



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

CHRISTOPHER D. CERF
Acting Commissioner

March 2, 2012

Dr. Francis Eberle, Executive Director
National Science Teachers Association
840 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201-3092

Dear Dr. Eberle:

The New Jersey Department of Education is in receipt of the travel waiver application you submitted on behalf of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) requesting a waiver of the prohibition on overnight travel in order to facilitate the hosting of the initial NSTA Forum & Expo: Tools for STEM Education...Preparations and Applications for Elementary and Middle School Educators planned for May 17, 18, and 19, 2012 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

As you are aware, N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12 requires that boards of education must ensure that all school district travel expenditures are "in compliance with State travel payment guidelines as established by the Department of the Treasury..." State Department of the Treasury *OMB Circular 11-05* Section X.B specifically prohibits reimbursement of in-State overnight travel. However, the circular authorizes the Commissioner of Education "to grant waivers for overnight travel for school board members and school district employees to attend in-State conferences pursuant to guidelines issued by the Department of Education," *OMB Circular 11-05 Section I.B.8*.

The department has issued guidelines to reflect its determination that waivers of the overnight travel prohibition should be granted in only extremely limited circumstances, consistent with the clear legislative intent to reduce non-instructional expenses of public school districts, particularly those related to travel. The guidelines were incorporated into regulations adopted on December 18, 2008 at N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.11 and are posted on the department's web site at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap23a.pdf>.

Pursuant to the regulations, waivers will not be granted for reimbursement of lodging prior to the first day of the event or after check-out time of the last day of the event. Moreover, waivers will be considered only where the sponsoring organization can demonstrate that the conference is broad and multidisciplinary in scope, comprised of content-rich educational programming with important professional development opportunities and/or

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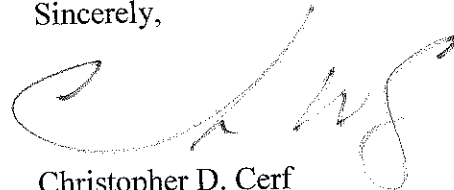
required training. In addition, the sponsoring organization must demonstrate that the conference's content, structure, scheduling and anticipated attendance necessitate that it be held on multiple consecutive days with overnight lodging.

After carefully reviewing your submission, the department finds that the initial NSTA Forum & Expo: Tools for STEM Education meets the criteria of the regulations. Specifically, I note that based upon the content of your submission, the conference promises to be comprised of content-rich instruction related programming focusing on emerging best practices for preparing today's students for tomorrow's workforce. I also note that the conference promises to attract attendees representing a wide geographical area, and will offer a comprehensive professional development opportunity including continuing education credits for New Jersey's education professionals requiring multiple days of programming. For these reasons, a travel waiver for the initial NSAT Forum and Expo: Tools for STEM Education is granted. As a result of this waiver, school districts will be able to reimburse attendees for overnight lodging on May 17 and 18, 2012 provided that the remaining conditions delineated in this letter are met. Reimbursement for registration fees, mileage and meals, subject to the limitations and conditions set forth in *OMB Circular 11-05* and *OMB Circular 11-09*, may also be permissible. School districts should ensure that they approve attendance only of board members and employees whose duties are related to the purposes of the conference or who are required to attend to meet continuing education requirements as a condition of continued employment.

Moreover, please be advised that the waiver of the prohibition for reimbursement for overnight lodging covers only those attendees whose home to event commute exceeds 50 miles. In other words, only those individuals whose one-way commute to the initial NSTA Forum and Expo: Tools for STEM Education in Atlantic City, New Jersey exceeds 50 miles may obtain reimbursement from their school district for overnight lodging for May 17 and 18, 2012.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation of NSTA's effort to provide a comprehensive professional development opportunity. My best wishes for a successful Forum and Expo.

Sincerely,



Christopher D. Cerf
Acting Commissioner

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c: Executive County Superintendents
Senior Staff