



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO: 19-16

SUBJECT: Changes to Departmental Manual Chapter 370 DM 451.5, Non-Monetary Awards

1. Purpose. This Personnel Bulletin (PB) modifies Department of the Interior (DOI) policy governing non-monetary awards and supersedes the Non-Monetary Awards Policy memorandum, dated February 5, 2013, and existing policy in Department Manual (DM) Chapter 370 DM 451.5, Non-Monetary Awards until corresponding changes in the DM are made. This policy applies to non-monetary awards for employees only, and does not apply to promotional items that are purchased for public distribution.

2. Authorities.

- A. Title 5 of the United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 45
- B. Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 451
- C. Personnel Bulletin 17-16, Length of Service Recognition Program, dated November 3, 2017

3. Policy. Non-monetary recognition awards may be granted to employees in recognition of their contributions to DOI. Contributions may include superior accomplishment of regularly assigned duties, exceptional achievements of project goals, noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period, or specific contributions to an organization's mission.

4. Eligibility for Non-Monetary Awards. All DOI employees are eligible to receive non-monetary recognition.

5. Requirements for Items Used as Non-Monetary Recognition.

A. Bureaus/Offices must exercise fiscal prudence in the use of non-monetary awards and ensure that items selected avoid potential appearance of misuse of government funds. Bureau/Office approving officials should consider whether public disclosure of the item would cause embarrassment to DOI. The item must take an appropriate form to be used in the public sector to be purchased with public funds.

B. The recognition method used should be commensurate with the employee's effort expended, the behavior exemplified or the results achieved. Bureau/Office approving officials can tailor recognition of their employees based on the personal interests of the individual. Approving officials may ask an employee how he/she would like to be rewarded.

C. In general, the cash value of a non-monetary award item may not exceed \$100. DOI may adjust this amount in succeeding years based on the inflation rate. Nominal value items appropriate for non-monetary recognition include, but are not limited to, lapel pins, coffee cups,

key chains, pens, paperweights, pen and pencil sets, clocks, plaques, jackets, caps, T-shirts, watches, or other similar items that can be of use in the employee's work environment. Where appropriate, a non-monetary award item should contain the bureau or DOI name, logo, award title, and/or mission.

D. Non-monetary awards that exceed \$100 in cash value may be given to employees *only* with the approval of the Bureau Director or equivalent Office Head (or designee). Bureaus/Offices must also consult with the Office of the Solicitor and their Bureau/Office Procurement Chief to determine the appropriateness of non-monetary awards that exceed \$100 in cash value. Items that exceed the \$100 cash value threshold must:

(1) Be something that the recipient could reasonably be expected to value, but not something that conveys a sense of monetary value;

(2) Have lasting trophy value. An employee can show the item to coworkers and friends as a "trophy" given in appreciation of good work; and

(3) Clearly symbolize the employer-employee relationship in some fashion.

E. There is no limit on how many non-monetary awards an employee can receive in a fiscal year. However, supervisors should avoid granting non-monetary awards and presenting award items several times throughout the fiscal year to avoid any possibility of abuse in granting awards. Items for non-monetary recognition should be purchased through normal procurement channels. As appropriate, Bureaus/Offices should order and have readily available sufficient quantities of non-monetary award items to maximize cost savings.

F. Bureaus/Offices are not permitted to use gift cards or other items that can be easily converted to cash (e.g., gift certificates, U.S. Savings Bonds, tickets to events, or similar items) as non-monetary recognition.

6. Informal Honors. Bureaus must establish guidelines and controls for granting informal recognition and awards.

7. Time-Off Awards. A time-off award is an excused absence awarded to an employee without loss of pay or charge to leave. Time-off awards should be granted for an appropriate number of hours commensurate with the employee's contributions. Bureaus must establish approval authorities and scheduling guidance regarding time-off awards, as appropriate. The minimum amount that can be granted as time-off recognition is one hour. Time-off awards shall not exceed 40 hours per event or 80 hours total per year. This limit includes performance rating-based time-off awards. Consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 4508, non-career Senior Executive Service employees or appointees in confidential or policy determining (Schedule C) positions are prohibited from receiving time-off awards during a Presidential election period. This period is from June 1 of any year in which there is a Presidential election through January 20 of the following calendar year. Employees normally have the discretion to determine when they will use a time-off award, subject to supervisory approval. A time-off award must be used while the recipient is employed at DOI; the time-off award cannot be transferred to another agency upon

separation of the employee. Consistent with 5 CFR 451.104(f), a time-off award shall not be converted to cash payment under any circumstances.

8. Length of Service Award. A length of service award is a form of recognition to honor employees at various milestones in their careers. Consistent with DOI policy, employees may be recognized for career service with an award certificate and emblem at five (5) year intervals.

9. Internal Processes and Approval Authorities. Bureaus/Offices are responsible for establishing nomination processes and approval authorities necessary for implementing this policy.

10. Processing Awards. Any employee aware of an achievement that he/she believes deserves recognition may make an award recommendation to the award recipient's supervisor. The recommendation must be approved by the Bureau/Office official authorized to approve non-monetary awards.

A. Non-monetary award items with a cash value of \$100 or less may be awarded, as appropriate, without completion of the Form DI-451, Recommendation and Approval of Awards.

B. For non-monetary award items that exceed a cash value of \$100, a Form DI-451 must be completed. Before finalizing and granting a non-monetary award that exceeds the nominal cash value of \$100, the employee should be advised that the award will be taxable and determine if the employee concurs in the granting of the taxable award item.

11. Taxable Income Reporting Requirements. Employees are responsible for reporting any taxable income, if applicable, that is associated with non-monetary awards. Employees should contact their servicing human resources office (HRO) for guidance.

12. Inquiries. Any DOI employee or employee representative seeking further information concerning this policy may contact the appropriate servicing HRO. Servicing HROs may contact the DOI's Office of Human Capital, Workforce Relations Division concerning questions related to this policy.



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