

STAFF PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Code **GBI** Issued **12/01**

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for staff participation in political activities.

Employee candidacy

The board recognizes that employees of the center have the same fundamental civic responsibilities and privileges as other citizens. Among these are campaigning for an elective public office or holding an elective or appointive public office to the extent that neither activity conflicts with the employee's duties in the center.

An employee who wishes to offer for an elective or an appointive position on a governing board or agency must verify in writing to the director that such position will not conflict with state or federal law and/or regulations concerning the employee's right to serve (dual office holding, conflict of interest, etc.).

The employee must notify his/her immediate supervisor in writing at the earliest possible moment. The notice must include the position sought and the employee's intention as to the possibility of continued employment and the conditions of that employment.

The immediate supervisor and the employee will meet with the director to discuss obvious and/or implied difficulties that might conflict with the public interest. The director will call this meeting and notify the employee as to the administration's recommendations in the matter.

The director will report the data, along with his/her recommendation, to the board at its next regular meeting. The board will make the final decision as to whether the activities proposed by the employee are consistent with his/her services to the center and in the best interests of education in the center.

In connection with campaigning and/or holding public office, an employee must **not** do the following.

- use school system facilities, equipment or supplies
- discuss his/her campaign with center personnel, students, parents/legal guardians or citizens during work hours
- use any time during normal work hours for campaigning purposes, either through his/her own activities or through the activities of a supporter/colleague

Political activities in schools

The board firmly believes in the democratic process and in those principles that are a part of the heritage of our nation. The board also believes in the exposure of mature students to persons of political prominence and/or current events as a means through which students are made aware of current events in their community, state, nation and world along with the effects of these events upon their individual lives.

However, the board opposes those actions that transform the schools into arenas for political activity, including advocating any political party or any candidate for public office. Such activity

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can and does create friction within the center and is thus disruptive to the educational processes and programs of the center.

Therefore, the board directs that no one may distribute cards, flyers, pamphlets, brochures, signs, pins, badges or any other political paraphernalia espousing any political party or candidate at any time on center property.

Further, no employee will, during the school day, on center property or at a center-sponsored event, influence or attempt to influence any student, teacher, parent/legal guardian or other person to vote for or against any candidate. During the school day, on center property or at a center-sponsored event, no employee will contact any student, teacher, parent/legal guardian or other person for the purpose of espousing any candidate or political party or use any center property for the purpose of espousing any candidate or political party.

No center publication will advertise or accept for advertisement any material promoting any political party or any candidate for public office.

Nothing in this policy is to be construed as precluding mock elections, debates, conventions or other simulated political activities where the activity is primarily intended as an educational experience.

Adopted 12/18/01

Legal references:

A. U. S. Code:

1. Hatch Act may apply to employees paid with Federal funds or working in activities supported by Federal funds. To obtain scope of coverage and permissible activities, contact General Counsel, U.S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C. or Atlanta Regional Office (Reference - S. C. Attorney General's Opinion, 1973-74, No. 3749, p. 117).

B. S. C. Code, 1976, as amended:

1. Section 2-1-120 - A South Carolina teacher elected to the General Assembly is exempted from requirements of recertification and retains his/her teaching certificate while serving in the legislature.
2. Section 8-13-10, et. seq. - Ethics, conduct, campaign practices and disclosures.