

# COLUMBUS STATE

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Notice to Employees Regarding Political Activity

Please take this opportunity to refresh your understanding of your rights and responsibilities as citizens, public servants and as employees of a state higher education institution. Columbus State encourages employees as citizens to exercise their right to vote and to express their personal opinions about candidates or issues. College Policy No. 13-12 promotes the free exchange of ideas, speech and assembly. While political activity and speech are guaranteed by the First Amendment, both federal and Ohio law establish limitations on political speech that could suggest the College has endorsed a particular candidate or cause. While not exhaustive, the lists provided below are meant to provide guidance to employees.

### All Employees

The following are examples of permitted political activities for all employees:

- Registration and voting; signing nominating petitions in support of individuals
- Expression of opinions as a citizen, related to a political, social or public concern
- Voluntary financial contributions to political candidates or organizations
- Circulation of nonpartisan petitions or petitions stating views on legislation
- Attendance at political rallies, activities
- Display of political materials at employee's home or on employee's property/vehicle
- Serving as a precinct election official under Revised Code 3501.22

The following are examples of restricted political activities for all employees:

- Using the College's name in any form that suggests the College's endorsement
- Examples include, but aren't limited to:
  - Using the College's name, logo, letterhead, marks in any report, advertisement, correspondence or publication in connection with personal or unofficial activities
  - Clarifying that your position or affiliation with the College does not imply College approval/disapproval or endorsement of a candidate, issue or viewpoint. (For example, clarify when participating in a political meeting, speaking on behalf of an issue, or writing a letter)
- Serving in an appointed or elected position when it is physically or professionally impossible for the employee to discharge the duties of both positions, or there would be a conflict of interest for the College, or a constitutional or statutory bar prohibits the employee from serving both positions
- Using College facilities and/or resources to participate in political activities or to solicit participation of others in political activities during working hours or at any time when using College facilities and/or resources. Examples include:
  - Sending/forwarding e-mails at any time using College computing equipment, staff, or using College communication system or equipment

- Using College facilities, vehicles or assets
- Using College mail service, equipment or supplies
  - ❖ Employees with government relations responsibilities may be exempted with VP approval
  - ❖ Using College communications is permitted to announce open political forums, and for discussions sponsored by registered College organizations and advisors of such organizations, but should not be used in support of a particular candidate

### **Staff Employees, Non-credit Instructors, Student Workers**

Under Ohio law, additional restrictions on political activities are placed on some employees – including Columbus State full-time and part-time staff, non-credit instructors and student workers (See: Policy No. 3-01 and Procedure 3-01 F). Such employees are prohibited from engaging in these additional activities:

- Candidacy for public office in a partisan election
  - Candidacy for public office in a nonpartisan general election if the nomination to candidacy was obtained in a partisan primary or through the circulation of nominating petitions identified with a political party
  - Filing of petitions under statutory requirements for partisan candidacy to elective office
  - Circulation of official nominating petitions for candidate participating in partisan election
  - Service in an elected or appointed office in any partisan political organization
  - Accepting a party-sponsored appointment to an office normally filled by partisan election
  - Campaigning by writing for publications, by distributing political material, or by writing or making speeches on behalf of a candidate for partisan elective office, when such activities are directed toward party success
  - Solicitation, either directly or indirectly, of any assessment, contribution or subscription, either monetary or in-kind, for any political party or political candidate
  - Solicitation of the sale, or actual sale, of political party tickets
  - Partisan activities at the election polls, such as solicitation of votes for other than nonpartisan candidates and nonpartisan issues
  - Participation in political caucuses or committees of a partisan nature
  - Participation in a political action committee which supports partisan activity
- ❖ For a complete list of applicable rules regarding political activity affecting the above employees, see Ohio Administrative Code §123:1-46-02.

Please contact the Legal Office at 614-287-5939 or <https://www.csc.edu/employee/doing-business/legal/legal-request.shtml> if you have questions about this memorandum and engaging in political activity at the College.