



2022 Faculty/Staff Political Activity Frequently Asked Questions

CSU encourages all faculty and staff to fully and freely exercise their constitutional right to vote, as well as to express their personal opinions regarding candidates and issues. However, these rights must be exercised in a way that does not suggest that CSU is endorsing a candidate or cause. The guidance below answers some basic questions about permissible political and campaign activity. For more information, contact the [Office of General Counsel](#).

I. Important Note for Classified Employees: Employees in classified service of the State of Ohio are subject to additional restrictions on political activities under Ohio law. “Classified service” for the purpose of political activity includes “all persons in active pay status serving in the competitive classified civil service of the State,” and “Political activity” is defined as “partisan activities, campaigns, and elections involving primaries, partisan ballots, or partisan candidates.” Ohio Admin. Code § 123:1-46-02.

A. Prohibited activities for classified employees include, but are not limited to, the following. Ohio Admin. Code Ann. §123:1-46-02:

1. Candidacy for public office in a partisan election;
2. Candidacy for public office in a nonpartisan general election if the nomination to candidacy was obtained in a partisan primary or through the circulation of nominating petitions identified with a political party;
3. Filing of petitions meeting statutory requirements for partisan candidacy to elective office;
4. Circulation of official nominating petitions for any candidate participating in a partisan election;
5. Service in an elected or appointed office in any partisan political organization;
6. Acceptance of a party-sponsored appointment to any office normally filled by partisan elections;
7. Campaigning by writing for publications, by distributing political material, or by writing or making speeches on behalf of a candidate for partisan elective office, when such activities are directed toward party success;

8. Solicitation, either directly or indirectly, of any assessment, contribution or subscription, either monetary or in-kind, for any political party or political candidate;
9. Solicitation of the sale, or actual sale, of political party tickets;
10. Partisan activities at the election polls, such as solicitation of votes for other than nonpartisan candidates and nonpartisan issues;
11. Service as, witness or challenger, for any party or partisan committee;
12. Participation in political caucuses of a partisan nature; and
13. Participation in a political action committee which supports partisan activity.

B. Classified employees are permitted to engage in the following types of political activities, provided the employee is off-duty.

1. Registration and voting;
2. Expression of opinions, either oral or written;
3. Voluntary financial contributions to political candidates or organizations;
4. Circulation of nonpartisan petitions or petitions stating views on legislation;
5. Attendance at political rallies;
6. Signing nominating petitions in support of individuals;
7. Display of political materials in the employee's home or on the employee's property;
8. Wearing political badges or buttons, or the display of political stickers on private vehicles; and
9. Serving as a precinct election official under section 3501.22 of the Revised Code.
10. A complete listing of the applicable rules regarding political activity is found in Ohio Admin. Code §123:1-46-02.

II. FAQ's on Faculty/Staff Political Activities:

The following FAQ's apply to classified employees only to the extent that the activity described is permitted by law (see Section I above and Ohio Admin. Code § 123:1-46-02). Note further that these FAQ's are not exhaustive. Considerable judgment in the application of certain principles discussed below is likely to be required. Please consult the Office of General Counsel if you have questions or need additional guidance.

Q1. Generally, what are the rules?

A1. Employees, regardless of designation as classified or unclassified, are restricted from using their university position, university facilities and resources, or the university name in any form that suggests any form of institutional political endorsement of any candidate or ballot issue. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use of University letterhead and logos in any announcement, advertising, publication, or correspondence;
- Use of University office supplies, equipment, or staff services;
- Use of University office space and other facilities (please see question below on use of campus facilities for political events);
- Use of University email, websites, social media accounts, message boards or other electronic forum owned and/or operated by the University;
- Providing or using University mailing or email lists; and
- Use of employee work time.

Q2. What is political or campaign activity?

A2. For the purpose of this guidance, political activity or campaign activity includes fundraising or advocating for or against a political candidate or ballot measure, and performing work for a candidate, ballot measure or political party. If you are not sure whether something you want to do is a political or campaign activity, please contact the Office of General Counsel.

Q3. May I, in my employment capacity with CSU, or through my office/department invite a political candidate to campus?

A3. You or your office/department may invite a candidate to campus in one of two ways:

- As part of a debate or candidate forum in which all legally qualified candidates are invited and given equal opportunity to speak; or
- In a non-candidate capacity, where the individual was chosen to speak for reasons other than his or her candidacy and where no political or campaign activity is conducted, or reference to the election is made.

Q4. May I invite a political candidate to campus in my individual (non-work) capacity?

A4. Yes. You may invite a candidate to campus in your individual capacity, so long as you reserve campus facilities in the same way that members of the general public do, including making any required payment. Because of your affiliation with the University, invitations and other material related to the event must include the following disclaimer:

This event is sponsored by_____. The use of Cleveland State University facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by Cleveland State University. Cleveland State University does not endorse any candidate or ballot measure in this or any other election.

Q5. May the student organization I advise invite a political candidate to campus?

A5. Yes. The student organization you advise may invite a candidate to campus and invite the University community, so long as the organization reserves campus facilities in the same way that student organizations usually do, If an event sponsored by a student organization is open to the general public, the organization must reserve the campus facilities in the same way that members of the general public reserves campus facilities, including making any required payment. Because of the student organization’s affiliation with the University, invitations or other material must include the following disclaimer:

This event is sponsored by_____. The use of Cleveland State University facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by Cleveland State University. Cleveland State University does not endorse any candidate or ballot measure in this or any other election.

Q6. May my office/department conduct a voter registration drive?

A6. Yes. Your office or department may sponsor a non-partisan voter registration drive, so long as the activities and location are not chosen in order to target voters of a particular party or help a particular candidate.

Q7. May I or my office/department raffle off prizes such as gift cards or other things having monetary value in exchange for an individual’s promise to vote or to reward a person for voting?

A7. No. This is illegal under federal law and state law.

Q8. May I endorse a candidate?

A8. Yes, but care must be taken to ensure that your endorsement does not appear to be an endorsement by CSU. Accordingly, you may not provide endorsements on University letterhead, or use any University logo in any correspondence related to your endorsement. If an endorsement identifies you using your CSU title, you must clarify that use of your name does not indicate endorsement by CSU.

Q9. May I sign a petition in support of an issue/candidate?

A9. Yes, but only outside of working hours.

Q10. May programs or departments endorse a ballot measure is fundamental to the academic integrity of my program or department?

A10. No. While issue advocacy by the University may seem beneficial to the University in certain circumstances, it is never permissible for the University, including a particular University program or department, to endorse (or oppose) a specific ballot measure.

Q11. May I distribute flyers about a candidate/ballot measure?

A11. Non-classified employees may do so outside of working hours, but not in any way that suggests that you are doing so in your University capacity or on behalf of the University. You may not distribute flyers to, or otherwise solicit votes from, students or anyone who may work for you or is in your chain of command. You may not use any University resources in connection with the distribution of flyers.

Q12. May I host or participate in a political fundraiser for a candidate?

A12. Yes, but only during non-working hours and away from the University. You may not invite, or otherwise solicit contributions from students or anyone who works for you or is in your chain of command. You may not use any University resources in connection with the fundraising event.

Q13. May my office/department host a fundraiser for an issue/candidate?

A13. No.

Q14. Can I wear a button, t-shirt, mask, or other article of clothing with a political message/affiliation while at work?

A14. Wearing a button, t-shirt, mask or other article of clothing with a political message/affiliation while teaching/performing one's job can be problematic as it may be perceived as CSU, through its employees, endorsing a candidate/party, which is not permissible under law. Please consider your role in terms of interfacing with students and the public as well as your supervisory status relative to employees and exercise prudence in this area.

Q15. May I give my class assignments related to the election?

A15. Yes. You may establish genuine curricular activities aimed at educating students about the political process. You may not use a class assignment to influence your students in favor or against a

particular candidate / ballot measure. You may not give your students credit (or any other thing of value) for voting.

Q16. May I run for office?

A16. The answer to this question depends on your employment status and the nature of the office you are seeking. Please contact the Office of General Counsel before taking any action to run for office.

Q17. Can I use my CSU Zoom, Teams or other CSU account to hold or sponsor a fundraiser for the candidate I support?

A17. No. It is not permissible to use a CSU resource to support a candidate.