

STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF STATE CIVIL SERVICE
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

December 1, 2009

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General Circular No. 1792

To: Heads of State Agencies and Human Resource Directors

Subject: Joining Organizations

Issue Date: December 1, 2009

Many state employees are active in private organizations related to their work. These organizations are both professional organizations and lobbying organizations. **Professional organizations** generally share knowledge and teach skills that apply to the work the members perform for the state. **Lobbying organizations** generally urge public bodies to take one position or another on issues coming before them. This general circular addresses spending state time or money in connection with either of these types of private organizations.

No state time or money can be spent for a purely private purpose. The state constitution in Article VII, Sections 9 and 10 states that state money can only be spent for a public purpose. That is, state employees' time at work must be spent "for a public purpose." Further, the amount of state time or money spent must be proportional to the benefits the public receives as a result. R.S. 42:1461 provides that if public money is spent to benefit a private interest, employees may be personally liable to pay back the money spent. This statute has been invoked when a state car or credit card was used for a private purpose. State employees are paid with public money. **Employees' time at work must be used for public purposes and the time spent on an activity must be proportional to the value the public receives.**

Below are questions frequently asked by state employees concerning this topic:

1. **Can I join a private organization that is professional or lobbying in nature?** YES.
2. **Can my employer require me to join a private organization?** NO.
3. **Can my employer require me to promote or be involved with an organization on personal time?** NO.
4. **Can my agency pay my membership dues for a lobbying organization?** NO.
5. **Can I spend state time on activities involving a lobbying organization?** NO.
6. **Can my agency pay my membership dues for a professional organization?** YES.

7. **Can I spend state time on activities involving a professional organization?** Only if your employer decides that the public will benefit in proportion to the time spent.
8. **Can my agency have brochures etc. available for employees to pick up?** YES, for either type organization.

Please contact Robert Boland at 225-342-8272 or your Assistance Coordinator at 225-342-8274 any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

s/Shannon S. Templet, Director
State Civil Service Commission