

## DEPARTMENTS

# Ethics Inquiries

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### Baseball Tickets from Heaven

**Scenario:** The county government has a strict law that prohibits employees from accepting any gift valued over \$25. In practice, the only gifts that are accepted are cookies that arrive during the holiday season. The police chief stopped by today to let the county manager know about an anonymous gift that was left in an envelope with the police dispatchers. The gift includes several tickets and parking passes for a popular baseball game.

Since no one knows who left the tickets, it is impossible to identify anyone who might seek to influence the county government. The county manager was inclined to go ahead and distribute the tickets to employees but wanted to be sure she wasn't overlooking any obvious ethical issues.

**Response:** Although it is possible that someone could make an allegation later that they left the tickets in an effort to curry favor with county employees, no one is known to be seeking to influence the county government. The county manager could contact the baseball ticket vendor to see if it is possible to identify the purchaser.

For example, if these are season tickets owned by a company that does business with the county, the county's gift law might be violated if they were accepted. If the county manager is uncomfortable in distributing the tickets to employees, she might ask the employees if they would like to give them to a charity. Some police departments take an active role with boys' and girls' clubs and might like them to enjoy this unexpected gift.

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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](mailto:ekellar@icma.org) or Martha Perego at 202/962-3668, e-mail, [mperego@icma.org](mailto:mperego@icma.org).