best position to drive the 10-minute parade route. Is there an ethical problem in providing this service? While the state legislator has not announced her plans to run for Congress, the town manager expects that she will do so soon. In the parade, however, the town manager would not have to display any campaign signs or other political messages on the car.

Response: Because the parade is a community event and not a political one, a reasonable person would not view this chauffeuring service as an inappropriate political activity. The assistance the town manager has been asked to provide is for the county fair and not for a political purpose. At the same time, the town manager is wise to be alert to the potential for an elected official to use a community event for political purposes, and should keep some distance if this were to occur.

Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The inquiries and advice are reviewed by the Committee on Professional Conduct, the ethics committee of the ICMA Executive Board. Some of the inquiries are revised and published as a regular feature in *PM*, to give guidance to members in the big and little ethical decisions they make daily. If you have a question about your obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics, call Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611, e-mail, ekellar@icma.org or Martha Perego at 202/962-3668, e-mail, mperego@icma.org.