3-01/070.05 - Political Activity

Political activities permitted and prohibited by this Department are as follows:

Permitted Political Activities

An employee, on his/her own time, is permitted to participate in any of the following activities:

- Voting;
- Expressing opinions on all political subjects and candidates;
- Becoming a candidate for nomination or election to any partisan or nonpartisan office;
- Engaging in partisan and nonpartisan political activities as an individual or as a member of a group;
- Contributing to political campaign funds (but not in any county building);
- Joining political organizations and voting on any questions presented;
- Organizing and managing political clubs, serving as officer, delegate, or alternate, or as member of any committee; addressing such club on any partisan/nonpartisan political matter;
- Participating actively in political conventions such as by making motions or addresses or preparing resolutions;
- Attending political meetings, rallies, caucuses, etc., and organizing, preparing, or conducting such gatherings;
- Participating actively, serving as officer or on any committee of a political organization, such as precinct committeeman or chairman of the food committee at a campaign dinner;
- Joining a labor union, civic betterment group, or citizens association;
- Initiating, signing, or circulating partisan or nonpartisan nominating petitions; distributing campaign literature, badges, etc., (but not during working hours or on county property);
- Wearing badges or buttons, except while in uniform; displaying bumper stickers, pictures, or posters on automobile or in window of home;
- Speaking publicly or writing letters or articles for or against any political candidate; endorsing or opposing such candidate in a political advertisement broadcast, campaign literature or similar material;
- Publishing partisan newspaper;
- Managing the campaign of a political candidate; and/or
- Making political contributions.

  NOTE: The granting of leaves of absence without pay to engage in political activities is discretionary with the department head (Civil Service Rule 16.02).

Prohibited Political Activities

An employee is prohibited from participating in any of the following activities:

- Engaging in any political activity whatsoever during working hours or on county premises;
- Placing or attaching any political poster, sticker, sign, or similar material on county property;
- Using any county or Department asset or resource (e.g., computers, databases, personnel lists, etc.) for any political activity;

- Knowingly solicit political funds or contributions, directly or indirectly, on or off duty, from county employees, except for mass mailing or other means of solicitation made to a significant segment of the public which may include Department members county employees (Refer to 3-01/070.07, Prohibited Political Activity and Other Conflicts of Interest.);

  EXCEPTION: County officers and employees may solicit funds for passage or defeat of a ballot measure affecting their pay, hours, retirement, civil service, or other working conditions.

- Soliciting contributions, signatures, or other forms of support whether in person, electronically, county or U.S Mail, or any other form for political candidates, parties, or ballot measures within, upon, generated from, directed to, or intended to be received at/on county property at any time;

  EXAMPLE: County employees shall not solicit signatures for a nominating petition in a county building or on county property.

- Directly or indirectly using official authority to interfere with any election or influencing the political actions of other county employees or any member of the general public;

  EXAMPLE: County employees shall not attempt to influence anyone's vote by such methods as promising, or threatening to withhold, a job, promotion, or other benefit.

- Favoring or discriminating against any employee or person seeking county employment because of political opinions or affiliations;
- Participating in any political activities of any kind in uniform;
- Participating in any other political activities expressly prohibited by the county or the Department.

Department members shall not use the fact of their county employment or their official title to support a political candidate in any manner that would suggest they are doing so in their official capacity.

A Department member who is a candidate for political office may indicate the fact of his/her employment and job title only for informational purposes and as evidence, where applicable, of his/her qualifications for the office sought. It must be clear, however, that the positions taken by the candidate and all fundraising or other campaigning are undertaken in the candidate’s individual capacity and NOT as a county employee. Moreover, no statements or other representations may be made to suggest that the county/Department supports or endorses the candidate.

NOTE: Employees who are subject to the basic political activity prohibitions while on active duty shall be equally subject to such restrictions when on paid or unpaid leave (Political Activity Guidelines, adopted by the Board of Supervisors, July 2, 1974).

Campaign Contributions - Prohibitions

- Department members who are a candidate for elected office are prohibited from making employment decisions regarding any member from whom the candidate has accepted a financial contribution; and/or
- Department members shall not utilize any Department resource (e.g., computers, databases, etc.) to solicit campaign contributions; and/or
- On-duty Department members shall not request another employee to solicit campaign contributions on his or her behalf or on behalf of any other person.

For purposes of this policy, an employment decision shall include administrative investigations, appraisals of promotability, promotions, annual employee performance evaluations, selection for coveted positions, or any other decision which may have an impact on any aspect of the employee's employment.