

ENGAGING IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY

City employees may be involved in most political activities, such as contributing money to a candidate for office or working on a political campaign. But there are certain guidelines you must follow.

Misuse of Position/Resources

Public servants may never use their City positions to help a political candidate or a political campaign.

Example: You may not send out a fundraising letter on City letterhead or use a City telephone to make calls on behalf of a candidate or photocopy a campaign flier on a City photocopier.

Coercion/Perceived Coercion

Public servants may not coerce anyone, or **even request** a subordinate to work on a political campaign or contribute to a candidate or party. (Requesting someone whose evaluation you sign to do something political can be easily mistaken as an implied order.)

Buying Office

Public servants and potential public servants are forbidden to buy a City position or promotion with a political contribution. In fact, they can't give or promise anything to anyone in order to be nominated for office or to obtain a City position. And no one can ask you to do so either.

Fundraising by High-Level Appointees

Some higher level City servants may not request **anyone** to make a political contribution to any candidate for a City office or to any City elected official who is running for any office. Such higher level City servants are also prohibited from holding certain political party positions.

Paid Work for a Local Political Campaign

Having a paid position with a local political campaign is treated much like any other outside employment you might have, with one big exception.

Like any other outside job, if you work on a local campaign for elective office, you are not permitted to:

- Use your City position to obtain any advantage for that campaign;
- Use City letterhead, personnel, equipment, resources, or supplies for the campaign;
- Conduct any business for the campaign on City time; and
- Use or disclose any confidential City information to help the campaign;
- Work for the campaign on any matter that is before **any** City agency, unless you get a waiver from the Conflicts of Interest Board.

However, there is one crucial difference between moonlighting for a local campaign and any other kind of moonlighting: even though local campaigns **do** have matters before City agencies (such as the Campaign Finance Board and the Board of Elections) you do **not** need a waiver from the Conflicts of Interest Board. You may still need to get permission from your agency to take the job, if your agency has such a requirement (again, check with your agency's general counsel), but the Board has made it clear that it would not violate Chapter 68 to have a paid position with a local campaign, as long as all of the above restrictions are followed.

Also, employees of certain campaign-related agencies, like the Board of Elections and the Campaign Finance Board may have stricter rules regarding political activity, paid or not. Employees of those agencies should consult their agency counsel before partaking in political activities.

Running for Office

Certain public servants running for office may face certain restrictions which require them to take a leave of absence if running for office. Employees in federally-funded lines may have to resign altogether before running for partisan political office. If you're thinking of running for office, you may wish to call the Board and see if any of these restrictions apply to you.