



# Ohio Elections Commission

21 West Broad Street, Suite 600  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614•466•3205

August 6, 1998

## OHIO ELECTIONS COMMISSION

### Advisory Opinion 98ELC-04

**SYLLABUS:** Bonus travel miles accumulated from a campaign financed telephone account cannot be used for personal travel.

**TO:** Honorable Leigh E. Herington  
State Senator

You are requesting an advisory opinion on the following question:

Is it permissible to use bonus travel miles accumulated from a campaign-financed telephone account for personal travel?

This Commission has issued numerous opinions regarding appropriate campaign expenses which can be made from the account of a campaign committee. The focus of these opinions has been that campaign expenses must be legitimate, verifiable, ordinary and necessary, as stated in the statute, and relate to a campaign or to the duties of the office that the candidate holds. The Commission has consistently used these elements as the basis for its opinions on the topic of campaign expenses.

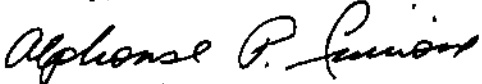
This request, however, is different in that it asks the Commission to determine what is the proper use of certain benefits that have been accumulated as a result of allowable campaign finance expenditures. From your letter, it would appear that you have accumulated certain bonus travel miles based on the usage of the campaign committee's telephone account. Now that those bonus travel miles have been accumulated, you are requesting direction from this Commission on the appropriateness of using these bonus travel miles for personal travel.

These travel miles should be considered assets of the campaign committee just like any other asset of the committee. They are no different than a computer, furniture, a car telephone, or a campaign checking account. The benefits of these assets inure to the campaign committee and Ohio Revised Code §3517.13(O) limits the use of these assets to the campaign committee in the manner outlined above. Therefore, no different than any other asset, the travel miles accumulated through the use of a campaign committee telephone account

may only be used for travel for the benefit of the campaign committee or for travel related to the duties of the office that the candidate holds, and not for personal travel.

Accordingly, it is the opinion of the Ohio Elections Commission, and you are so advised, that bonus travel miles accumulated from a campaign financed telephone account cannot be used for personal travel.

Sincerely,

  
Alphonse P. Cincione  
Chairman