**Private Organizations / Unofficial Activities**

**Leadership Rules of the Road**

**Private organizations (POs) are self-sustaining special interest groups**. They are NOT a part of the Air Force. They write and adhere to their own constitutions and by-laws. They elect their own leadership. They independently decide how to spend their funds and pay their own bills. They are responsible for paying their own bills. If they get sued, the PO will need to hire a civilian attorney. If someone is harmed by the activities of a PO, they will have to pay any damages. If a PO does not have enough money to pay its bills, every member of the PO may be held legally responsible.

The rules of the road for POs operating on an Air Force base are found in AFI 34-223 and AFI 36-3101. The rules are designed to **clearly** separate the Air Force and POs. As a member of Air Force leadership, you must always remember that a PO (even a professional military group such as CGOC, Top 3, etc.) is not a government entity

The Air Force has 2 official fundraising campaigns (AFAF and CFC). Outside these 2 campaigns, the Air Force NEVER fund raises. If you are contacted to “help get the word out” on an event or fundraising opportunity (PO or other off base entity), politely decline as it could give the appearance of government sanction or endorsement, and violates DoD 5500.7-R, Section 3-210.a. When in doubt, contact the legal office for guidance.

(1) Government resources are not available for use by POs. Military members, civilian employees, and contractors may not work for the PO or conduct PO fundraisers while on duty or in the workplace. POs must furnish their own equipment, supplies and other materials. The Air Force may provide POs a place to conduct a meeting of reasonable duration.

Government systems (daily bulletin boards and/or electronic public folders) may be used to provide notice of unofficial off-installation fundraising campaigns and volunteer requests if approved by the Installation Commander or designee.

(2) POs should never give the appearance that they are an official part of the Air Force. THEY ARE NOT. A PO may not use the seal, logo or insignia of the DoD or the Air Force. They cannot not use Air Force letterhead, rank, or Official titles. The PO cannot conduct its business using government resources.

POs must prominently display a disclaimer on all print or electronic media mentioning the POs name to avoid confusion that they are an official part of the Air Force. It must state: “THIS IS A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION. IT IS NOT A PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OR ANY OF ITS COMPONENTS AND IT HAS NO GOVERNMENTAL STATUS.”

POs cannot correspond with donors and businesses using government email. PO business must be conducted off-duty and out of uniform. The use of government email and/or a government signature block may confuse the public. Someone receiving the email may believe that it is an officially sanctioned Air Force activity.

(3) POs can only conduct fundraisers with permission. The Services Director approves all fundraisers. Approval is required foron base fundraisers

POs are limited to three fundraisers per calendar quarter. AFI 34-223 sets this limit.

POs can conduct limited fundraisers during CFC/AFAF with approval IAW the policy of the installation commander. However, during these campaigns, the only fundraisers that will be considered for approval will be those conducted by Air Force members and the funds raised must be exclusively benefit of Air Force members (internal…for us, by us).

Fundraisers cannot be conducted in the workplace. Areas like public entrances, community support facilities, picnic areas, parking lots etc. can be used to conduct fundraisers with proper approval.

(4) POs can accept donations. Commanders and first sergeants may NOT. Since a PO is not part of the Air Force, it may solicit for donations off-base. It may also accept donations from others. For example, if an honorary commander wanted to donate gift cards to a PO, the PO could accept. If an honorary commander wanted to donate gift cards to the Air Force for distribution to local Airman, the Installation Commander would have to accept them as a gift to the AF.

(5) POs can enter contracts. However, the contract can’t say it is between the Air Force and a business.

POs cannot represent or commit the Air Force to a contract. If a PO falsely represented that it was part of the Air Force, it would be fraud and grounds for the dissolution of the PO on an installation. Only Services can utilize the AF Commercial Sponsorship Program. Services cannot partner with POs for events without a waiver.

(6) POs do not have an automatic “right” to operate on the installation. POs are allowed to operate by permission of the installation commander. This permission can be withdrawn. Grounds for withdrawal of permission include failure to follow AFI 34-223, fraud and gross mismanagement.

(7) POs must follow the rules. POs may not sell or serve alcoholic beverages on base (exception is members may consume alcoholic beverages during a social meeting within the membership). They may not advertise for, make referrals to or encourage the use of a particular business. They must comply with federal, state and local laws. If required, the PO must file tax returns.

(8) Unofficial activities and Unit Unofficial Activities are also held to AFI 34-223 guidance. Unofficial activities with assets of less than $1,000 do not have to become a PO. However, they still must comply with applicable rules (to include fundraising stipulations) in AFI 34-223.

(9) Never use your government position (or allow others to use theirs) to apply pressure (real or perceived) to POs or subordinates. This is considered unlawful command influence.

(10) Do not confuse PO events with official government events. If the PO is paying for the event, then it is not an official function, it is a private organization function. A PO can accepts donations from local businesses. In return, the PO can recognize donors at the event. However, it should be a PO officer that thanks donors – not Air Force leadership.

(11) Situational Awareness of the POs that operate inside your area of control is critical to ensure that POs do not exceed their boundaries. Check to assure that orderly and timely turnover of records and funds are made when officers change, and report any irregularities to Services immediately.

If you have any specific questions or desire in depth training, contact Amy Brightbill at 454-4062