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FEDERAL

EMPLOYEE FACTS

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Rules for Federal Employees



Exemptions for Certain Communities

Special rules apply to the residents of certain communities with large numbers of Federal employees. Any community in the immediate vicinity of Washington, D. C., and any community the majority of whose voters work for the Federal Government, can ask the Civil Service Commission for partial exemption from political-activity restrictions. If the request is granted, Federal employees living in the community may actively participate in local political management and local political campaigns but they must run as independent candidates and must conduct their campaigns in a nonpartisan manner.

They may run for office, provided that they do not represent a political party or become involved in political management in connection with the campaign of a party candidate. They must not, of course, neglect their official duties in exercising these privileges, and must, if elected or appointed to local office requiring full-time service, resign their Federal positions.

This exemption has already been granted to more than 50 communities, most of them located in the vicinity of Washington, D. C. Any Federal employee who is in doubt as to whether his community has been granted this partial exemption from political-activity restrictions can get the information from the Civil Service Commission, Washington 25, D. C.

Questions About Political-Activity Restrictions

If you are uncertain whether a certain action would violate political-activity rules, you should present the matter in writing to the Civil Service Commission, Washington 25, D. C. You should get a ruling on the matter *before* engaging in the action, since ignorance of provisions of the law will not excuse you from penalties for violation.

U. S. Civil Service Commission
Washington, D. C.

- You may not campaign for or against a political party or candidate.
- You may not use your automobile to transport voters, except members of your immediate family, to the polls.
- You may not distribute campaign material.
- You may not march in a political parade.
- You may not sell tickets for or otherwise actively promote such activities as political dinners.
- You may not write for publication or publish any article or letter soliciting votes for or against any political party or candidate.
- You may not solicit or receive any assessment or contribution for any political purpose.
- You may not make a political contribution in a Federal building or to some other employee.

What the Penalties for Violation Are

The Civil Service Commission enforces political-activity restrictions for employees in competitive positions. The Commission makes investigations and holds hearings in cases involving violations. The most severe penalty for violation is removal and the minimum penalty suspension without pay for 90 days.

In cases where removal is ordered by the Commission, the employee may not be reemployed in any position the salary of which is paid from the same appropriation as the job from which he was removed.

Employees in excepted positions come under the jurisdiction of their agency head in political-activity matters.



How Political-Activity Restrictions Protect Employees

Federal employees who are a part of the Government's career civil service are protected by law from efforts to force them to render political service or tribute. This was not always the case. Federal employees derive this protection from the Civil Service Act, passed in 1883, which laid the foundations for the Federal merit system.

The Hatch Act, passed in 1939, goes further than the Civil Service Act. It provides in general that Federal employees cannot render political service—that is, take an active part in political management or political campaigns—even if they are willing to do so.



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Basically both these laws have the effect of insulating the Federal career employee against the effect of political considerations that might damage his job tenure. They are a protection to the employee against political "reprisals"—which were the order of the day under the spoils system—because they eliminate grounds for such reprisals.

Who Is Subject to Political-Activity Restrictions

In general, employees of the Federal Government and the District of Columbia Government, whether career or temporary, are subject to political-activity restrictions. Part-time and temporary employees are included.

A few specific exemptions are made, including the heads and assistant heads of agencies, members of the White House staff, and officials who determine national policy and who are appointed by the President subject to Senate confirmation. There is a partial exemption for Federal employees who live in communities in the immediate vicinity of the National Canal, and in other communities the majority of whose voters are employed by the Federal Government (see p. 6).

Some State employees are also subject to political-activity restrictions. They are employees whose principal employment is in connection with an activity that is partly or wholly financed by Federal funds.

What Employees May Do

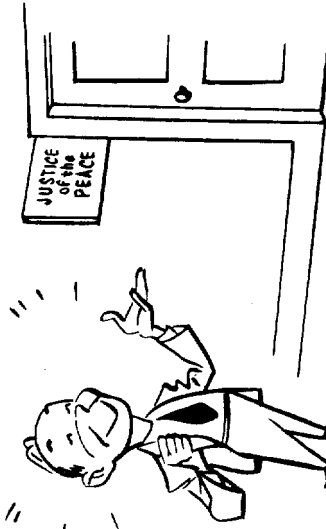
There are some permissible activities with regard to politics—

- You have the right to vote as you choose. Political-activity restrictions do not relieve a Federal employee of his obligation as a citizen to inform



himself of the issues and to register and vote. Employees are encouraged to vote by being given up to 1 day off without charge to leave in order to register and to vote in States where absentee balloting is not permitted.

- You have the right to express your opinions on all political subjects and candidates as long as you do not do so in such a manner as to take an active part in political management or political campaigns of a partisan nature.
- You may make a voluntary campaign contribution to any regularly constituted political organization. (Note restrictions below.)
- You may display a political sticker on your private automobile if the use of stickers is permitted by local ordinance, but you should not do so while on duty conducting the public business.



ordinance, but you should not do so while on duty conducting the public business.

- You may wear a political badge or button while you are not on duty performing the public business.
- You may accept appointment to such positions as justice of the peace and member of boards of education, school committees, and boards of public libraries and religious or charitable institutions if your agency decides the holding of these local offices will not conflict or interfere with the discharge of your Federal duties. If these offices are elective, you may not participate in a partisan political election.
- You may participate in a nonpartisan local election in which party designation, nomination, and spon-

sorship are completely absent. You may be a candidate for office in such an election and you may hold the office after election if the head of your agency decides that your holding it will not interfere with your Federal employment.

- You may petition Congress or any Member of Congress. For example, you may write to your Congressman and tell him how you think he should vote on any issue.
- You may sign petitions, including nominating petitions, but may not initiate them or canvass for the signature of others if they are identified with partisan political management or campaigns.
- You may attend political rallies and join political clubs, but you cannot take an active part in the conduct of the rally or the operation of the club or act as chairman, officer, committee member, or delegate. You may vote on issues, but you may not speak for or against them.

What Employees Are Prohibited From Doing

The general prohibition on Federal employees is that they may not take an active part in political management or in political campaigns of a partisan character. These are some of the prohibited activities—

- You may not be a candidate for nomination for election to a National or State office. You may run for a community office only as described in the sections *What Employees May Do and Exemptions for Certain Communities.*
- You may not solicit others to become candidates for nomination or election to partisan offices.



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