



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON, DC

AUG 04 2008

Office Of The General Counsel

MEMORANDUM FOR SAF/IE

FROM: SAF/GCA

SUBJECT: Use of Appropriated Funds for Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association Membership Fee

SAF/IE asked whether the USAF could be a member of an organization that engaged in lobbying. Specifically, you wanted to know if Major Commands and installations could use appropriated funds to purchase membership in the Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association (VPPPA) when the VPPPA organizes grassroots efforts to "educate" legislators on Voluntary Protection Programs and provides draft letters and contact information on members of Congress. SAF/GCA opined in the past that under these circumstances USAF membership in VPPPA would violate 18 U.S.C. § 1913, which prohibits the use of appropriated funds to indirectly pay for grassroots lobbying.

In response to these concerns, the VPPPA removed the "Grassroots" and "Draft Letters" from its webpage and edited other pages and publications that could be perceived as conflicting with 18 U.S.C. § 1913. The VPPPA states that it has shifted its focus to educating its members. The only issue remaining is whether appropriated funds may be used to pay for membership fees. 5 U.S.C. § 5946 generally prohibits expenditure of appropriated funds for an individual's membership fee in a private organization. Payment for agency membership is not prohibited, however-- appropriated funds may be used to pay for an agency's membership in an organization if such membership is necessary for, or beneficial to the agency's activities. See AFI 65-601, Vol 1, Budget Guidance and Procedures, 3 Mar 05, para 4.44; B-305095, Dec 8, 2005; B-205356, Jul 23, 1983. Thus, if proper authority determines that membership in the VPPPA is necessary for or beneficial to the organization's and the Air Force's activities, appropriated funds may be used to purchase the membership in the Air Force's name.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 697-6643.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marina M. Kozmcyz".

MARINA M. KOZMCYZ  
Counsel  
(Fiscal, Ethics and Administrative Law)