

**Ethics Commission Exemption for
"Class Gifts" to Teachers**

Under MGL c.268A, public school teachers (and other public employees) are generally prohibited from accepting gifts valued at fifty dollars or more unless that gift falls within certain exemptions. The State Ethics Commission recently created a new exemption for "class gifts" whereby a public school teacher may accept a class gift up to one hundred fifty dollars in value if a group of students and/or parents wish to pool their contributions toward a gift. A class gift removes the possible conflict of interest inherent in gifts as the teacher will have no knowledge of the individual amounts contributed or by whom. For this reason, it is not necessary for the teacher to disclose a class gift to the appointing authority as would be required by the Code of Massachusetts Regulations for many gifts from individual students/parents. In addition to a class gift, the teacher may also accept a gift from an individual student or parent who did not contribute to the class gift; however, the teacher may need to disclose the individual gift. No gift—of ANY value—may be accepted in exchange for a showing of favoritism toward a particular student.

School Committee may wish to communicate this new exemption to parents, in addition to making sure teachers themselves are aware of the state law governing conflicts of interest.