



# OKLAHOMA ETHICS COMMISSION

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PHONE: (405) 521-3451 • FAX: (405) 521-4905 • WEBSITE: [WWW.OK.GOV/ETHICS](http://WWW.OK.GOV/ETHICS)

## Staff Memorandum 2015-04

### **May a lobbyist principal purchase a meal for a legislator with the principal's funds and without the lobbyist involved in any way?**

The general rule under Ethics Rule 5.6 is that a lobbyist or lobbyist principal shall provide nothing of value to a legislator unless the Rules specifically allow. The Rules provide for spending limits by a lobbyist of \$500 for meals and \$200 for gifts (the gifts will deduct from the \$500 limit on meals). The Rules then provide some exceptions for expenditures by lobbyist principals. This includes food and beverage for the entire legislature, for the official caucuses, committees, and out of state events. There are no rules allowing for a lobbyist principal to expend funds on a meal for an individual legislator. Only lobbyists may expend funds for a meal for an individual legislator.

The Rules further provide that the lobbyist must report any meals given to a legislator, regardless of the source of funds used to pay for the meal. Therefore, if an employee or officer of a lobbyist principal wants to provide a meal to an individual legislator there are a couple options. First, they may spend their own personal funds and not the funds of the lobbyist principal. If they spend their own discretionary money, it is not regulated by the Ethics Rules. Second, they can bring the lobbyist to the meal and have the lobbyist involved. In that case, the lobbyist can report the meal regardless of the source of funds used to pay for the meal. The bottom line is this, if a lobbyist principal wishes to engage in the expenditure of funds for meals while lobbying an individual legislator, then it needs to involve the lobbyist that is publicly registered with the Ethics Commission.