



TEXAS ETHICS COMMISSION



ETHICS ADVISORY OPINION NO. 296

December 15, 1995

Whether an officeholder may use political contributions to purchase stuffed and mounted game to display in a Capitol office. (AOR-331)

The Texas Ethics Commission has been asked whether a statewide officeholder may use political contributions to purchase stuffed and mounted game (such as deer, pheasant, ducks, and fish) to display in his or her Capitol office. The requestor states that after the official leaves office he or she would donate the items or purchase them with personal funds.

Title 15 of the Texas Election Code prohibits the conversion of political contributions to the personal use of a candidate or officeholder. Elec. Code § 253.035(a). "Personal use" is defined for purposes of this provision as "a use that primarily furthers individual or family purposes not connected with the performance of duties or activities as a candidate for or holder of a public office." *Id.* § 253.035(d). Use of political contributions to purchase furnishings and decorations for an officeholder's Capitol office is a use connected with officeholder activities and is therefore not a violation of the personal use prohibition. Items purchased with political contributions may not be converted to personal use at the end of an officeholder's tenure in office and would need to be disposed of in a manner consistent with section 254.204 of the Election Code. [Ethics Advisory Opinions Nos. 241](#) at 3 (1995); [237](#) (1994). Donation of the items to charity or purchase of the items with personal funds would be acceptable dispositions.

SUMMARY

Use of political contributions to purchase items to decorate an officeholder's Capitol office is a use connected with officeholder activities and is therefore not a violation of the personal use prohibition. Items purchased with political contributions may not be converted to personal use at the end of an officeholder's tenure in office.