

Fangman



Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

135721

B-226900.2

April 29, 1988

The Honorable George J. Mitchell
United States Senate

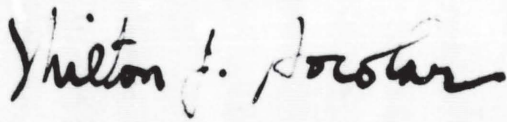
Dear Senator Mitchell:

This is in response to your request of February 9, 1988, that we respond to concerns expressed by your constituent, _____, regarding our decision on government expenditures for seasonal decorations. _____ does not believe that purchasing seasonal decorations for government office buildings is a proper use of government funds and that it should be up to the employees to donate or loan seasonal decorative items for their work areas.

Our responsibility in issuing this decision was to advise the requesting agencies as to whether they were authorized to use government funds to purchase seasonal decorations. The decision was the result of our interpretation of the law. As we view it, the law gives an agency authority to make expenditures for these types of items when deemed necessary to enhance the government work environment. We believe that this decision embodies not only the correct legal response but also that it sends a clear message to government agencies that such expenditures should be firmly controlled. In the decision we urged agencies to establish guidelines to prevent abuses and we clearly pointed out areas of concern which should be addressed in such guidelines.

One important restriction contained in this and other similar decisions is that decorative items may be purchased only for public areas of the office, private office area decorations may not be purchased with government funds. Under this decision employees will still have to provide their own seasonal decorations for their immediate work areas, as _____ suggests should be the case.

Sincerely yours,

for 
Comptroller General
of the United States