

# American Statistical Association

*Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics*

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June 28, 2011

Richard M. Thomas, Associate General  
Counsel, Office of Government Ethics  
Office of Government Ethics  
1201 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005-3917

RE: RIN 3209-AA09  
[Proposed Rule Exemption and Amendment Under 18 U.S.C. 208(b)(2)]

Dear Associate General Thomas,

On behalf of the American Statistical Association, we write in support of proposed rule RIN 3209-AA09 “that would permit government employees to participate in particular matters affecting the financial interests of nonprofit organizations in which they serve in an official capacity, notwithstanding the employees’ imputed financial interest.”

The American Statistical Association is a professional society of 18,000 statisticians. Government scientists are one of the three largest segments of the ASA’s membership, along with members from academia and the private sector. To adequately involve these sectors in ASA leadership, the ASA rotates the presidency and vice presidency among the three sectors in three-year cycles. Government statisticians also play an important role in the governance of ASA sections, chapters, and committees.

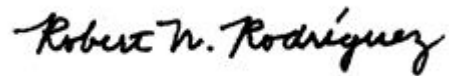
Under the current rules, the ASA Nominating Committee has reported difficulty in securing candidates from the government sector, and we hear of related problems from ASA sections, chapters, and committees. These difficulties affect the ASA as a professional society. Without federal statisticians in its governance, the ASA would not be able to serve fully the needs of the government sector, since there would not be an active voice from that sector in our decision-making process. The ASA would also be deprived of the perspective of the government sector for its broader mission.

Furthermore, the rules precluding a federal scientist’s professional society activity hinder his/her ability to achieve the professional stature afforded by professional society leadership experience. Finally, such rules could dissuade scientists from entering federal service and/or prevent federal

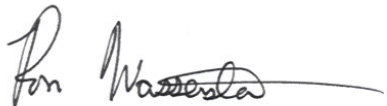
scientists from serving in high-profile professional society positions, thereby undermining the overall stature of an agency's scientific work.

For these reasons, we heartily support this proposed rule from the Office of Government Ethics. We are grateful to you—and to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Office of Personnel Management—for facilitating the full participation of federal statisticians in ASA leadership and governance.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert N. Rodriguez in black ink.

Robert N. Rodriguez  
President-Elect  
The American Statistical Association

Handwritten signature of Ronald L. Wasserstein in black ink.

Ronald L. Wasserstein  
Executive Director  
The American Statistical Association