

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



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

March 4, 2024

Reply to Attention of: General Law Practice Group

TO: Distribution

FROM: Agency Counsel for Ethics

SUBJECT: Determination Regarding Attendance by NASA Employees at The
Planetary Science Caucus Kick-off Event on March 5, 2024

The Planetary Society, a not-for-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code, will hold a reception on March 5, 2024, at the Library of Congress, Madison Bldg., Madison Hall, from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. This is a kick-off for the Congressional Planetary Science Caucus. Event will include displays from prominent space organizations – including Caltech, the Applied Physics Lab, and the American Astronomical Society – to showcase the diversity of the scientific community and exciting future for planetary exploration. The Planetary Society is in control of the planning, organizing, and issuing invitations for this event.

Approximately 100-125 people are expected to attend the event. Attendees will have a diversity of views or interests and will include personnel from other federal agencies, representatives of the legislative branch, and representatives from academia and industry. The estimated cost of the event, including all food, beverages and items listed above, is approximately \$15 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 - including NASA employees in non-career positions who are required to sign an ethics pledge under Executive Order 13989 - who do not have a significant role in a matter affecting the interests of The Planetary Society may accept an invitation for free attendance for themselves and a guest to 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 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 NASA ethics counselor as to whether they may accept the invitation.

Adam F. Greenstone