

**ETHICAL PRACTICES BOARD**

**First Floor South, Centennial Building . 658 Cedar Street . St. Paul, MN 55155-1603**

The following publication does not identify the requester of the advisory opinion, which is nonpublic data under Minn. Stat. § 10A.02, subd. 12(b)

**RE: Political committee use of free world wide web page**

**ADVISORY OPINION # 247**

**SUMMARY**

**Use by a party unit or a principal campaign committee of a service provided without charge to the public and to civic organizations does not result in a contribution to the committee or a gift to the candidate.**

**FACTS**

You are the chair of a political party unit. On behalf of the party unit and some of the party's candidates, you request an advisory opinion from the Ethical Practices Board based on the following facts:

1. Geocities is a for-profit provider of internet services. Its web site is supported in part by on-line advertising, some of which may be placed by companies which are lobbyist principals.
2. As a service to the internet community as a whole, Geocities offers free world wide web home page space to individuals and civic organizations.
3. There is no cost to the home page holder, and the service is available to any individual or civic organization requesting it.
4. Your party unit and some of the party's candidates would like to accept Geocities offer of free home page space for use by their political committees.

## ISSUE

May a political committee, including a principal campaign committee, accept free world wide web home page space from Geocities under the terms described in the facts without violating the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 10A?

## OPINION

Yes, your party unit and the candidates' principal campaign committees may accept the Geocities home page space offer.

The service in question is available to civic organizations and to the public as a whole without charge and without restrictions as to who may use the service. The acceptance of such a service by a political committee does not result in a contribution to the committee from the service provider. (See also, advisory opinion #154.)

The gift prohibitions of Minn. Stat. § 10A.071 are not applicable to the facts you present. Even if the services provided were recognized as a contribution, it would be a contribution to the committee involved, not to an individual. Party units are not subject to the provisions of Minn. Stat. § 10A.071, and contributions to principal campaign committees are specifically excluded from the general prohibition by the exception provided in Minn. Stat. § 10A.071, subd. 3(a)(1).

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Carolyn D. Rodriguez, Chair  
Ethical Practices Board