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Political activities guidance 2024

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Download date	2024-10-08 22:34:38
Link to Item	https://dc.statelibrary.sc.gov/handle/10827/55430



Political Activities Guidance 2024

The Department of Defense encourages all military and civilian personnel to register and vote.

Political activity is defined as “an activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office or partisan political group.” Because rules vary depending on an employee’s status, it is extremely important that employees who are engaging in political activity know which rules apply. DoD personnel must consider contextual factors when engaging in political activity, on and off duty, especially on social media.

Active Duty – T32/T10 AGR & Army and Air National Guard M-Day service members while in uniform, in the workplace, or otherwise on duty/military orders, regardless of duration or purpose

When does this guidance apply?
24/7 – on or off-duty

CAN express opinions and participate in peaceful, non-partisan public demonstrations when OFF-DUTY and NOT in uniform

CAN express opinions on political candidates and issues, make monetary contributions to a political campaign or organization, and attend political events, in their personal capacity as a spectator when OFF-DUTY and NOT in uniform

CAN'T engage in partisan political activity, such as soliciting or engaging in fundraiser activities, serve as the sponsor of a partisan club, or speak before a partisan gathering, or act in a manner that could imply National Guard, or DoD, endorsement of a political party, campaign, or candidate in a partisan election

CAN'T actively participate in a public demonstration that is organized by a political party, campaign, or candidate, or is likely to become violent

CAN'T wear military uniforms at political campaign events, whether on or off-duty, or use government equipment (or personal equipment while on duty) to engage in political activities

DoD Civilians – Technicians; and competitive and excepted Title 5

When does this guidance apply?
While in the workplace, to include remote or telework, or otherwise on duty

CAN engage in political activity on behalf of a political party or partisan political group or candidate in a partisan election as long as it is not on duty or in the workplace

CAN while in their personal capacities, volunteer with a political campaign or political organization. Examples of permitted volunteer activities include: organizing political rallies and meetings, making phone calls on behalf of a candidate, serving as a delegate to a party convention, and working for a political party to get out the vote. These employees are, however, prohibited from soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions

CAN'T engage in political activity while on-duty or in a Federal building. Specifically, an employee may not send or forward political emails, post political messages to social media, even if the employee is using their personal phone or computer

CAN'T use government equipment to engage in political activities

CAN'T act in a manner that could imply National Guard, or DoD, endorsement of a political party, campaign, or candidate in a partisan election

Social Media

Official U.S. Army Guidance: <https://www.army.mil/socialmedia/personal/index.html>

Civilian personnel may generally express their personal views on public issues or political candidates via personal accounts on social media platforms when off-duty and not in a government building

Personnel who identify themselves as DoD employees, by title or image, must clearly and prominently state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and do not imply DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign, or cause (see **DoD disclaimers - Figure 1**)

Employees may follow or like a political party or candidate running for partisan office on social media, but they may not post links to or share from the account of a political party or candidate running for partisan office. Such activity is deemed to constitute participation in political activities

Do not suggest or ask anyone to make financial contributions, whether on or off-duty

Service members must also be careful not to comment, post, or link to material that violates the Uniform Code of Military Justice or service regulation, including showing contempt for public officials, releasing sensitive information, or posting unprofessional material that is prejudicial to good order and discipline



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Avoid use of DoD titles, insignia, uniforms or symbols in a way that could imply DoD sanction or endorsement of the content. A disclaimer in the bio of a personal account or in the caption or first comment of each relevant post is recommended if the personal account content includes DoD titles, insignia, uniforms, or symbols.

Disclaimer (figure 1):

“The views and opinions presented herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of DoD or the Army. Appearance of, or reference to, any commercial products or services does not constitute DoD or Army endorsement of those products or services. The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute DoD or Army endorsement of the linked websites, or the information, products or services therein.”

Resources: DoD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces; the Hatch Act; AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, chapter 5; AFI 51-508, Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly of Air Force Personnel; and DoDI 5400.18, DoDI 5400.18, DoDI 5405.03, DoDI 5535.12, DoDD 5122.11.

DoDD 1344.10, paragraph 4.1.5: “Activities not expressly prohibited may be contrary to the spirit and intent of this Directive. Any Activity that may be reasonably viewed as directly or indirectly associating the Department of Defense...or any component of these Departments with a partisan political activity or is otherwise contrary to the spirit and intention of this Directive shall be avoided.”

General guidance on the Hatch Act (U.S. Office of Special Counsel): <https://osc.gov/Services/Pages/HatchAct.aspx>