

# Title 292 WAC

## ETHICS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

### Chapters

292-110 Agency substantive rules.

### Chapter 292-110 WAC AGENCY SUBSTANTIVE RULES

#### WAC

292-110-010 Use of state resources.

**WAC 292-110-010 Use of state resources.** (1) **Statement of principles - stewardship.** The proper stewardship of state resources, including funds, facilities, tools, property, and employees and their time, is a responsibility that all state officers and employees share. Accordingly, state employees may not use state resources for personal benefit or gain or for the benefit or gain of other individuals or outside organizations. Responsibility and accountability for the appropriate use of state resources ultimately rests with the individual state officer or state employee, or with the state officer or state employee who authorizes such use. State officers and employees should ensure that any personal use of state resources permitted by this section is the most efficient in terms of overall time and resources.

(2) **The following are permitted uses:**

(a) Use of state resources that is reasonably related to the conduct of official state duties, or which is otherwise allowed by statute.

(b) An agency head or designee may authorize a use of state resources that is related to an official state purpose, but not directly related to an individual employee's official duty.

(c) An agency may authorize a specific use that promotes organizational effectiveness or enhances the job-related skills of a state officer or state employee.

(d) A state officer or employee may make an occasional but limited personal use of state resources only if each of the following conditions are met:

(i) There is little or no cost to the state;

(ii) Any use is brief;

(iii) Any use occurs infrequently;

(iv) The use does not interfere with the performance of any officer's or employee's official duties; and

(v) The use does not compromise the security or integrity of state property, information, or software.

(3) **Permitted use of computers, electronic mail, the internet, and other technologies.** A state officer or employee may use equipment such as the telephone, the internet, and electronic mail provided such use conforms to ethical standards under subsection (2) of this section, and the use is not otherwise prohibited under subsection (5) of this section.

(4) **No expectation of privacy.** Technologies such as electronic mail, facsimile transmissions, the internet, and voice mail may create an electronic record. This is what separates these from other forms of communication such as a

telephone conversation. The ethics rules do not distinguish between the various forms of communication. Electronic records are reproducible and therefore cannot be considered private. Such records may be subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act, or may be disclosed for audit or legitimate state operational or management purposes.

(5) **Prohibited uses.**

(a) Any use for the purpose of conducting an outside business, private employment, or other activities conducted for private financial gain;

(b) Any use for the purpose of supporting, promoting the interests of, or soliciting for an outside organization or group, including, but not limited to, a private business, or a political party, or supporting, promoting the interests of, or soliciting for a nonprofit organization unless provided for by law or authorized by an agency head or designee;

(c) Any use for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Such a use of state resources is specifically prohibited by RCW 42.52.180, subject to the exceptions in RCW 42.52.180(2);

(d) Any use for the purpose of participating in or assisting in an effort to lobby the state legislature, or a state agency head. Such a use of state resources is specifically prohibited by RCW 42.17.190, subject to the exceptions in RCW 42.17.190(3);

(e) Any use related to conduct that is prohibited by a federal or state law or rule, or a state agency policy; and

(f) Any private use of any state property that has been removed from state facilities or other official duty stations, even if there is no cost to the state.

(6) **Reimbursement for personal use.** Establishing a system for reimbursement for private or personal use of state resources undermines the purpose of the Ethics in Public Service Act and imposes significant administrative burdens on state agencies. However, the board recognizes that in some limited situations, such as officers or employees working at remote locations, a system of reimbursement may be appropriate. Any system of reimbursement must be established by the agency in advance, and must result in little or no cost to the state, including administrative costs. To be permitted under this section, the board must approve any reimbursement system implemented by an agency.

(7) **Agency policies encouraged.** State agencies are encouraged to adopt policies applying these principles to their unique circumstances. Agency policies that are approved by the board qualify for "safe harbor" under WAC 292-120-035. Nothing in this section is intended to limit the ability of an agency to adopt policies that are more restrictive. However, violation of a more restrictive agency policy by itself will not constitute a violation of RCW 42.52.160, even if it would constitute a violation of agency policy.

(8) **Frequently asked questions and examples.** The board maintains a list of frequently asked questions and examples that provide additional guidance regarding this section. State officers and employees are encouraged to review this document at the board's web site [www.ethics.wa.gov](http://www.ethics.wa.gov) or to request a copy of the document through the board's office.

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