



Office of the Ethics Administrator
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MEMORANDUM

January 21, 2015

TO: All UG Elected Officials, UG Appointed Officials and UG Employees

FROM: Ruth M. Benien, Ethics Administrator

SUBJECT: Permitted and Prohibited Political Activities

In preparation for the upcoming Unified Government elections and the filing deadline for the same, the Ethics Commission and the Unified Government remind all elected and appointed officials and employees of the Unified Government of prohibited and permitted political activities under the UG Ethics Code. Political affiliation or support is not a condition of employment with the Unified Government.

Prohibited Political Activities:

No official or employee of the Unified Government shall at any time:

- Be required to participate in or contribute to any political campaign.
- Be subject to direct or indirect political influence or coercion.
- Use official authority to solicit funds or receive contributions from other officials or employees for political purposes.
- Display political bumper stickers, posters, banners, pamphlets or buttons on Unified Government vehicles or property, or on a Unified Government work site. However, such articles may be displayed on private vehicles parked in employee or UG parking areas.
- Contribute more than \$25.00 to the campaign of any candidate for elected unified government office.

No official or employee of the Unified Government shall at any time:

- Use an official Unified Government title or designate employment with the Unified Government in political advertisements, endorsements, or speeches except in the case of an incumbent or person currently holding the position to reflect that title or status in his or her own election campaign materials for re-election or retention in that office or position.
- Produce and forward, or authorize and forward, or forward a produced or received, social media communication (i.e. email, facebook, twitter, etc.) to a personal computer or to others on a unified government computer or other equipment or using unified government title or resources that advocates the nomination, election, support or defeat of any identified political candidate or political issue.

While on duty, including breaks, or in the offices or on the property of the Unified Government, while using equipment or materials of the Unified Government, while representing himself or herself as an official or employee of the Unified Government, or while wearing a uniform generally associated with the Unified Government, an official or employee shall not:

- Distribute campaign literature.
- Give, solicit or receive contributions or subscriptions.
- Promise or perform political services.
- Sign or circulate petitions for, on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office.

Permitted Activities:

Each official or employee of the Unified Government, may, on their own time:

- Register and vote in any election.
- Privately and publicly express an opinion on political subjects and candidates.
- Be a member of a political party and participate in its activities.
- Sign a political nomination or recall petition as an individual.
- Make a financial contribution to a political party or candidate.
- Participate in connection with a public issue that is not specifically identified with a political party, such as a constitutional amendment, referendum, or issue of similar character.
- Display bumper stickers, posters, banners or pamphlets on private property for the endorsement of candidates or issues.

Note:

The Unified Government Human Resources Guide also contains specific provisions with respect to voting. That policy states generally that “Employees who desire to vote are expected to do so before or after their workday or on their own time.” An exception is allowed for time off to vote for employees who are required to work before 9:00 a.m. and to remain at work after 5:00 p.m. If your work hours fall within those parameters please consult the policy and/or Human Resources. The policy does ask that employees exercising that option try to request the time off in advance of election day if possible. (Unified Government Human Resources Guide 5.10 Time Off to Vote).

As an individual citizen, not representing oneself as a Unified Government official or employee, on one’s own time, off Unified Government property, and out of uniform, and not during breaks while on duty, an official or employee may:

- Take an active part in the work and management of any political campaigns.
- Solicit, receive, or account for funds for a political purpose.
- Solicit votes in support of, or in opposition to, a political party’s office.
- Initiate or circulate a nominating or recall petition.
- Serve as a delegate, alternate, or proxy to a political party convention.
- Drive voters to the polls on behalf of a political party or candidate.

- Endorse or oppose a candidate for public or political office in a political advertisement broadcast, campaign literature, or similar material.

If an official or employee has a question about his or her conduct or that of another representative of the Unified Government and whether it may violate the Code, all officials and employees are reminded the UG Code of Ethics allows anyone to seek an advisory opinion from the Ethics Administrator. Complaints about the conduct of any employee or representative of the Unified Government may be made confidentially and anonymously, if desired, by contacting the Ethics Administrator on the Ethics Hotline number at (913) 621-3294 or at the Ethics Commission website at ethics.wycokck@gmail.com.
