

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics Inquiries

The Political Party Invitations

Scenario: The city manager is struggling with two invitations she has received. The local Republican and Democratic clubs have asked her to brief them on what is going on in the city and, particularly, to provide information on an upcoming ballot measure. She is concerned because the events include luncheons, and attendees will be buying tickets. Proceeds will be used to support the political parties. She asked for advice on how to balance her responsibility to provide information about a ballot measure that the city council is supporting, while avoiding any inappropriate political activity.

Response: In general, city and county managers are well advised to keep as much distance as possible from political fund-raising events. In a situation like this, however, the city council may feel that the manager has a responsibility to represent their views and to provide information about the ballot measure to all groups within the community. The city manager should first check with the city council to see whether she should address the groups. If the council wants her to go, she can let the organizers know that she will be available to speak but will not be able to stay for lunch. It is important, whatever the city manager does, that she not appear to favor one party over another.