

Senate Ethics Committee Provides Guidance for Convention Events Honoring a Senator

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As reported in the January edition of *Election Law News*, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct issued guidance in mid-December interpreting the newly enacted prohibition on Members attending events in their honor during a national political party convention, if the event is paid for by a federal lobbyist or an entity that retains or employs a federal lobbyist.

On February 4, the Senate Select Committee on Ethics followed suit and provided its own interpretation of the parallel prohibition in the Senate Rules. In its interpretation, the Committee explained that the prohibition only applies during the calendar dates the national party convention is in session. Furthermore, events honoring a Senator include those where a specific Senator or group comprised solely of Members of Congress is identified, e.g., the "Nevada Congressional Delegation," but would not include an event where a Senator is participating as a featured speaker. Lastly, the prohibition applies not only to an event in a Senator's honor that is paid for by a lobbyist or an entity that retains or employs a lobbyist, but to any event where funds are raised and earmarked to pay for the event by lobbyists or entities that employ or retain them.

Please keep in mind that any event that is not prohibited by this new provision must also fit within one of the preexisting exceptions to the general prohibition on gifts contained in the Senate Rules. Potentially applicable exceptions include the so-called reception or widely attended event exceptions.

Authors

Caleb P. Burns
Partner
202.719.7451
cburns@wiley.law
Carol A. Laham
Partner
202.719.7301
claham@wiley.law