

# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS POLICY AND PROCEDURE



**SUBJECT:** Travel Policy

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**CATEGORY:** Agency  
Administration

**SUBCATEGORY:** Administration

**APPROVED BY:**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 11/14/2019

**REVISION DATE:** N/A

SIGNATURE

Executive Director Michael Reilly  
**DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS**

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## Definitions

**Base Point** - Place office or building where the employee performs his/her duties on a routine basis. At Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP), the base point will be the work location on the employee's Employee Work Profile (EWP). In cases where there are multiple work locations, the employee's supervisor will be responsible for designating and documenting the base point for reimbursement purposes. VDFP does not allow multiple base points.

**Commuting Distance** - Round-trip distance traveled routinely by the employee between his residence and his base point.


**Commuting Mileage** - Round-trip mileage traveled routinely by the employee between his residence and base point. VDFP considers commuting mileage, and other commuting costs incurred during commuting status, ineligible for reimbursement.

**Overtime** – Work or travel time that occurs beyond the employee's normal, scheduled work hours, but not overnight

**Reasonableness Test (Reasonable and Necessary Test)** - a cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost (2 CFR § 200.404 Reasonable Costs)

**Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher** - Original authorized documentation for requesting reimbursement of expenses incurred by an individual while traveling on official State business. This documentation, including

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but not limited to, itemized original hotel bills and receipts as required, provides support for reimbursement of travel expenses.

**Travel Status** – VDFP considers Employees to be in travel status when they meet the conditions described in the section “Travel Status”.

**International Travel** – All travel to areas outside of the 48 contiguous United States

**Purpose of Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to establish and define Virginia Department of Fire Programs travel and reimbursements policy.

**Applicability**

The policy is applicable to all VDFP employees.

**Risk**

VDFP establishes this policy to address the following risks:


1. The risk that agency funds will be misappropriated due to error or fraud.
2. The risk that the general public/General Assembly/Administration may perceive agency travel activity as fraudulent due to waste of public funds.
3. The risks that travel will not meet the mission, vision, and core values established by VDFP.

**Detailed Policy Statement**

Virginia Department of Fire Programs is committed to ensuring that all travel is reasonable and necessary for the execution of the agency’s mission, vision, and core values. In order to define when an expense is “reasonable and necessary” the agency adopts a portion of the reasonable cost concept from the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR § 200.404 Reasonable Costs). According to this code section, *a cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost.* To simplify this language, when considering the necessity and reasonableness of a potential travel expense, the employee should consider whether the expense is a prudent use of taxpayer resources. This policy refers to this thought test as the “reasonable and necessary” test, or simply, the “reasonableness” test (see “Definitions” section above).

This policy is not a comprehensive list of all allowable and unallowable expenses related to travel. It is the employee’s responsibility to ensure all travel related expenditures are related to the mission, vision, and core values of the agency, and that the employee seek clarification on portions of this policy that are unclear.

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## Travel Status

Employees are on travel status when the following conditions are met:

1. The employee is engaged in a justifiable circumstance (such as training, a conference, work assignment, etc.)
2. The employee's supervisor has approved the travel and has documented that approval in writing with a date.
3. The one-way commute is 50 miles or more from the employee's basepoint, and it is beneficial to the agency that the employee stay overnight. **The term "Base Point" is defined in the "Definitions" section above.**
4. Other circumstances may be considered by the Office of the Executive Director given written justification.

The employee's supervisor and appropriate Chain of Command (depending on the workflow preference of the supervisor) can determine if a circumstance is a justifiable circumstance in accordance with this policy.

Once an employee is in travel status, they are entitled to reimbursement for lodging, meals, incidentals, and transportation. All reimbursements will occur in accordance with agency and state policies.

Additionally, the supervisor and/or division director can determine (in consultation with the employee) if it is beneficial for the employee to stay overnight. For example, an employee, supervisor, and/or division director can determine that it is more beneficial for an employee to drive to and from a meeting/training, 50 miles or more from the employee's basepoint, rather than stay overnight. In these cases, the employee would not be on travel status and would not be entitled to lodging and meal/incidental reimbursement. However, the employee would be entitled to non-travel status mileage reimbursement.


## Travel Planning, Authorization, and Approval

**All travel over \$1,000.00** (the total cost of the travel) requires a Request for Travel Authorization. – [CAPP Manual Topic 20335](#)

Additionally, a "Travel Authorization" must be submitted for all out of state travel. **Note:** Use of state-owned vehicles outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia must be coordinated in advance of the travel with the Agency Transportation Officer (ATO). ATO's should take into consideration the mileage and age of the vehicle prior to approving a vehicle for out of state travel. In the event that OFMS has to recover a state-owned vehicle from outside the Commonwealth, the agency assigned the vehicle will be charged for the recovery costs irrespective of fault.

Total costs must be included on the travel authorization. These costs can include, but are not limited to, lodging, transportation, meals, conference registrations, etc. Additionally, a cost-benefit analysis of the

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transportation method should be included with the travel authorization (<https://dqs.virginia.gov/fleet/travel-planning/trip-calculator/>). Costs of the trip that may be direct billed (such as lodging or conference registration) must also be included in the cost estimate on the Travel Authorization. The Travel Authorization must be approved by the employee's supervisor, The Executive Director and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and included with the post-travel expense report in addition to other documentation to substantiate expenses.

## Reimbursement Process


- A.** Following the completion of class, the adjunct instructor has 7 calendar days to send time sheets and travel reimbursement forms to the respective VDFP Division Office where the training class was held. The respective VDFP Division Office has 7 calendar days to send the completed time sheet(s) and travel reimbursement vouchers to the VDFP Finance Staff. VDFP Finance Staff will issue payment to VDFP adjunct instructors within 7 calendar days of receipt in finance. VDFP Finance Staff will return any submissions with errors to the respective VDFP Administrative Staff to correct. The 7 calendar day process and deadlines will reset upon correction. Travelers shall not hold a Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher for an excessive amount of time. A failure to submit a timely voucher may result in a failure to be reimbursed.
- B.** Employees should include their contact information in the Travel Reimbursement in the event of any questions and/or concerns. Failure to respond after 24 hours, revisions will be made accordingly.
- C.** Employees shall enter VDFP Employee Identification Numbers in lieu of a social security number in the vendor ID field of the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher.
- D.** In the event a trip initially estimated at a cost of under \$1,000 exceeds that amount, the employee shall submit a memorandum, justifying the late receipt due to having to procure a Travel Authorization, to The Financial Services Section.

## Use of Internet to Purchase Travel Services

Employees can use the Internet to purchase travel services as long as it is a cost benefit to the state. Employees must use prudent judgment when choosing an Internet travel service website. The employee must comply with procurement guidelines.

- A.** The following documentation must be submitted with a Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher after travel services are obtained via the Internet:
  - 1.** Hardcopy or electronic, final page from the Internet site showing total cost and confirming service.
  - 2.** Documents that validate the mode and class of travel.
  - 3.** Confirmation from the airline and/or hotel of actual lodging costs since an invoice may not be created if the Internet travel provider is paid in advance.

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- B.** When paying for travel services via the Internet, the following methods may be used:
1. Individual Liability Travel Card for all types of purchases (examples: hotel and transportation tickets).
  2. Employees can use Small Purchase Charge Card for transportation tickets (i.e. rail, air, and bus). Employees must make purchases in accordance with VDFP's Small Purchase Charge Card Policy.

Employees will be reimbursed when using personal charge cards for travel, provided the travel is complete and the Travel Reimbursement Voucher is submitted with original receipts attached.

## Lodging

Employees can obtain lodging when the one-way commute is greater than 50 miles from the employee's base point. Supervisors may grant an exception on a case-by-case basis, but must provide written explanation for the exception (an email is sufficient documentation).

VDFP will adopt the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) lodging rates for employee reimbursement. Employees are reimbursed up to the guideline rate, plus hotel taxes, fees, and surcharges. Expenses in excess of these amounts will not be reimbursed unless approved in advance by the Executive Director (the approval must be written, and can be in the form of email). The lodging destination is the physical location (county or city) of the destination, and not necessarily the mailing address. The employee is responsible for ensuring all cancellations occur in a timely manner to avoid cancellation fees. The GSA rates are available at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>.

Lodging expenses for rates, taxes, and surcharges can be direct billed. VDFP policy, generally, does not permit direct billing of travel meals and incidentals.


Employees must submit an itemized hotel bill, obtained at the time of checkout, with the expense report.

Lodging procured by a VDFP employee for official VDFP business should not be used to gain personal points in any Hotel Chain points program.

## Meals and Incidental Travel Expenses (M&IE)

Meals and incidental travel expenses will be reimbursable based on the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) per diem rates for the travel location corresponding with the overnight lodging. The reimbursement ceiling for travel days will be the GSA 75% prorated rate. The GSA rates are available at the following website <http://perdiemcalc.net/gsa/>.

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## Travel Days

The reimbursement ceiling for travel days will be the GSA 75% prorated rate. For trips involving multiple travel destinations, base the reduction rate in effect for where the employee spends the night. See examples below:

Departure Day: Where you spend the night

Return Day: Where you spend the night *before* returning to home base.


## Reimbursement Restrictions

VDFP expects agency employees to disclose meals provided in conjunction with certain travel events on the expenditure report. In these cases, reimbursement will be reduced by the per diem allowance for that meal. If this occurs on anytime during the travel, the full per diem will be reduced. For example, on a travel day if the per diem rate allows a \$51 total reimbursement and lunch was provided at no cost, the total allowable reimbursement for that day would be \$29.25 [(\$51 - \$12 lunch = \$39 X 75%). If the employee is not able to partake of the included meal, due to dietary or medical restrictions, the employee is free to obtain a meal costing up to the GSA per diem limitation, with all travel day proration requirements still in effect. The meal must be noted as "dietary or medical restrictions" on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Form, however, the agency strongly encourages the employee to make every effort to ensure travel event meals meet their dietary and medical restrictions prior to travel. - [CAPP Manual Topic 20335](#)

*When meals are included with registration or lodging expense as part of a package, the number and type of meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) must be recorded on the Expense Report. If a continental breakfast or reception is offered as part of the travel event and is sufficient to serve as a meal, the traveler must reduce the per diem by the appropriate allowance amount. If a breakfast is offered at no charge by the hotel and the traveler does not partake in the breakfast due to any reasonable circumstance (e.g. early work hours do not allow for participation in the provided breakfast, the food provided was not adequate, the traveler's dietary needs were not met, etc.), then the traveler must notate this on the Expense Report. If a meal is offered as part of a conference and the traveler has medical restrictions, the traveler should make every effort to have the conference facilitate his/her needs by the deadline specified by the conference. If the conference does not honor the request, the traveler is not required to deduct the applicable meal allowance from the per diem. However, the traveler must include a note or other documentation with the Expense Report documenting this information. – [CAPP Manual Topic 20335](#)*



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## Certain Allowable Expenses

This is not a comprehensive list of all allowable expenses, but merely a list of typical travel expenses. Employees and supervisors should use the “necessary and reasonable” test to determine if a travel expense is appropriate.

**Business Telephone Calls, Internet Access, Hotel Business Center Charges, and Facsimiles** for official business purposes and paid for by the traveler may be claimed on the Expense Report. Employees must provide full explanation on the Expense Report accompanied by supporting documentation.

**Tolls and parking fees** are reimbursable when paid for by the traveler in the course of conducting official State business. A receipt is required for reimbursement claims where each individual claim is greater than \$25 per instance. Reimbursement must be claimed as an “other expense” on the Expense Report.

## Certain Unallowable Expenses

Unallowable expenses include:


- Lost or stolen articles
- Alcoholic beverages
- Damage to personal vehicles, clothing, or other items
- Services to gain entry to a locked vehicle
- Movies charged to hotel bills
- All expenses related to the personal negligence of the traveler, such as fines
- Entertainment expenses
- Travel Insurance (Personal injury or loss, trip interruption / cancellation, etc.)
- Towing charges, and
- Expenses for children, spouses, and companions while on travel status.

This is not a comprehensive list of all unallowable expenses. Employees and supervisors should use the “necessary and reasonable” test to determine if a travel expense is appropriate.

## Transportation

The agency offers a number of transportation options to meet employee travel needs.

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## Cost Benefit Analysis

Employees are required to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine which transportation option (listed below) is the most economical. Typically, employees use automobile travel most frequently, and will be required to complete a transportation cost benefit analysis by using the Office of Fleet Management (OFMS) travel calculator (<https://dgs.virginia.gov/fleet/travel-planning/trip-calculator/>). A copy of this analysis is required for reimbursement submission.

If an employee uses his or her personal vehicle for reasons of convenience, VDFP will reduce the reimbursement rate (policy outlines specific rate below). If no rental or state-owned vehicle is available, the employee may use his or her personal vehicle. If an employee is assigned a state-owned vehicle, they cannot put in for personal vehicle mileage reimbursement.

*Mileage Versus Air Costs* - Planned personal vehicle or rental car costs cannot exceed the total cost of the trip using the most economical public air transportation available. Employees should consider all travel costs (including meals, lodging, parking, ground transportation, etc.) for each option. Reimbursement shall be limited to the least expensive option (flying vs driving).

*Commuting Mileage* - **Round-trip** mileage traveled routinely and directly by the employee between his residence and base point incurred on a scheduled workday is considered commuting mileage. An employee can have only one assigned base point. **Commuting mileage and other commuting costs incurred on normal workdays are considered a personal expense and are not reimbursable.**


*Travel Routing* - Travel routing, whether by public transportation, privately owned vehicle, state-owned vehicle or for-hire conveyance, shall be the most direct practicable route.

*Base Point* - An employee can only have one base point, even if the employee has multiple work locations. The supervisor shall assign the base point used for reimbursement purposes. **The term “Base Point” is defined in the “Definitions” section above.**

The supervisor can assign the employee’s residence as the base point when it is cost beneficial to the agency. In this case, the mileage driven from the employee’s residence to one or more, temporary work locations, including the central office, is official state business mileage and is fully reimbursable. The supervisor should approve these assignments in writing and forward approval documents up the chain of command for final



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approval. In cases where the Executive Director is the supervisor, the Executive Director’s written approval, alone, is adequate.

## State-Owned Automobile

The Office of Fleet Management (OFMS) Policies & Procedures, issued by the Department of General Services (DGS), defines rules and policies for use of state vehicles. VDFP shall limit authorization for commuting in state-owned vehicles to those employees whose job travel requirements make commuting the only cost-effective or practical alternative. No appointee, serving at the pleasure of the Governor, shall use a state-owned vehicle for commuting, except:

- where the commute is connected to a departure for or return from a trip on official state business, or
- where authorized by VDFP’s Executive Director for job-related emergencies

Employees that travel frequently may want to consider having a state vehicle permanently assigned.

In order to obtain a state-owned automobile for travel the traveler should consult the Logistics Technician.

## Short Term Trip Vehicle

The Department of General Services, Office of Fleet Management Services (OFMS), maintains a contract with a car rental company to provide vehicles for short-term travel by state employees.

When preparing for a trip, the traveler should visit the OFMS website (at least 24 hours in advance) and use the trip calculator to determine the vehicle cost for their proposed trip.

Details on how to access the trip calculator and book short-term rentals are available at the following website:

<http://www.dgs.virginia.gov/OfficeofFleetManagementServices/TravelPlanning/tabid/170/Default.aspx>

When determining if the rental is economical, the following factors could include:

- Distance to the nearest rental location and the hours of operation
- Administrative time required to obtain the rental car
- The type of vehicle required and the number of travelers

**Employees must make all vehicle reservations at least 24 hours in advance of the anticipated pickup of the vehicle.** Otherwise, the traveler may be restricted to reimbursement at the Personal Convenience Rate.

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Rental of vehicles, which exceed 30 days, must have the prior approval of OFMS. Employees should inform procurement and allow sufficient time for procurement staff to obtain prior approval from OFMS.

Operators of Short-Term Trip Vehicles are subject to the OFMS Policies and Procedures that apply to state or agency owned vehicles. Including use for official business only. See OFMS Policies and Procedures Manual (Page 14; II Travel Planning) Employees should direct questions about short-term trip vehicles to the Director of Procurement.

## Personally Owned Automobile

VDFP permits employees to use their personally owned automobile when a state-owned vehicle or Office of Fleet Management Services (OFMS) rental vehicle is not available, or when the use of a personally owned vehicle is cost-beneficial to the agency. Per [CAPP Manual Topic 20335](#), travel routing shall be the most direct route in miles. This has resulted in an internal practice of auditing mileage and comparing what is reported against a standard. The chosen standard is Google Maps. When auditing is performed the auditor has no idea of extenuating circumstances. Therefore, if a deviation from the most direct route is utilized it needs to be documented as to why. For adjunct instructors and VFSB members that live outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia and travel is required to perform the accepted or commissioned services, personal vehicle mileage reimbursement will be calculated and reimbursed only from/to the Virginia State line to/from the required destination. Mileage reimbursement will be calculated according to [CAPP Manual Topic 20335](#)

The agency will adopt the mileage reimbursement rates set in the [CAPP Manual Topic 20335](#). Currently, the rates for the first 15,000 miles of use each fiscal year are:


- **Current IRS rate** - when a personally owned vehicle is cost justified or a state-owned vehicle/OFMS rental is not available.
- **\$.246 mile** – when an employee elects to use a personally owned vehicle for convenience.

VDFP reduces reimbursement rates to **\$.13/ mile** for travel in excess of 15,000 miles in one fiscal year, unless a state-owned vehicle/commercial rental is not available; then, the rate shall be **the current IRS rate**. The employee is responsible for documenting that a state vehicle option is not available if they exceed 15,000 miles and elect to use the current IRS rate. The employee shall submit that documentation with expense reimbursements.

Employees can find the current IRS rates at the following site:

<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

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## **Public Transportation (Air, Rail, Bus, Rental Car, Taxi, Shuttle, or other “for hire transportation”)**

Generally, airline and rail travel cannot exceed the rates charged for tourist or coach class accommodations.

The employee can book business class air or rail travel with the approval of the Executive Director and under the following conditions:

### Air

- When it does not cost more than the lowest available tourist/coach fare (comparison must be attached to Expense Report), or
- For travel to western Europe if the business meeting is conducted within three hours of landing, or
- For transoceanic, intercontinental trips involving flight-time of more than eight consecutive hours, or
- If the traveler pays the difference.

### Rail


- When it does not cost more than the lowest available tourist/coach fare (comparison must be attached to Expense Report), or
- When reserved coach seats are not offered on the route, or
- If the traveler pays the difference.

## **Reimbursement for first class air or rail travel is prohibited**

*Additional Airline Fees* - Certain airlines now charge additional fees for baggage and other services formerly included in the airfare cost. When procuring airfare for business travel, travelers should consider total costs in selecting the most appropriate carrier. Airlines publish limits for baggage and the fees associated with those limits. VDFP expects travelers to be aware of these limits. In the event employees must exceed these limits for legitimate business purposes, the cost is reimbursable. The employee must include a receipt and appropriate explanation with the expense report.

*Cancellations* – Employees are eligible for reimbursement for trip cancellations. The amount is limited to the actual eligible expense incurred by the employee that the travel service provider does not refund. For example if an employee has incurred eligible expenses for air travel, and that trip is cancelled, the employee is required to seek reimbursement from the airline, and VDFP will reimburse those amounts not refunded through the

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airline (if any). The employee will follow the reimbursement process, outlined above, for any agency reimbursement.

Any credits associated with agency-paid expenses will accrue to the agency.

*Bus Travel* – Permitted in lieu of automobile, airline, or train travel when cost beneficial.

*Car Rental* – In cases where an employee has traveled to destination without an automobile, car rental expenses are allowed but limited to official business use only. Employees can make car rentals through commercial rental agencies. The traveler must select the most economical contractor and type of vehicle available, and acquire any governmental commercial rate or discount available. Employees must make an effort to use rental agencies that have contracted with the Commonwealth to perform such services.

Travelers must refuel the rental vehicle before returning the vehicle to the rental contractor. VDFFP will base any reimbursement on the fuel used and receipts provided. The employee must claim reimbursement as an “other expense” on the Expense Report. In no instance should the traveler enter into a “Fuel Agreement” or pay for fuel at the time of rental or before vehicle is used. This avoids paying for fuel that is not used.

*Car Rental Insurance* - The Department of Treasury, Division of Risk Management, provides a Statewide Self-Insured Automobile Plan for State employees, therefore the employee should decline any rental insurance offered by the rental agency.

## International Travel


The Executive Director must approve international travel in advance of the travel dates. The employee will provide a cost benefit analysis of travel options (as described above) for documented approval and inclusion in the final expense report.

VDFFP applies all travel requirements, outlined in the sections above, in the case of international travel.

VDFFP uses the lodging and M&IE per diem rates for foreign travel as defined by the Federal Government, General Services Administration (GSA). The Department of Defense (DOD) sets the rates for Hawaii, Alaska, and all United States Territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, The Virgin Islands, etc.) The Secretary of State establishes these maximum rates of per diem allowances for travel in foreign areas.

The GSA web page (<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>) link for domestic travel lodging and M&IE rates has links to the DOD and State Department web sites. If a specific city is not listed, use the

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Executive Director Michael Reilly <b>DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS</b>			
<b>FORMS REQUIRED:</b> TEV Form			

“Other” rate shown for that country. The M&IE portion of the maximum per diem rate covers the cost of meals as well as incidental expenses.

## **Miscellaneous Topics**

**Weekend and Holiday Mileage** – VDFP will reimburse mileage incurred when the individual is required to work on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday.

**Business Meals** – VDFP defines business meals as meals for individuals not on travel status, but engaged in substantive discussions of agency business that further the agency’s mission, vision, and core values. Business meal approval is subject to the guidelines issued under *Procurement* policy.

If business meals (directly or through reimbursement) are infrequently provided, the meals are likely excludable as a De Minimis Fringe Benefit under Internal Revenue Code. However, employees should monitor the frequency that they receive business meals (directly or through reimbursement) and notify Payroll if they believe they are receiving meals from the agency with any regularity. Additionally, Financial Services should monitor the frequency that VDFP provides business meals (directly or through reimbursement) and report to payroll any meals that appear to be provided on a regular basis.

**Gifts** - No officer or employee of a state governmental or advisory agency or candidate required to file the disclosure form prescribed in § [2.2-3117](#) or a member of his immediate family shall solicit, accept, or receive any single gift with a value in excess of \$100 or any combination of gifts with an aggregate value in excess of \$100 within any calendar year for himself or a member of his immediate family from any person that he or a member of his immediate family knows or has reason to know is (i) a lobbyist registered pursuant to Article 3 (§ [2.2-418](#) et seq.) of Chapter 4; (ii) a lobbyist's principal as defined in § [2.2-419](#); or (iii) a person, organization, or business who is or is seeking to become a party to a contract with the state governmental or advisory agency of which he is an officer or an employee or over which he has the authority to direct such agency's activities. Gifts with a value of less than \$20 are not subject to aggregation for purposes of this prohibition.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title2.2/chapter31/section2.2-3103.1/>