

CONFIDENTIAL

*Aldermanic
Travel*

December 20, 2007

The Honorable [Alderman John Doe]

Chicago, IL 606

Re: Case No. 07053.Q

Dear Alderman [Doe],

You are Alderman of the Ward. On December 20, your Office Manager, J , at your direction, asked whether, under the City's Governmental Ethics Ordinance, you can accept travel expenses for a mission to Israel from and sponsored by the American Israel Educational Foundation (AIEF), a unit of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). You would depart Chicago on January 8 and return January 16. According to the information Ms. Bussell provided, neither of you know of any matters that AIPAC or AIEF may have before the City or the City Council. During the mission, the purpose of which is cultural and educational, you will meet with Israeli public officials. You will be part of a group (including at least one other Chicago alderman) of legislators and policy-makers from around the U.S.

Board staff concludes that nothing in the Ordinance prohibits you from accepting these expenses and participating in the mission. We also advise you that, as long as you accept only reasonable travel expenses associated with this mission, you will not be required to report this trip on your 2008 (or 2009) Statement of Financial Interests. If you do receive any honoraria, however, you will be required to report those to our agency within 5 days of accepting them (your reasonable travel expenses are not honoraria), and, if they are over \$500, on your Statement of Financial Interests as well.

A line of previous Board cases has established that, under § 2-156-040(d) (iv) of the Ordinance, travel expenses, such as these, offered to elected City officials (or City employees) for cultural and educational trips, are not prohibited by the Ordinance provided that, as here, they are furnished in connection with a public event or ceremony, by the sponsor of the event, related to official City business, and reasonable. Case Nos. 88134.A; 90017.A; 89105.Q; 92017.Q; and 07020.Q. Similarly, the Board has recognized that reasonable hosting or travel expenses that meet the conditions set forth in § 2-156-040(d), like these, are not "gifts" (these expenses are still subject to the prohibitions contained in §§ 2-156-040 (a) and (b), namely, that they cannot be accepted from an anonymous donor or based on a mutual understanding that the recipient's City judgments or decisions would be influenced thereby), and thus need not be reported on the recipient's Statement of Financial Interests.

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Board staff's conclusions are based solely on the application of the City's Governmental Ethics Ordinance to the facts summarized in this letter. If these facts are incorrect or incomplete, please notify our office immediately, as any change may alter our conclusions. Please also note that this letter does not address any reporting requirements to which you may be subject under the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act (5 ILCS 420/4A-101 et seq.) or the Statement of Economic Interests filed pursuant to that Act. We advise you to seek independent legal advice as to how that law may affect you.

Our office sincerely appreciates the opportunity to advise you, your bringing this matter to our attention, and your concern to abide by the standards embodied in the City's Governmental Ethics Ordinance (a copy of which is enclosed). If you have further questions about this or any other matter, please contact me.

Yours very truly,

Steven I. Berlin,
Acting Executive Director

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