



Public Employees and Political Campaigns

A local option levy for Portland Public Schools is on the November election ballot, along with other measures and candidates. These guidelines will help you comply with very specific electioneering laws for public employees and what they may, and may not, do during work hours. **In short: Do not use school district resources to advocate a position for or against a ballot measure. Public resources mean money, staff time during working hours, vehicles or travel allowances, or facilities and equipment.**

While on the job during working hours, public employees MAY:

- **Prepare and distribute impartial written material or make an impartial presentation that discusses election subjects.**
- Wear political buttons at any time. (However, you may not display campaign signs or distribute campaign materials during public employee work time.)
- Address election-related issues while on the job, in a factual and impartial manner, if such activity is legitimately within scope of employee's normal duties.

While on the job during working hours, public employees MAY NOT:

- Collect funds, receive or distribute advocacy materials or prepare correspondence on behalf of a political campaign.
- Prepare or distribute written material, post website information, transmit emails or make a presentation that advocates a political position (be careful that any information about a measure is impartially worded and balanced).
- Use work time to post website information, transmit emails or make a presentation that advocates a political position.
- Make outgoing calls to schedule or organize campaign events or other political activity on behalf of an elected official or political committee.
- Grant unequal access to public facilities to candidates or political committees.

These restrictions do not apply while a public employee is on their own time.

Public employees may use personal time, lunch hours, breaks, days off (when the employee is considered to be off duty) for political activity. Salaried public employees, whose hours are less defined, are advised to keep records when appropriate to verify that any such political activity occurs while off duty.

Any such activity must be voluntary – the employee must not feel obligated to participate in the political activity by co-workers or supervisors. Public employees may, on their own, off-duty time may send letters to the editor or participate in any other lawful political activity, as long as they do not use district resources (such as photocopiers, supplies, computers or email accounts) in that activity.

If you have questions, please contact Jollee Patterson, district legal counsel, at jpatters@pps.k12.or.us or 503-916-3570. Your employee association may also offer guidance.