

ANSWERS FROM THE CITY ETHICIST

#2: An Important Tip

Question: *In my City job, I have a lot of contact with the public – assisting people with requests, handling cases, taking complaints, etc. To show his appreciation for all I've done for him, a client wants to give me \$25. May I accept it? - Serving the Public in Queens*



Answer: The City Charter **prohibits** a City employee from accepting **anything** from **anyone** other than the City **for doing his or her City job**, including “tips.”

This “gratuity rule” makes a lot of sense if you put yourself in the shoes of a green-grocer, or the parent of a child enrolled in a Department of Ed school. You wouldn’t want to have to pay a cop in your neighborhood, or your kid’s teacher, extra money to do the job that you’re already paying for with your taxes. And although a gratuity may seem innocent enough, if that police officer or teacher accepted the tip, it could potentially open him or her to allegations of having given preferential treatment to someone in exchange for cash.

So, no, *Serving*, you can’t accept the \$25 from your former client for doing your City job. On the other hand, it would be fine for him to write a letter to your supervisor singing your praises!

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