

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



Mary W. Jackson Building NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001

July 12, 2023

Reply to Attn of: General Law Practice Group

TO: Distribution

FROM: Agency Counsel for Ethics

SUBJECT: Determination Regarding Attendance by NASA Employees at the Embassy of Italy and Virgin Galactic Reception on July 12, 2023

On July 12, 2023, the Embassy of Italy and Virgin Galactic will hold a joint reception at the Embassy of Italy, 3000 Whitehaven St., NW, Washington, DC, 20008, at 5:30 p.m. This event is to celebrate the successful Galactic 01 suborbital human spaceflight mission. The mission flew an Italian crew and payloads on Virgin Galactic's vehicles. The Embassy of Italy and Virgin Galactic are jointly in control of the planning, organizing, and issuing invitations for this event.

Approximately 200 people are expected to attend the event. Attendees will have a diversity of views or interests and will include personnel from congressional staffers, state and local officials, academia, industry representatives, administration personnel, spouses and plus ones. The estimated cost of the event, including all food and beverages, is approximately \$37 per person. Attendance at this event will allow NASA attendees to exchange information regarding various NASA programs. I find that the event meets the requirements of a "widely attended gathering" as defined in 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(g)(2).

I further determine that there is an Agency interest in having NASA personnel attend the event because it will provide an opportunity for the invited persons to exchange ideas and views pertaining to NASA's policies, programs and operations. NASA employees who do not have a significant role in a matter affecting the interests of Virgin Galactic may accept an invitation for free attendance for themselves and a guest to attend the event. In those circumstances, I find that the Agency's interest in attendance outweighs any concern that the individual may be, or may appear to be, improperly influenced in the performance of their duties.

However, NASA employees in non-career positions who are required to sign the ethics pledge under Executive Order 13989 may only attend the reception if they reimburse the sponsor the fair market value of the event. An honor basket will be provided.

In addition, NASA employees who have a significant role in any pending matter affecting the interests of the sponsor, such as procurement duties, program management, or

negotiating or administering a Space Act Agreement, should seek a separate determination from their local ethics counselor as to whether they may accept the invitation.

You are reminded of the \$20 gift exception at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(a), which provides that you may accept gifts valued at no more than \$20 per occasion (and no more than \$50 from one source in a calendar year). We understand that Virgin Galactic will be distributing a Galactic 01 mission patch. Employees attending, including non-career appointees subject to the ethics pledge in Executive Order 13989, may accept the mission patch.

Attendees are reminded to exercise any COVID-19 precautions appropriate to their individual situation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam F. Greenstone', is written over the printed name.

Adam F. Greenstone