

Political Activities of Employees

The Board of Governors adopts the following policy concerning political activities by University employees.

I. University employees retain the rights and obligations of citizenship provided in the Constitution and laws of the State of North Carolina and the Constitution and laws of the United States of America. Employees are encouraged to exercise fully and freely their right to participate or refrain from participating in political processes without fear of penalty or reprisal, consistent with the University's commitment to encouraging the full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, service, and publication. Certain types of activities by University employees related to political processes, however, may be incompatible with the general responsibilities of employment or with the particular responsibilities of University employment.

A. Applicability. This policy applies to all University employees who are exempt from the State Personnel Act (Chapter 126 of the General Statutes) pursuant to G.S. 126-5(c1).¹

B. Definitions. For purposes of this policy:

1. "Campaign" or "campaigning" means all acts done by a candidate and his or her adherents to obtain votes to be cast toward a nomination or in an election.
2. "Candidate" means an individual who seeks nomination or election to any elective public office whether or not the person is elected. Absent any other evidence of candidacy, an individual is deemed to be a candidate if the individual has received political contributions or made expenditures or has consented to another person receiving contributions or making expenditures with a view to bringing about the individual's nomination or election.
3. "Election" includes a primary, special, runoff, or general election.
4. "Employee" means an individual who is employed by the University of North Carolina and is exempt from the State Personnel Act (Chapter 126 of the General Statutes) pursuant to G.S. 126-5(c1).
5. "Endorse" means a public statement by an individual expressing support or approval of another individual's candidacy for public office.
6. "On duty" means the time period when an employee is: (a) in a pay status other than paid leave, compensatory time off, or excused or authorized absence (including leave without pay); (b) representing the University of North Carolina or any constituent institution or subdivision thereof in an official capacity; or (c) expected to perform services for which he or she receives compensation from the University. Provided, however, an employee who is or may be expected to perform his or her duties on a twenty-four hour per-day basis shall not be considered on duty except during regularly scheduled working hours or at other times when the employee is actually performing the duties of his or her office.
7. "Partisan" when used as an adjective means related to a political party.
8. "Partisan political group" means any committee, club, or other organization which is affiliated with a political party or candidate for public office in a partisan election, or organized for a partisan purpose, or which engages in partisan political activity.

¹ For employees subject to the State Personnel Act (SPA), political activities are governed by Article 5, Chapter 126 of the North Carolina General Statutes, policies adopted by the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) and campus policies adopted in accordance therewith.

9. "Partisan political office" means any public office for which any candidate is nominated or elected as representing a political party, but does not include any office or position within a political party or affiliated organization.
10. "Political activity" means actions directed toward the success or failure of a candidate for public office, political party, or partisan political group including, but not limited to, campaigning, political management, and soliciting financial contributions for political purposes.
11. "Political management" means taking an active part in the direction, supervision, or management of a partisan political group or a campaign for public office.
12. "Political party" means a national political party, a state political party, or an affiliated organization.
13. "Political purpose" means an objective of promoting or opposing a political party, candidate for public office, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.
14. "Public office" means any national, state, or local governmental position of public trust and responsibility, whether elective or appointive, which is created, prescribed, or recognized by constitution, statute, or ordinance (other than within the University of North Carolina).
15. "Senior officers" means the president, the chancellors, and the senior academic and administrative officers (SAAO) described in Policy 300.1.1, subpart I.A., who are at the rank of vice president, vice chancellor, provost, dean, and other positions of equivalent rank and responsibility.
16. "Solicit" means to request expressly of another person that he or she contribute something to a candidate, a campaign, a political party, or partisan political group.

II. Political Activities.

A. Permissible Activities. An employee may engage in political activity to the extent not expressly prohibited by law or applicable policy.

1. Permissible activities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Registering, voting, and otherwise participating in elections;
 - b. Becoming a candidate for and holding public office in accordance with University policy;
 - c. Expressing opinions privately and publicly on political subjects;
 - d. Participating in political organizations;
 - e. Participating in political campaigns;
 - f. Engaging in political management; and
 - g. Soliciting, accepting, receiving, and making financial contributions for political purposes to political parties, partisan political groups, and campaign committees of candidates for public office.
2. Nothing in this policy prohibits, or otherwise limits, teaching, inquiry, classroom discussion or discourse concerning political issues, including campaigns, candidates, political groups or issues in campaigns for public office, that are within the subject matter of any academic program, course, curriculum, or study.

3. An employee may participate fully in public affairs in a manner that does not compromise his or her efficiency or integrity as an employee or the neutrality, efficiency, or integrity of the University constituent institution or unit in which he or she is employed.

4. The political opinions assumed by employees are personal ones, and employees must ensure that they do not imply that such opinions are endorsed by the University.

B. Prohibited Activities. An employee may not:

1. Participate in political activity while on duty;

2. Use the authority of his or her position, University funds, services, supplies, equipment, information technology resources, vehicles, or other University property, to endorse, campaign for, secure support for or oppose any candidate, political party, partisan political group, referendum, or issue in an election, or affect the results thereof; or

3. Make any promise of preferential treatment (or actually confer such preference) or make any threat of detrimental treatment (or actually impose such detriment) to any person, including with respect to any condition or incident of employment over which the employee has authority, control, or influence, for purposes of inducing support of or opposition to any candidate for public office, political party, or partisan political group.

C. Senior Officers. The University will supply to any candidate for public office information of a substantive nature, whether it is information on agriculture, economics, education or any other topic. It is important that all candidates know they can receive factual information from the University, but it should be made clear that the administration of the University will not be identified with any candidate or any party. Accordingly, in addition to the restrictions set forth in subpart 3.a., above, a senior officer may not:

1. Solicit, accept, or receive financial contributions from other persons or organizations on behalf of any candidate for partisan political office or the campaign committee of any candidate for partisan political office; or

2. Endorse or oppose a candidate for partisan political office or a candidate for political party office in a political advertisement, broadcast, campaign literature, or similar material.

D. Violations. Violation of the prohibitions contained in subparagraphs B. and C., above, shall be cause for appropriate disciplinary action, including discharge from employment.

III. Other Matters.

A. Effective Date. The requirements of this policy shall be effective upon adoption by the Board of Governors.

B. Policies of Constituent Institutions. The board of trustees of each constituent institution shall adopt policies governing political activities of employees. Policies adopted or substantively amended by a board of trustees regarding political activities of employees shall be effective upon approval by the president.

C. Relation to Other Laws. This policy is designed to supplement, and does not purport in any way to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments and rights which may govern or limit the political activities of employees of the State of North Carolina.

D. Regulations and Guidelines. This policy shall be implemented and applied in accordance with such regulations and guidelines as may be adopted by the president.