

National Court Reporters Association
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Contacts:

Marshall Jorpeland, NCRA, mjorpeland@ncrahq.org

Mark Golden, NCRA, mgolden@ncrahq.org

703-556-6272 (office)

National Court Reporters Association Launches “Ethics First” Campaign to Confront Gift-Giving Issues

VIENNA, Va. (April 24, 2009) – The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) is launching an “Ethics First” campaign to encourage court reporters, firms that employ them, and the clients they serve to avoid giving and accepting high-value gifts, an activity that threatens the perception of reporters’ impartiality and violates NCRA’s Code of Professional Ethics.

“As officers of the court, reporters are held to a very high standard,” says NCRA President Karen Yates, CRR, CBC, CCP, of Minden, Nev. “Restrictions on giving and accepting gifts are designed to prevent court reporters from violating or appearing to violate their duty to remain independent and impartial to all parties.”

She emphasizes that court reporters compete in the marketplace on the basis of their skills and the products and services they provide, not the gifts or incentive prizes they give.

“There should be no incentives to hire court reporters other than the excellent service you will receive from them,” Yates says.

The NCRA’s Code of Professional Ethics does not rule out token gifts or inexpensive promotional items. It does not seek to limit competition among court reporters or their firms based on price or volume, and it does not prohibit providing pro bono services.

NCRA Executive Director and CEO Mark J. Golden, CAE, states, “The association’s ethics code recognizes that giving nominal items, valued at less than \$100 per year per individual, should not compromise or be viewed as compromising a court reporter’s neutrality and impartiality.”

Law firm managers and paralegals should be especially wary when accepting gifts from court reporters. The IRS may consider these gifts to be revenue, creating a taxable event to the recipient, whether it is a lawyer, legal assistant, or any other employee of the law firm, and in some instances the law may consider the gift to belong to the firm’s client. In addition, a reporter or deposition firm who gives gifts to a law firm that exceed \$600 would be required to provide an IRS information return to that recipient law firm.

The Ethics First campaign will reach out to courts reporters, owners of firms that offer court reporting services, state leaders, state associations, and law firms. More information is available at www.ncraonline.org/EthicsFirst.

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NCRA is a volunteer member, nonprofit organization representing the judicial reporting and captioning professions. Members include official court reporters, deposition reporters, broadcast captioners, providers of realtime communication access services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people, and others who capture and convert the spoken word into information bases and readable formats.

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