



## POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

One of our most important rights and obligations as citizens of the United States is to participate in the democratic process established to elect our government leaders. However; as Marines, Sailors, and Department of Defense employees, we should all be aware there are some restrictions on our political activities that do not apply to other Americans. In this issue of IG Basics, we will address some of the guidelines regarding the political activities of military personnel and DoD civilian employees. With the 2016 election season in full swing, it is important to understand what we are and are not allowed to do.

### Guidelines for All DoD Personnel

Military members and civilian employees are authorized to vote for the candidate of their choice and express personal political views outside the workplace. It is permitted to display a political bumper sticker on privately owned vehicles.

*DoD members acting in their official capacity may not engage in activities that associate the DoD with any partisan political campaign or election, candidate, cause, or issue. SECNAVINST 5720.44C*

Military members and civilian employees are never authorized to:

1. Engage in partisan political activity while in the government work place.
2. Solicit or coerce votes or other political activity from a subordinate.
3. Solicit or accept a campaign contribution.
4. Use government equipment (computer, telephone, fax machine etc.) for partisan political purposes.
5. Use government title in connection with partisan political activities.
6. Place campaign items (buttons, bumper stickers, candidate photos etc.) in the workplace. *Ref: DoDD 1344.10, 5 U.S.C. 7321-7326*

*Political activity is defined as an activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group. 5 C.F.R 734.101*

### Prohibited Activities Specific to Military Members (DoDD 1344.10 and MARADMIN 603/15 for additional guidelines)

Although military members are allowed to attend partisan political club meetings (when not in uniform), they are not allowed to serve as an official of a partisan political club, speak before a partisan political gathering, perform any duties for a candidate, participate in partisan fundraisers and events, march in partisan political parades, or canvas for votes.

### Some Guidelines Specific to DoD Civilians

Most DoD civilian employees have more leeway than active duty military members with regard to political activities. They are not only allowed to attend partisan political club meetings, but they may serve as an official of a partisan political club, speak before partisan political gatherings, perform duties for candidates, publish partisan political writings soliciting votes, participate in partisan events, and march in political parades. However, civilian employees who wish to participate in political activities such as these must be familiar with the restrictions imposed upon them by the Hatch Act (5 C.F.R. 7321-7324), which governs the political activities of federal civilians.

### Social Media

The same restrictions regarding political activities apply to what you post on social media. Although personnel may generally post political views on issues or candidates via social media, if the site identifies the member as on active duty, the entry must prominently state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the Department of Defense. Active duty service members and further restricted civilian employees (*See Hatch Act Restrictions*) **MAY NOT** post links to a political party, candidate, campaign, group, or cause. Suggesting that others “like”, “follow”, or “friend” a political candidate or group is considered participation in political activities and is prohibited for these personnel. *Ref: UCMJ Article 88, DoDD 1344.10, MARADMIN 603/15, Hatch Act 5 C.F.R. 7321-7324*

*Penalties for violation of political activities laws and regulations:  
Military personnel-subject to punishment under the UCMJ  
Civilian personnel-mandatory minimum of 30 days suspension without pay up to possible removal from civil service*

### Bottomline

Although it is our right and civic duty to participate in the U.S. political process, as active duty military members and DoD civilian employees, we have additional restrictions regarding our participation in political activities, and failure to adhere to the established laws and regulations can result in severe penalties. The most important thing to remember when engaging in political activities, is that we must not even appear to associate the Marine Corps or the DoD with any partisan political activity, whether we are on or off duty. Consult your SJA if you have questions regarding political activities.

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