

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics Inquiries

The Mayor May Run for the Senate

Scenario: The city manager has enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the mayor, who has confided that she may run for a vacant United States Senate seat. She has asked the city manager if he would be interested in working on her campaign, which would be launched in a few months, if she appears to have the necessary support. At first, the manager declined, explaining that he had no experience in political campaigns. The mayor has persisted, however, telling the city manager that she is confident that he would have exactly the sort of skills that she needs to organize her campaign.

Upon reflection, the city manager has begun to entertain the idea of entering the political world and would like to see the mayor elected to the Senate. He asked for advice on how to handle the uncertainties of the next few months, as the mayor weighs her possible candidacy, and what to do if she does announce and he becomes her campaign manager.

Response: During the exploratory period, the city manager needs to be careful to separate official city business from those activities by the mayor that may be laying the groundwork for her senatorial campaign. The city manager suggested that he might take a leave of absence from his job during the exploratory period. As the time approaches for the mayor to make a decision, the city manager may find it difficult to serve two masters: a potential Senate candidate and the city's business. The city manager agreed that he would resign from ICMA if he felt this way, and was prepared to resign as city manager if it was clear that the mayor was running for the Senate.