

Memorandum

January 26, 2009

To: All DOI Employees

From: Secretary Salazar

Subject: Ethical Responsibilities

It is a great honor to be confirmed as the 50th Secretary of the Interior. As I indicated in my address to the employees of the Department of the Interior, I vow to lead with openness in decision making, high ethical standards, and respect for scientific integrity.

On his first full day in office, President Obama issued an Executive Order raising the bar and establishing the highest ethical standards for Executive Branch Personnel. As part of this commitment, all Political Appointees are required to sign and adhere to an ethics pledge: 1) to not accept gifts from a registered lobbyist or lobbying organization; 2) to comply with enhanced revolving door conflict of interest bans, both during and upon leaving government service; and 3) to make hiring or other employment decisions based on the candidate's qualifications, competence, and experience.

While the Executive Order immediately binds only Political Appointees, the President also ordered the Office of Government Ethics to develop rules and regulations consistent with the ethics pledge for all Executive Branch employees, where applicable. I am confident that employees at the Department of the Interior aspire to the same level of personal and professional integrity in the pursuit of our remarkable and special missions. I expect all employees—both career and political—to adhere to all ethics laws, regulations, and guidelines applicable to employees of the Department of the Interior, including the 14 general principles of ethical conduct specifically applicable to Executive Branch employees. I also want each of you to become familiar with the ethics pledge for Political Appointees of the new Administration and to honor its principles as we all strive to achieve the highest level of ethical conduct, consistent with the oath of office each of us takes to, “well and faithfully discharge the duties” of our positions. The American people whom we all serve have a right to expect that all employees of the Department place loyalty to the Constitution, public laws, and applicable ethical policies and principles above private gain. We fulfill this trust by adhering to our own standards of personal and professional integrity as well as specific ethical regulations, and by being fully accountable for our conduct.

But mere compliance with minimum ethics requirements is not enough to fully meet our obligations to uphold the deep and abiding trust that the public places in all civil servants. It is essential that we fully honor President Obama's commitment to the highest standards of conduct and decision making. To that end, before any changes to Government-wide rules are implemented, I have met with and directed the Designated Agency Ethics Official to review our Departmental specific regulations and recommend areas where we can improve on our own ethical policies and guidance.

All of us face ethical choices every day in the conduct of our business. I urge you to seek the assistance of your bureau or office ethics official who, along with the Department Ethics Office, are ready to assist you in providing ethics guidance to help you avoid even the appearance of impropriety in carrying out your work. Only authorized ethics officials may interpret ethics rules and statutes, and only they can provide authoritative and protective advice for your questions.

It is important that you seek ethics advice early, before taking action, and that you provide a complete and honest description of all of the relevant facts.

I appreciate your warm welcome and look forward to meeting more of you and working with such dedicated and highly talented employees. I reaffirm my and my senior leadership team's commitment to the high ethical standards announced by the President. Working together, we will uphold the highest level of integrity for the Department of the Interior and its employees.