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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ETHICS GUIDANCE ISSUED ON GOLF OUTINGS AND VENDOR GIFTS

At its past meeting in May, the Ohio Ethics Commission reviewed several questions that have been raised regarding items given to public officials and employees. In response, the Commission approved two formal advisory opinions that apply Ohio's Ethics Laws to golf outings and gifts provided to public servants by vendors.

Advisory Opinion 2001-03 addresses the practice of those doing business with public officials and employees paying for the costs of golf outings. Advisory Opinion 2001-04 addresses the receipt of vendor gifts by school administrators and employees for their personal use. Both opinions conclude that Ethics Laws prohibit vendors, as well as public officials and employees, from engaging in these practices.

Noting the unanimous vote of the bi-partisan Commission on both opinions, Commission Chairman Merom Brachman said, "With issues that have been cited in court cases finding favoritism in dispensing public funds, and with referrals on practices cited by the Auditor of State, our duty was to make clear the application of Ohio Law to all in government. Further, since the General Assembly broadened Financial Disclosure categories in 1994 to include school district administrators, increased attention has been given to their duties."

David E. Freel, Executive Director of the Commission, stated, "This advice reinforces common sense ethical practices by school administrators and other public officials that vendors should not be paying for their recreational activities or personal gifts." Freel noted that these opinions will be highlighted during the remainder of the year in presentations that the Ethics Commission provides to public officials and the general public as part of its ongoing educational responsibility.

As part of its statutory duty, the Commission issues formal advisory opinions on the Ohio

Ethics Law, copies of which are available on its Web site at www.ethics.state.oh.us or by contacting the Commission by telephone at (614) 466-7090.