



# Rules and Recommendations for Political Activities and Advocacy of College Employees during a Ballot Measure Campaign



## General Principles

During a ballot measure campaign, such as the current Measure A campaign to pass a parcel tax for local community college funding, the District and colleges come under extra scrutiny, and it becomes doubly important that no public funds or facilities be used for political advocacy. This is always the rule, but it is especially important to err on the side of the caution when there are issues on the ballot that seem to directly affect college funding.

Educators, of course, have the right and the duty to educate, and all employees have free speech rights, but the risks of drawing negative attention and thus distracting the electorate (not to mention other ways that employees or the District could get into trouble) are substantial. As with most legal issues, especially in politics, the rules are not always 100% cut and dry. But these are our best recommendations based on consultation with our legal and political advisors.

## In the Classroom

Faculty should refrain from advocating inside the classroom. If your subject-matter normally deals with political issues (in social science classes or writing classes), you certainly may lecture or craft assignments designed to inform your students about issues, including Measure A, and even to encourage your students to debate and express opinions. If your subject-matter normally is not political, then leave politics out of your classroom. In no case should you tell the students how to vote or discuss your own intention to support any particular ballot measure. This is true whether class is formally in session or not, since the space itself, the classroom where you are meeting your students, is funded by public dollars (and so expected to be politically neutral territory).

## Around Campus or in the Quad

Students have broad freedom to advocate around campus because they are not employed by the District, and college campuses are generally free-

speech zones. Since students advocating for *any* political position would be welcome to table and distribute literature on campus, so long as such activities conform with campus policies, they pose no problem. Faculty also have free speech rights on campus, but only when not working (in other words, when clearly not employed by the District). Since faculty time on and off can seem a little murky, we recommend erring on the side of caution. Certainly one should not sit at a table advocating for a political position on campus while grading papers! If you take time to encourage and support student advocacy efforts on campus or if you decide to make a speech at a rally where all points of view are welcome, make sure you have clearly taken the time off (a lunch hour or other time outside <sup>16853</sup> your regular work day or an official leave of absence).

### **In Your Office**

You should not engage in any sort of political activity or advocacy while in your office. This includes using campus telephones to make political calls, holding political meetings of any kind, using your work computer or printer to make political signs or materials, or posting partisan messages on your office door. Educational material on your door or walls is fine; advocacy is not. Do not leave messages on your college answering machine advocating for a political position or measure.

### **On Email**

You may receive political email at your campus email address, but do not use your college email account to send political messages, even in reply to others. Use a non-district email address on a non-district server if you send political emails advocating to your friends or community.

### **Around Town**

You may attend meetings and engage in advocacy anywhere off campus so long as you do not advocate during work hours. Do not claim ever to be advocating on behalf of the District. It is OK to tell members of your community that you are a college professor or employee and to discuss college conditions while advocating.

### **What You Wear**

Do not wear buttons or T-shirts or other signs that advocate for a particular political measure while working.

## **From Home**

So long as you do not use your campus email address, advocate during work hours (such as during an on-line office hour) or claim to be representing the college district while advocating, you may advocate however you like from home.

## **Using Your Cell Phone**

You may use your personal cell phone to communicate about political activity or strategy, but it is preferable to do this away from the work site.

## **Mailings**

Do not use college or district letterhead to engage in advocacy or sign your name to mass mailings using a college title that might seem to indicate that you are representing the College or District. You may sign a mailing or petition noting your title as faculty, but be careful not to claim to be representing the College or District.

## **Exceptions**

United Faculty employees or elected faculty representatives on released time may advocate in free-speech areas on campus, much as students may, so long as they do so during time when they are clearly working for the Union rather than the District. The UF is now hiring grass-roots organizers; for more information, contact the UF at 925-680-1771.

Salaried administrators without a defined lunch or break time should avoid all political activity while District administrative offices are open for business.

## **How Will the Word Get Out?**

Sure, this is a long list of rules, and it seems restrictive. But fear not. There will be non-partisan rallies sponsored by the UF on every campus in October. There will be students registering others to vote and tabling for various measures on the Quad. There will be grass-roots off-campus efforts to educate our communities about all the measures that affect us. By attending these events and volunteering your time outside of work, you can certainly make a difference. To get involved, call the UF at 925-680-1771 or email [uf@uf4cd.org](mailto:uf@uf4cd.org). While at work, we recommend that you play it safe. We don't need to push the envelope to get the message out; we just need to stuff the envelope while we're not at work.