

Advisory Opinion 2015-1
Response to a Request for an Advisory Opinion
from Senator Dan Feltes and Senator Donna M. Soucy
(June 3, 2015)

Please Note: For clarity, references to and excerpts from provisions of statutes or the Ethics Guidelines have been updated to conform to subsequent changes in numbering and language, where the changes have not affected the substance of the Opinion.

Senator Dan Feltes and Senator Donna M. Soucy have sought an Advisory Opinion about whether acceptance of payment for the costs of travel, lodging, and meals related to a proposed trip to Israel, sponsored by the American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF), will qualify for exemption from the prohibition on “Gifts” under RSA 14-C:3, as “Expense Reimbursement” under RSA 14-C:2, IV(b)(10).

According to a memorandum and an agenda submitted by AIEF, the purpose of the trip is to attend an educational seminar comprised of “meetings, briefings and site visits that highlight the vital importance of the US-Israel relationship.” The educational seminar would be structured to showcase Israeli approaches to issues that are relevant to the State of New Hampshire, such as public health care, homeland and border security, law enforcement in a democratic society, protecting civil liberties, information-based economic development, comparative democracy, renewable energy, water conservation, comparative business-labor relations, the role of first responders, and the preservation of historical and natural landmarks.

Based on the information provided by Sen. Feltes and Sen. Soucy about the trip’s purpose and activities, acceptance of the payment of expenses associated with the trip would qualify for the exemption. See Interpretive Ruling 2013-1.

The Senators must report their attendance in accordance with RSA 14-C:4.

We appreciate the opportunity to be of assistance.

Donna Sytek, Chairman
Senator Sharon M. Carson, Vice Chairman
Representative Janet G. Wall
Senator Martha Fuller Clark
Representative David A. Welch
Honorable John A. Graham
Attorney David H. Bradley

For the Committee,
Donna Sytek
Chairman

[Vote: 7-0]