

Gift reporting rules for Calif. lawmakers may change

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

The state political watchdog agency is set to consider next month adopting substantial changes to rules governing gifts to public officials and staff, including exemptions from disclosure for presents received from former spouses, dating partners and longtime friends.

The proposed regulations drafted by Fair Political Practices Commission staffers affect what must be disclosed and count toward the \$420 annual cap on gifts from an individual source. Registered lobbyists, who are prohibited from giving gifts worth more than \$10, and firms or interests that hire lobbyists would not qualify for the exemptions.

In addition to establishing relationship categories to exempt, the proposed amendments would let lawmakers receive without public scrutiny gifts considered “acts of neighborliness” and “acts of human compassion” and update language related to bereavement, birthdays and weddings.

Tickets or event admission received in connection with a “ceremonial role,” such as throwing out the first pitch at a baseball game, would not be considered a gift.

FPPC Chair Ann Ravel said the changes are simply meant to clarify the rules and put into regulation current enforcement practices, saying most of the language comes from advice letters generated by the agency.

Read the whole story