

ETHICS REMINDERS

Writing a letter?
Think twice before using your agency letterhead

Overview

- The Public Officers Law prohibits a State employee from using State resources—including official letterhead—to personally benefit himself or herself or others, or for private business or other non-governmental purposes.
- The use of agency letterhead for anything other than official agency business creates the false impression that the correspondence was written under the agency's authority and carries that agency's endorsement.
- You may not use your agency letterhead to write a letter regarding ANY personal matter, including but not limited to: a letter to any other state or federal government entity regarding a personal matter (e.g., a speeding ticket);
 - A letter regarding a personal business matter or approved outside activity (e.g., a dispute involving your own company);
 - A letter on behalf of a relative or personal friend you know outside of your State employment (e.g., a letter of reference, unless permitted by your agency).
 - If you believe that there are extenuating circumstances that might warrant the use of agency letterhead for a matter that does not involve official agency business, seek guidance.
- A State employee may be fined up to \$10,000 for violating these prohibitions.



Remember:

The Joint Commission on Public Ethics periodically releases Ethics Reminders. Each reminder is a brief and easy to understand synopsis of the laws and rules under the Commission's jurisdiction. Ethics Reminders are issued to assist those subject to the Commission's jurisdiction in understanding and complying with their obligations under the law.