

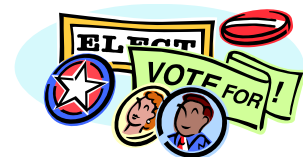
Ethics Tip of the Month



Political Campaigning

The Ethics in Public Service Act states that no state officer or state employee may use or authorize the use of facilities of an agency, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Knowing acquiescence by a person with the authority to direct, control, or influence the actions of the state officer or state employee using public resources for political campaigning is also a violation.

“Facilities” is broadly defined and includes agency office space and working hours. It also includes voice-mail and e-mail on state phones and computer systems. Personal clothing and personal vehicles, however, would not be considered an agency facility. Therefore, the Ethics Act would not absolutely prohibit an agency policy that permits wearing typical political buttons on an individual’s clothing or affixing a political bumper sticker to a personal vehicle. If employees interact with the public they are urged to exercise caution because wearing political buttons while interacting with the public or displaying political signs in public areas, could result in prohibited campaigning or violate their agency policy.



Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:

- Using work hours to solicit signatures for ballot propositions, to raise funds for or against propositions or candidates, organize campaigns for propositions or candidates.
- Displaying political material in or on state vehicles.
- Displaying or distributing campaign material on state owned or operated premises.¹



Employees may campaign for or against a ballot proposition or candidate on their own personal time (this includes authorized leave time), away from the office.

¹This does not include property considered to be a “neutral open forum,” which is public property open to all expression that is protected under the First Amendment, i.e., streets, parks, and sidewalks or if the state intentionally opens a nontraditional forum for public discourse.