

## **GUIDELINES FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

These are guidelines for political activity that apply to employees of agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction and to officials appointed by the Governor. Failure to follow these guidelines could result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

### **What Everyone Can Do**

### **What No One Can Do**

### **What No One Whose Principal Employment is in Connection with an Activity Financed in Whole or in part by Federal Funds Can Do**

### **What No Civil Service-Covered Employee Can Do**

### **What Senior Level Executive Branch Employees Should Not Do**

### **When Prior Approval is Required**

### **Employees as Candidates for Public Office**

#### **What Everyone Can Do:**

- Register to vote as a member of a political party or as an independent.
- Vote in primary, general, and special elections.
- Give personal funds to the person, campaign, cause, or party of your choice (if not otherwise improper, such as exerting undue or improper influence, etc.).
- Put a bumper sticker on your personal vehicle, but not on a Commonwealth vehicle.
- Express your personal political views as a private citizen.
- Sign a petition to get a candidate on a ballot or other political petition.
- Place a sign in your yard.
- Attend political gatherings, such as rallies or fundraisers, during non-work hours or otherwise when not on duty.

Employees and officials may engage in the above activities without obtaining prior approval from their agency.<sup>1</sup> However, as discussed below, certain political activities may require prior approval, and failure to obtain such prior approval could result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Certain agencies may have agency-specific requirements for the approval of political activity. For more information on agency-specific requirements, please contact your agency's Human Resource Manager.

## **What No One Can Do:**

- Participate in political activity—such as campaigning, fundraising, canvassing or poll watching—during work hours.  
**Note:** Employees are eligible to use up to two (2) hours per calendar year for the purpose of voting in primary, general, and special elections.
- Coerce any other Commonwealth employee to:
  - participate in political activity;
  - contribute time, money, or services to a political candidate, campaign, cause, party, or other political issue or event; or
  - support a particular person, campaign, cause, party, or other political issue or event.
- Volunteer as a poll worker (judge of election, majority/minority inspector of election, and in some cases clerks and machine inspectors/operators) at a polling location.
- Participate in political activity that requires approval, without first obtaining the necessary approval (see “When Prior Approval Is Required” on page 3).

In addition, [Executive Order 1980-18, Code of Conduct](#), as amended by [Executive Order 2023-04, Executive Branch Employee Gift Ban](#) (Gift Ban), prohibits employees and officials from accepting or soliciting certain things, such as gifts of more than nominal or de minimis value, from anyone who: 1) is seeking to obtain business or an outcome from or has financial relations with the Commonwealth; 2) conducts operations or activities that are regulated by the Commonwealth; 3) is engaged, either as principal or attorney, in proceedings before the Commonwealth or in court proceedings in which the Commonwealth is an adverse party; or 4) has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the official duty of the employee or official. Examples of prohibited gifts include tickets to political events or fundraisers. For more information on the Gift Ban, please read the [Gift Ban FAQs](#), which are available on the Office of Administration’s website.

## **What No Employee/Official, Whose Principal Employment is in Connection with an Activity Financed in Whole or in part by Federal Funds, Can Do:**

Employees and officials who are covered by the federal Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 1501–1508, *as amended*, cannot:

- be a candidate for an elected office if the employee’s or official’s salary is paid completely, directly or indirectly, by loans or grants made by the United States or a federal agency.
- use their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office.
- directly or indirectly, coerce, attempt to coerce, command, or advise another employee to lend, pay, or contribute anything of value to a political candidate, campaign, cause, party, or other political issue or event.

### **What No Civil Service-Covered Employee Can Do:**

The Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) restricts employees in the classified service (i.e., employees holding civil service positions) from engaging in certain political activities **unless** furloughed or on a leave of absence, as defined by the CSRA. For a complete list of restrictions, please review [Section 2705\(b\) of the CSRA](#).

### **What Senior Level Employees Should Not Do:**

No political activity should be undertaken by a Senior Level Employees under the Governor's jurisdiction without first obtaining guidance from the General Counsel.

### **When Prior Approval for Political Activity is Required:**

All employees and officials must obtain **prior** approval to engage in political activity that:

- involves running for or holding a public office, whether through election, delegation, or appointment;
- would require the use of leave;
- involves compensation or remuneration;
- interferes with the efficient performance of the employee's/official's Commonwealth job duties;
- presents an actual conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof, with the employee's or official's Commonwealth employment, including the employee's or official's work hours; or
- is of such a consistency and duration that the activity constitutes supplementary employment, regardless of whether the employee or official is, or is not, compensated for the political activity.

Prior approval must be sought by completing and submitting a Supplementary Employment Request using the [Employee Resource Center](#). For more information on the approval process, please review [Management Directive 515.18 Amended, Supplementary Employment](#).

Additionally, as noted in the section entitled "What Everyone Can Do", certain agencies may have agency-specific requirements for the approval of political activity. For more information on agency-specific requirements, please contact your agency's Human Resource Manager.

### **Employees as Candidates for Public Office**

It is imperative that a Commonwealth employee or official, who is seeking to hold a public office through election, delegation, or appointment, follow the guidelines set forth above and obtain approval **prior** to taking any action to become a candidate for, or otherwise accepting, the public office. This includes canvassing and circulating nomination petitions.

Employees and officials are **not** permitted to remain employed by the Commonwealth while

running for a full-time public office. Additionally, employees and officials are prohibited from engaging in any activity that would be a real or apparent conflict of interest or impair the trust and confidence of the public in the employee's or the official's ability to carry out their Commonwealth duties. Under no circumstances shall an employee or official use Commonwealth equipment, information, or supplies, to engage in political activity, nor shall they engage in any political activity while on work time, in Commonwealth facilities and on Commonwealth property, or when performing official business for the Commonwealth.

**QUESTIONS?** Refer questions regarding the federal Hatch Act to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel by telephone at 800.85.HATCH or 800.854.2824 or by email at [hatchact@osc.gov](mailto:hatchact@osc.gov). For any other questions, please contact your agency's Human Resource Office.