

# STATE ETHICS ADVISORY COMMISSION

## ADVISORY OPINION 1984-21

Re: Can the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker use political funds to pay for entertainment expenses, such as a reception at the governor's mansion for visiting dignitaries from other states?

This opinion responds to a request (AOR-1984-21) from the Public Servant Standards of Conduct Advisory Committee for a State Ethics Advisory Commission opinion. The request was received by the Commission at its meeting on January 13, 1984, and relates to the following issue:

"Can the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker use political funds to pay for entertainment expenses, such as a reception at the governor's mansion for visiting dignitaries from other states?"

Tex. Elec. Code Ann. art. 14.03d (Vernon Supp. 1984) prohibits a person who accepts a contribution as a candidate or office-holder on or after September 1, 1983, from converting such contribution to personal use. Act of June 17, 1983, Ch. 44, § 5, 1983 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 2584 (Vernon). The statute defines "personal use" as:

a use which primarily furthers individual or family purposes not connected with the performance of duties or activities as a candidate for or holder of public office. The term does not include any payments made to defray ordinary and necessary expenses incurred in connection with activities as a candidate or in connection with the performance of duties or activities as a holder of public office . . . .

A reception for visiting dignitaries from other states is clearly an activity performed in connection with the office of governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker. Accordingly, the use of political funds to pay for such an event would not constitute a conversion to personal use and would not be prohibited by law.

### SUMMARY

The governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker are not prohibited from using political funds to pay for a reception for visiting dignitaries.

W. Page Keeton, Chairman  
State Ethics Advisory Commission  
Adopted this 14th day of September, 1984.