

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

It is important to provide direction regarding the political activities permitted and prohibited for classified employees within agencies of the State of West Virginia or political subdivisions thereof affiliated with the Division of Personnel. The following summarizes various provisions of State and federal law. It is suggested that this information be posted or circulated to employees within each Department/Bureau/Division.

The issue of political activities for State employees is complex and requires determination of the application of the appropriate State and/or federal law. The intent of this document is to provide some clarification in this matter. Specific questions regarding this issue should be directed to the Division of Personnel, Employee Relations Section at 558-3950, extension 57209.

Political activities of employees classified under the Division of Personnel's civil service system are delineated in West Virginia Code §29-6-20 and Section 16 of the Division of Personnel's *Administrative Rule*.

EMPLOYEES MAY

1. Serve as a poll clerk or worker
2. Be a candidate for or serve as a delegate to any state or national political party convention.
3. Voluntarily campaign for a candidate or party during non-work time, off of State property, and without use of State supplies or equipment within the provisions of Election Guidelines and law, so long as they are not paid a fee other than actual expenses incurred.
4. Voluntarily sell tickets to political affairs to individuals other than employees of the classified services during non-work hours.
5. Voluntarily erect campaign signs on private property, as long as property is not used as State office or official office site by the State.
6. Voluntarily attend political dinners, rallies, and dances.

EMPLOYEES MAY NOT

1. Sell tickets to political affairs to employees of the classified service.
2. Serve as a campaign financial agent or treasurer for a political committee or candidate.
3. Be a candidate for any partisan or nonpartisan national, State paid public office, or court or record, including local.
4. Be a member of any national, State, or local committee of a political party.
5. Hold any paid elective or appointive office.
6. Solicit or receive any assessment, subscription, or contribution from employees in the classified service.

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| 7. Voluntarily serve on campaign committees for a candidate, so long as not receiving compensation for services. | 7. Use an official authority or influence to interfere or influence an election or nomination for office. |
| 8. Be a candidate for paid local partisan or non-partisan elective office (except court of record) by taking a leave of absence commencing with filing date. | 8. Post or distribute campaign literature in a State office building or during work hours. This includes employee organization bulletin boards. |

W. Va. Code §3-1-42. Time off for Voting

Employees may be granted time off from work in accordance with W. Va. Code §3-1-42. which state:

“Every person entitled to vote at any election who may be employed by any person, company, or corporation on the day on which such election shall be held in this state, shall, on written demand of such employee, made at least three days prior thereto, be given a period of not more than three hours, if necessary, between the opening and the closing of the polls on such day, for the purpose of enabling such person to repair to the place of voting to cast his vote and return, without liability to any penalty or deduction from his usual salary or wages on account of such absence, except that any employee, who has three or more hours of his own time away from his work or place of employment at any time between the hours of the opening and the closing of the polls on election day and who fails or neglects to vote or elects not to vote during such free time away from his work or employment, may be subject to wage or salary deductions for the time actually absent from his work or employment for voting in such election.

In essential government, health, hospital, transportation and communication services and in production, manufacturing and processing works requiring continuity in operation, the employer may, upon receipt of such written demand for voting time off, arrange and schedule a calendar of time off for any and all of his employees for voting so as to avoid impairment or disruption of essential services and operations, but every such schedule or calendar of time off for voting so arranged shall provide ample and convenient time and opportunity for each employee of such services or works to cast his vote as herein provided.”

W. V. Code §3-8-12(e). Promise of Employment or Other Benefits

“A person may not, directly or indirectly, promise any employment, position, work, compensation or other benefit provided for, or made possible, in whole or in part, by act of the Legislature, to any person as consideration, favor or reward for any political activity for the support of or opposition to any candidate, or any political party in any election.”

Election Day Holiday

Section 14.1(a) of the Division of Personnel's Administrative Rule, entitled Official Holidays, states, in pertinent part, that "Employees shall be released from work with pay...any day on which a Primary or General election is held throughout the State...." This section shall not apply to local (e.g., county or municipal) elections.

Federally Funded Programs (Hatch Act)

The Federal Hatch Act governing State and local employees found in 5 U.S. Code §§ 1501-1508, applies to any "individual employed by a State or local agency whose principle employment is in connection with an activity which is financed in whole or in part by loans or grants made by the United States or a federal agency but does not include – (a) an individual who exercises no functions in connection with that activity...." In certain areas the federal statute is more restrictive than the current law found in Chapter 29, Article 6 of the West Virginia Code, as amended. Therefore, to the extent those employees are covered by the Hatch Act, the provisions of W. VA. CODE §29-6-1, *et seq.* would apply.

W. Va. Code §29-6-1, *et seq.* permits an employee to be a candidate for election to a local level paid partisan or non-partisan office, except for courts of record, by taking a leave of absence without pay for the period of candidacy commencing with the date of filing for such candidacy. A leave of absence is not necessary to be a candidate for an unpaid elective office permitted by statute. The Hatch Act does not allow a State employee whose principal employment is in connection with an activity which is financed in whole or in part by federal funds to be a candidate for partisan elective office. More Hatch Act Information can be found at: <http://www.osc.gov/hatchact.htm>

Division of Highways Employees (W. Va. Code § 17-2A-5)

The Division of Highways' law provides, in pertinent part, that:

"...No person may be appointed as commissioner or employed in any other capacity or employment by the commission or commissioner when he is a candidate for or holds any public office or is a member of any political party committee. In the event the commissioner or any employee of the commission or commissioner becomes a candidate for or holds any public office or becomes a member of any political party committee, his office as commissioner or position as employee, as the case may be, shall be immediately vacated."

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