National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
2101 NASA Parkway
Houston, Texas 77058-3696

November 2, 2006

Reply to Attn of: AL-06-146

TO: Distribution

FROM: AL/Chief Counsel

SUBJECT: Widely Attended Gathering Determination Regarding Attendance of NASA Employees at the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership Annual Banquet

On January 19, 2007, the 14th Annual Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership (BAHEP) Banquet and business meeting will be held at the South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center. The event will recognize NASA Administrator, Dr. Michael Griffin. Dr. Griffin will be recognized as the 2007 Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership Quasar Award recipient. The Quasar Award is given annually to an individual who has contributed greatly to the economic wealth and diversity of Houston's Bay Area. Dr. Griffin was selected in acknowledgement of the progress he has made in carrying out America's Vision for Space Exploration. It has been determined to be in the best interest of the Government for those NASA employees who are invited to this event to attend in their official capacities as representatives of NASA.

The BAHEP helps to create a regional development context within which the public, private, and community sectors can work together to provide direction for positive change, and to: improve the quality of life and social well-being; strengthen the economic infrastructure and facilitate the recruitment, retention, and creation of jobs; guide future development and encourage wise use of the environment; support the cultural and civic life of the region; and provide an agenda for concerted community action.

NASA JSC has partnered with BAHEP under a Space Act Agreement to participate and support various community and education outreach activities. Through this relationship, NASA JSC is able to widely disseminate information to the members of BAHEP and to the entire community about the NASA Mission, Vision, goals, and statutory obligations.

BAHEP will sponsor a banquet dinner in honor of Dr. Griffin. The event will be a widely attended gathering of approximately 650 people, which includes representatives of NASA, academia, Texas State Government, aerospace and other various industries in and around the Houston Bay Area. Individual tickets to the banquet are valued at $100.00, and include the cost of all food and beverages.

Lockheed Martin will sponsor an Afterglow reception immediately following the banquet. Coffee, liqueurs, and dessert will be served at no charge to invitees. This portion of the event will be open to approximately 200-300 invitees from the BAHEP banquet.

This event will allow NASA employees the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest regarding the economic development of the Houston Bay Area. I find that these events meet the requirements of a "widely attended gathering" as defined in 5 C.F.R. §2635.204(g). Consequently, I conclude that NASA's interest in its employees attending this event outweighs any concern that free attendance may, or may appear to, improperly influence any NASA personnel in the performance of their official duties.

NASA employees whose duties may substantially affect the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership or Lockheed Martin should seek an individual determination pursuant to 5 C.F.R. §2635.204(g)(3)(i) regarding participation in this event from the Office of Chief Counsel.

NASA employees who have been invited to attend and are permitted to do so under the criteria above, may attend both of these events at no charge and accept any food or refreshments that are offered to all attendees as an integral part of the event. They may also accept invitations for accompanying spouses or guests.

Bernard J. Roan

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