

## MEMORANDUM

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To: Rhode Island Ethics Commission

From: Jason Gramitt, Executive Director

Date: May 14, 2025

Re: Gift Limits – Nationwide Comparison

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Below is a comparison of gift limits included in other states' gift laws. These limits generally appear in state ethics statutes, although some may be set forth in executive orders, lobbying laws, or legislative rules. As has been previously noted, each state regulates government ethics, conflicts of interest, and gifts differently so that there are no real "apple to apple" comparisons to be made. For example, while many states regulate gifts given to public officials from those who we in Rhode Island would call "interested persons," some other states only regulate gifts from to legislators from lobbyists. Furthermore, while Rhode Island's gift regulation applies to gifts regardless of the motivation behind the gift, several states only regulate gifts made with an intent or desire to influence official decision-making. Finally, focusing only on dollar limits does not tell the whole story of which state's gift laws are more or less strict than Rhode Island's because some states with lower overall gift limits also provide numerous, generous exceptions not offered in Rhode Island, such as exceptions for gifts from "friends," gifts given to celebrate life events, and gifts of food and beverages.

The one aspect of gift regulation that most states share is treating inexpensive gifts, variously referred to as "insubstantial" or "*de minimis*," as falling outside of gift regulation. One presumes that the basis for this exclusion is that such small gifts, such as a promotional pen, cap, or t-shirt, or an inexpensive working lunch, are not likely to interfere with a public official's integrity or independence of judgement. In Rhode Island, since 2005, individual gifts with a value of \$25 or less, or several gifts from the same source in one calendar year with an aggregate value of \$75 or less, are not prohibited.

Some states adjust their gift limits from time to time based on changes to the consumer price index, which is a measure of the average change over time in prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services. According to the consumer price index calculator maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$25 spent in 2005 when the Ethics Commission last amended the gift regulation had the same buying power as approximately \$41 spent today.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) (last accessed May 13, 2025).

Below is a very simplified listing of the dollar amounts that other states consider to be so insubstantial, or *de minimis*, as to be excluded from various gift laws. This listing is a consolidation of information on state gift rules compiled separately by the National Association of Attorneys General,<sup>2</sup> the Council on Government Ethics Laws,<sup>3</sup> and the National Conference of State Legislatures,<sup>4</sup> supplemented by independent Ethics Commission staff research.

Utilizing these figures, the mean (average) gift limit is \$68. The median (middle number in the range) gift limit is \$50. The mode (most frequently recurring) gift limit is also \$50.

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**Alabama**: \$32/\$64 aggregate limits: Adjusted from time to time based on Consumer Price Index.

**Alaska**: \$250 limit.

**Arizona**: Prohibits acceptance of “valuable” gifts, defined by General Accounting Office as gifts with more than \$25 value.

**Arkansas**: \$100 limit.

**California**: \$250 limit.

**Colorado**: \$75 limit: Adjusted every four years based on Consumer Price Index.

**Connecticut**: \$10 limit; \$50 for food and beverages.

**Delaware**: No limits, but gifts valued at more than \$250 must be reported.

**Florida**: \$50 limit.

**Georgia**: \$75 limit.

**Hawaii**: No limits, but gifts are prohibited if it can be reasonably inferred that the gift was intended to influence.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.naag.org/state-gift-laws/> (last accessed May 8, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cogel.org/resource/resmgr/cogel\\_blue\\_books/cogel\\_blue\\_book\\_2024\\_ethics\\_.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cogel.org/resource/resmgr/cogel_blue_books/cogel_blue_book_2024_ethics_.pdf) (last accessed May 8, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/ethics/legislator-gift-restrictions> (last accessed May 12, 2025).

**Idaho**: \$50 limit.

**Illinois**: \$100 limit.

**Indiana**: \$50 limit.

**Iowa**: Limit of \$3 or less per calendar day, but many exceptions.

**Kansas**: \$40 limit.

**Kentucky**: No limits, but gifts valued at more than \$200 must be reported.

**Louisiana**: \$79 limit on food and drink, adjusted each year based on Consumer Price Index.

**Maine**: \$300 limit on gifts, but an exception for gifts based on personal friendship.

**Maryland**: \$20 limit.

**Massachusetts**: \$50 limit.

**Michigan**: Adjusted \$76 limit on gifts of food and beverages from lobbyists to public officials.

**Minnesota**: \$5 limit on trinkets or mementos.

**Mississippi**: \$10 limit on food and beverages for immediate consumption from a lobbyist.

**Missouri**: No general limits, but \$10 limit on souvenirs or mementos.

**Montana**: \$50 limit.

**Nebraska**: \$50 per month limit.

**Nevada**: Gifts of any value prohibited, but many exceptions.

**New Hampshire**: \$50/\$250 aggregate limit.

**New Jersey**: Zero tolerance except in limited circumstances.

**New Mexico**: \$250 limit.

**New York**: \$15 limit, but many exceptions.

**North Carolina:** Zero tolerance, but many exceptions.

**North Dakota:** Zero tolerance for gifts from lobbyists to public officials, but many exceptions.

**Ohio:** \$75 limit for gifts to legislators from legislative agents.

**Oklahoma:** \$20/\$50 aggregate limits, but many exceptions.

**Oregon:** \$50 limit.

**Pennsylvania:** No gift limits, but gifts must be reported if more than \$250 aggregate.

**Rhode Island:** \$25/\$75 aggregate limits.

**South Carolina:** \$50/day and \$400 aggregate limits on gifts to legislators from lobbyist's principals.

**South Dakota:** \$100/year limit on gifts to legislators from lobbyists.

**Tennessee:** \$50 limit on food, beverages, and entertainment offered at in-state event to all members of the General Assembly.

**Texas:** \$500 limit on gifts from lobbyists; \$50 limit on gifts from other interested persons.

**Utah:** \$50 limit.

**Vermont:** \$50/\$150 aggregate limits.

**Virginia:** \$100 limit.

**Washington:** \$50 limit.

**West Virginia:** \$25 limit.

**Wisconsin:** Limit on gifts of "substantial value".

**Wyoming:** \$250 limit.