



**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
*City of Chicago*

Joseph M. Ferguson  
*Inspector General*

740 North Sedgwick, Suite 200  
Chicago, Illinois 60654-2996  
Telephone: (773) 478-7799  
Fax: (773) 478-3949

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**VIA EMAIL**

October 26, 2012

Theresa Mintle  
Chief of Staff  
Mayor's Office  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
Room 509  
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Chief of Staff Mintle:

Over the past year there has been an uptick in complaints to the Inspector General's Office (IGO) from City of Chicago employees regarding solicitations from their co-workers and supervisors during work. The solicitations – requests for employees to purchase items or donate money – range from annual Girl Scout cookie sales to donations for individual employees. The problem is not concentrated in one department.

These solicitations clearly violate City Rules. Personnel Rule XVIII, §1 lists the causes for disciplinary action. Paragraph 30 prohibits the “[s]olicitation of other employees for any purpose, during the working time of the employee soliciting or being solicited, or in areas to which the public has access for the purpose of transacting business relating to City government.”

The IGO does not have the time or resources to investigate each of these complaints, as they are mostly *de minimus*. However, the nature of the complaints and the steady increase in frequency concerns this office as such solicitations can undermine morale or cause undue pressure.

Recent examples of complaints received by the IGO include:

- A supervisor organized a raffle to raise money to bring her mother to Chicago from another state. The complaining employee felt pressured to purchase a ticket, fearing that he would be punished if he refused.
- A supervisor solicited \$15 donations for an event at her church. The complaining employee stated that the employees felt put on the spot and forced to purchase a ticket out of fear of losing their jobs.

- A complaining employee felt strong-armed when asked to donate money, during working hours, for a fellow employee who had had a death in the family.

While any solicitation during working hours is a violation of the Personnel Rules, it is especially egregious when it comes from a supervisor. The complaining employees worry that if they do not participate that they could be retaliated against or lose their jobs. These solicitations raise the same concerns that led this summer to the City Council amending the City's Ethics ordinance to ban employee-to-supervisor gifts except in limited circumstances. Supervisors should be setting an example for other employees by following the rules.

The IGO recommends that Mayor's Office remind all City employees that non-City sanctioned solicitations during working hours are a direct violation of the City of Chicago Personnel Rules. Should someone wish to solicit his or her co-workers, they may do so before or after working hours. However, we would recommend that supervisors refrain from soliciting employees under any circumstances, as it puts unwarranted pressure on employees.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Ferguson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph M. Ferguson  
Inspector General  
City of Chicago