

From: [Nate Smith](#)

To: USOGE

Cc: "[Laura Perrotta](#)"

Subject: Proposed Amendments to Part 2635

Date: Tuesday, October 18, 2011 4:16:54 PM

Attachments: [image002.png](#)

[Comment to OGE 2011 Fall.pdf](#)

Good afternoon,

Please find comments for the record from the American Traffic Safety Services Association regarding the Proposed Amendments to Part 2635, RIN 3209-AA04.

Thank you,

-Nate Smith

Nathan R. Smith

Associate Director of Government Relations

American Traffic Safety Services Association

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2011 Call-to-Action: It's Time to Contact your Member of Congress **TODAY** - [Click Here to Take Action!](#)


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October 18, 2011

Mr. Don Fox
Acting Director and General Counsel
Office of Government Ethics
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3917

RE: RIN 3209-AA04
[Proposed Amendments Limiting Gifts from Registered Lobbyists and Lobbying Organizations]

Dear Mr. Fox:

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposed rule RIN 3209-AA-04, which restricts all executive branch employees of the Federal Government from using certain exceptions to accept gifts from registered federal lobbyists and lobbying organizations, including invitations to widely attended gatherings.

ATSSA, a 501(c)6, is an international trade association that represents companies and individuals in the traffic control and roadway safety industry. ATSSA represents over 1,600 members who provide the majority of features, services and devices used to make our nation's roadways safer.

While ATSSA fully supports the Office of Government Ethics' (OGE) mission to promote high ethical standards for executive branch employees, ATSSA feels the latest proposed amendments is a step too far and will actually damage communication and knowledge sharing between the public and private sectors.

OGE acknowledges that certain widely attended gatherings can be important to government purposes. OGE states that federal employees and political appointees should be able to accept offers of free attendance to "substantive events that would provide a legitimate educational or professional development benefit that furthers the interests of an agency." While OGE would permit allowing government employees to accept invitations to educational and professional development activities held by 501(c)3 organizations, institutions of higher education and nonprofit professional associations, scientific organizations and learned societies, regardless of Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) registration status of these entities, it quite decidedly leaves trade associations out of the exclusion.

ATSSA would argue that trade associations are an invaluable resource to federal employees and political appointees. They are the voice of thousands and focus on crucial research, training and industry issues that produce a wealth of knowledge, information and expertise.

Excluding federal employees from attending ATSSA conferences and meetings would be a dire mistake. ATSSA provides industry expertise on roadway safety infrastructure, with its members on the roadway making it safer day-in and day-out. Shouldn't the federal government have the firsthand information and insight from the very industry that is helping to build our roadways and making them safer? Unfortunately, the alternative is agencies making decisions in a box, without any input from the people on the front line.

While ATSSA appreciates OGE's stipulation that government employees can accept free attendance at events where they are speaking or presenting information on behalf of the administration, the stigma that is placed on trade associations by not including them with the other educational institutions might lead many to not accept an invitation at all. Furthermore, the proposed rule's stance that trade associations utilize invitations to events as a way for lobbyists to cultivate relationships with these officials will more than likely cause many organizations to deregister as lobbying organizations leading to a new obstacle to transparency which the LDA was actually established to create.

Again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule. It is our hope that trade associations not be left out in the cold as you move forward. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Laura Perrotta, ATSSA's Director of Government Relations, at 202-454-5246 or laura.perrotta@atssa.com.

Sincerely,
Roger A. Wentz, CAE
President and CEO