



2020 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](#).

*Please note that during the current COVID pandemic, all on campus events are subject to COVID related restrictions and must be approved through [Conference Services](#) prior to being scheduled on campus.

Q1. What is political or campaign activity?

A1. For the purpose of this guidance, political activity or campaign activity includes fundraising for a candidate or in support or opposition to a ballot measure, 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 political or campaign activity, please contact the Office of General Counsel.

Q2. Generally, what are the rules?

A2. The guidance in this document is directed towards ensuring that two rules are followed:

- The University may not participate in political/campaign activity. As a result, care must be taken to ensure that personal political/campaign activity does not suggest that the University is participating in political/campaign activity; and
- No University resources may be used for political/campaign activity.

For these purposes, University resources include, but are not limited to:

- University letterhead and logos;
- Office supplies;
- Office space and other facilities (please see question below on use of campus facilities for political events);
- Photocopiers, telephones, and faxes;
- Email, University websites, etc.; and
- Employee work time.

Q3. May I or 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 campaign activity is conducted, or reference to the election is made.

You may also 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, in order to avoid confusion, 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.

Q4. May the student organization I advise invite a political candidate to campus?

A4. The student organization you advise may invite a candidate to campus and invite the University community, so long as it reserves campus facilities in the same way that student organizations usually do. If an event is open to the general public, the organization should reserve the campus facilities in the same way that members of the general public do, 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.

Q5. May my office/department conduct a voter registration drive?

A5. 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.

Q6. 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?

A6. No. This is illegal under federal law and state law.

Q7. May I endorse a candidate?

A7. Yes, but care must be taken to make sure that your endorsement is not seen as endorsement by CSU. So, you may not provide endorsements on University letterhead, or use the University logo in any correspondence related to your endorsement. If an endorsement identifies you using your CSU title, you must seek to clarify that use of your name does not indicate endorsement by CSU.

Q8. May I sign a petition in support of an issue/candidate?

A8. Yes, but only outside of working hours. Please also note that there are some state law restrictions on classified employees filing or circulating nominating petitions for signature. If you are a classified employee, please check with the Office of General Counsel before conducting those activities.

Q9. A ballot measure is fundamental to the academic integrity of my program or department – for us this is not a political issue. May we endorse the ballot measure?

A9. No. While issue advocacy by the University may be permissible in certain circumstances, it is never permissible for the University, including a particular program or department, to endorse (or oppose) a specific ballot measure.

Q10. May I distribute flyers about a candidate/ballot measure?

A10. Non-classified employees may do so, but state law prohibits these activities for classified employees. If you are not a classified employee, you may only distribute flyers outside of working hours and you may not do so in your classes or in any way that suggests that you are doing so in your official capacity or on behalf of the University. You should not distribute flyers to, or otherwise solicit votes from, your 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 distribution of flyers.

Q11. May I host a fundraiser for a candidate?

A11. Non-classified employees may do so, but state law prohibits these activities for classified employees. If you are not a classified employee, you may only host a fundraising event, or take any action in connection with the fundraising event, outside of working hours and away from the University. You may not invite, or otherwise solicit contributions from, your 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.

Q12. May my office/department host a fundraiser for an issue/candidate?

A12. No.

Q13. Can I wear a button, t-shirt, mask, or other article of clothing with a political message/affiliation while at work?

A13. 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 - it could be seen 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.

Q14. May I give my class assignments related to the election?

A14. 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.

Q15. May I run for office?

A15. 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.

Q16. Can I use my CSU Zoom or other CSU account to hold or sponsor a fundraiser for the candidate I support?

A16. No. This would be using a CSU resource to support a candidate, which is not permissible. You should use a personal virtual conferencing account instead.