

PLM-1
Mr. Putnam

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DECISION



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FILE: B-195045

DATE: February 8, 1980

MATTER OF: Gentry Brown, LeRoy Vokins, and Dianna Whitaker - [Reimbursement for Registration Fee and Luncheon]

DIGEST:

Three employees of Community Services Administration (CSA) requested reimbursement of registration fee, which included cost of luncheon, for Federal Executive Board meeting for presentation of awards for 1978 Combined Federal Campaign. Claims may not be allowed. Although a registration fee which includes cost of meal may be reimbursed under certain circumstances, here registration fee consisted primarily of cost of luncheon meal and therefore is not reimbursable from appropriated funds of agency. Further the Board meeting did not concern a function or activity of CSA for which the claimants were employed or the purpose for which appropriation was made to agency.

This action is in response to a request for an advance decision by Mr. Robert M. Lematta, Chief, Financial Services Branch, Authorized Certifying Officer, Community Services Administration (CSA), as to the allowability for payment and charge to the appropriation of the CSA for the cost of expenses incurred by three employees of the agency at a Board meeting for the Combined Federal Campaign.

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The facts and circumstances, briefly stated, are as follows: The Greater Kansas City, Missouri, Federal Executive Board issued an invitation for agencies to attend a full Board meeting for the purpose of presenting awards for the 1978 Combined Federal Campaign. The Kansas City, Missouri, CSA, Region VII, approved the attendance of three employees, Gentry Brown, LeRoy Vokins, and Dianna Whitaker, for this meeting, at a cost to each of \$5.75 which included the registration fee and cost of a luncheon meal.

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The certifying officer states that after reviewing the decisions of the Comptroller General of the United States dealing with the subject matter of the claims, he has been unable to reach a conclusion as to whether the expenses incurred by the three employees may be certified as costs properly chargeable to the appropriations of the CSA. We have been informally advised by officials of the CSA and the Federal Executive Board that the \$5.75 in question represented the registration fee and the cost of the luncheon for each employee at the Board meeting. The officials were unable to state or ascertain the portions of the total cost for each employee allocable to the registration fee and to the cost of the luncheon meal. They did state, however, that the registration fee constituted a minimal part of the total \$5.75 charge for the meeting.

The general rule is that an employee may not be paid a per diem allowance at his permanent duty station or at his place of abode from which he commutes daily to his duty station. Paragraph 1-7.6a, Federal Travel Regulations (FPMR 101-7, May 1973). In this connection we have held that the subsistence expenses of civilian employees at their official duty stations are personal to the employees and, in the absence of specific authority, may not be provided at Government expense regardless of any unusual working conditions involved. 53 Comp. Gen. 457 (1974). On the other hand, we have held that the payment of a registration fee incident to attendance at a conference held at an employees' headquarters was proper even though meals were furnished to persons attending such conferences at no additional charge. 38 Comp. Gen. 134 (1958); B-160579, April 26, 1978; and B-166560, February 3, 1970.

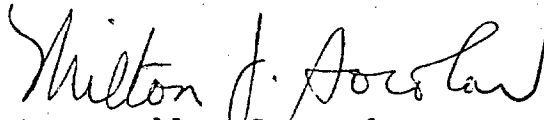
In the present case, the record indicates that the registration fee consisted primarily of the cost of the luncheon meal. Therefore, only a nominal portion of the \$5.75 in question was earmarked for administrative expenses. Inasmuch as the predominant portion of the "registration fee" represented the cost of the luncheon meal, such fee may not be considered a registration fee insofar as reimbursement by the Government is

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concerned. B-187150, October 14, 1976, and B-182527, February 12, 1975. Compare B-160579, supra.

This Office has consistently held that to be properly charged with the cost of providing meals, appropriations must be made specifically available by statute for that purpose. B-187150, supra. We are not aware of any legislation that provides the Director, CSA, with such authority. In this regard, the travel and transportation regulations of the CSA provide that an employee may be authorized to incur registration fees incident to attendance at meetings at his duty station provided such attendance is concerned with an agency activity or function for which the employee was hired, notwithstanding the fact that the employee is not in a travel status. See 5 U.S.C. § 4110 (1976). In our opinion, the Board meeting in question is not a function or activity of the CSA for which the claimants were employed and the statutory language does not authorize expenditures for meals under the facts presented in the instant case. Therefore, the appropriated funds of the agency may not be expended for the intended purpose, although concerned with and for the benefit of a worthy cause. B-182527, February 12, 1975. Compare 38 Comp. Gen. 134, supra.

In view of the foregoing, we conclude that it would be improper for the Government to reimburse the three employees for the registration fee, consisting primarily of the cost of the luncheon meal, which they incurred at the meeting of the Federal Executive Board for the Combined Federal Campaign. Accordingly, payment of the fee in question may not be authorized.



For The Comptroller General
of the United States