

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



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

April 17, 2024

Reply to Attn of: General Law Practice Group

TO: Distribution

FROM: Agency Counsel for Ethics

SUBJECT: Determination Regarding Attendance by NASA employees at the Middle East Institute (MEI) 77th Annual Gala Dinner on April 17, 2024

On April 17, 2024, the Middle East Institute, a nonprofit organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, will host a reception and dinner at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (National Portrait Gallery), G & 8th Streets, NW, Washington, DC. The reception starts at 6:00 p.m. and the dinner is at 7:00 p.m. The event is to celebrate MEI's mission and the achievements of their awardees. The MEI Visionary Award, Chairmans Award, and the Issam M. Fares Award for Excellence will be presented to the awardees.

Approximately 375 people have been invited to attend. Attendees will have a diversity of views or interests and will include representatives from the legislative branch, state and local government officials, representatives from industry, employees of Federal agencies, and members from the foreign government space agencies. The estimated cost of the event, including all food and beverages, is \$240 per person. The Middle East Institute is in control of the organizing, planning and invitations for this event. 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 the ethics pledge under Executive Order 13989, who do not have a significant role in a matter affecting the interests of the sponsor may accept an invitation for free attendance 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 MEI, 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 MEI will be providing a “gift bag” upon departure the retail value of these items is \$25.00. NASA employees may only accept the gift bag and its contents if they reimburse the sponsor the market value of the gift.

Adam F. Greenstone