

2019 VCNO Ethics Guidance Summary

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References / Background

Background: Every year the Vice CNO Puts out Annual Standards of Conduct Guidance (ie. VCNO Ethics Guidance) to his flag officers. It is a 30 page document which covers common ethical situations. This article summarizes that document into two pages specifically for COs / XO's, and other senior officers.

BLUF: The American Navy has built a strategic foundation of trust with the American People which can never be taken for granted. Our service is a public trust, requiring all of us to put forth honest effort, avoid appearances of impropriety, and place loyalty to the Constitution, laws, and ethical principles above private gain. Our CO's are the front line in holding the standard for both themselves and their command.

References

- [Navy JAG Website](#)
- [SECNAV IG Website](#)
- [Official Navy Ethics app](#)
- [Executive Order 12731; 5 C.F.R. Part 2635; 5 C.F.R. Part 3601](#)
- Joint Ethics Regulations – [DOD 5500.07](#)
- 2019 VCNO Ethics Policy – [PDF Download](#)

Travel Guidance

- Commanders are responsible for ensuring travel is used effectively, economically and only for accomplishment of the. Exercise the same care as if it were your personal money.
- Travel to change of command, retirements, funerals, and other similar events should not be paid for with government funds; if you try to set up an "official meeting" right before a Change of command, refer to the ethical questions below.

Receiving Gifts outside the Navy

- Unsolicited gifts less than \$20 per gift (\$50 per year) are generally acceptable. *
- There are special considerations for gifts from foreign governments, meals and entertainment in a foreign area, widely attended gatherings and awards. It is best to get guidance before accepting. *
- Apply the "Junk Rule" – If it is "junk" you can probably accept; something you really like may influence your official behavior and should be returned or paid for.
- **Recommendation:** Before attending an event where gifts may be exchanged tell the host your intent is to give coins or plaques with the expectation the host will reciprocate.

Receiving Gifts From Juniors

- Seniors can not receive gifts that are greater than \$10 from a junior. For COCs or special infrequent occasions. If the value of your COC gifts exceed \$300, you need to pay for the excess. *

- **Recommendation:** Make it clear to your COC / Retirement coordinator that you will pay for any gifts over \$300 or if insufficient funds are collected. You do not want your coordinator shaking down the troops and finding yourself hot water weeks before your ceremony.
- **Note:** This policy also goes for visiting Admirals & VIPS. It is not ethical or proper to “gift” a VIP a ballcap or coin purchased with appropriated funds.

Command Coins

- Only CNO, VCNO, DNS, CNP, MCPON, and officers serving in command may purchase command coins with appropriated funds.
- Commanders must balance the need to formally recognize excellence with the responsibility to conserve scarce resources; any gift must also be logged.
- Command coins may not be given to contract employees.
- **Recommendation:** Buy Command coins, or cheaper “[pokerchips](#)” out of your first two months command responsibility pay, Then you can do what ever you want with them.

Use of Government Vehicles

- Government vehicles (GOVs) are for official use only; defining “official use” shall be resolved in favor of strict compliance with statutory and regulatory provisions.
- Use of Rental Cars: Rental vehicles are considered “special conveyances” under the JTR. As such, the current rules allow use only for official purposes, to include transportation to and from places required for subsistence, health, or comfort while TDY (Dinner is OK, Night life after dinner is not). Consequences for violations may result in accident claims not being honored if the vehicle was not being used properly.
- Any Duty-To-Domicile use must first be authorized in writing.

Five Ethical Questions Test

1. Would you or your boss have any issues with this showing up on the Front page of Navy Times or the New York Times?
2. How comfortable are you with putting this in your HOWGOZEIT to your ISIC?
3. How would you respond if one of your ENS was doing this?
4. If doing this action once is “no big deal” what prevents it from happening 50 times?
5. Still unsure? Reach out to the office of JAG Ethics at [ojag_ethics \(-at-\)navy.mil](mailto:ojag_ethics@navy.mil).

Recommendation: Assign your legal officer to be your ethics officer and bring him/her on your discussions. A trusted JO will see things different than your leadership team.

A reservoir of trust can disappear in an instant, and a lifetime of honor can be destroyed by a single act or omission.

* = Special nuance associated with this rule review the JFR or Joint Ethics Guidance for further info.