

Political Activities

University System of Georgia (USG) employees are encouraged to fulfill their civic obligations and engage in the normal political processes of society, including the right to express their personal opinions on matters of public concern, and nothing in BOR policy is intended to infringe or restrict free expression rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution or the Georgia Constitution.

Employee Expressions of Political Opinions - BOR Policy 8.2.18.3

The USG respects the free expression rights of USG employees to share their personal views on political issues. Sharing these personal political views must be done only in an employee's personal capacity and in a manner that does not interfere with work or involve improper use of state resources. Likewise, USG employees must not hold themselves out as speaking or acting on behalf of the USG or its institutions when participating in political activities. Employees must also take reasonable measures to avoid any appearance that the individual employee's participation is in an official capacity as an employee of the USG or its institutions.

USG employees may list their employment status, title, affiliation with USG or a USG institution, or similar information in an external biographical description so long as they make it clear when expressing personal political views—whether at an external speaking engagement, on social media, or elsewhere—that they are speaking in their own personal capacity and not in their capacity as an employee of or on behalf of USG or a USG institution. Employees also may not use state property, resources, or materials (including work email or other information technology resources) or work time to communicate these personal political views. Finally, employees are prohibited from using any USG registered trademarks when expressing personal opinions on political issues unless expressly authorized to do so.

Employee Involvement in Political Campaigns - BOR Policy 8.2.18.3

Individuals may not hold elective political office at the state or federal level while employed by the USG. Any employee seeking federal or state elective office must notify his or her direct supervisor and request a leave of absence without pay prior to qualifying as a candidate.

Employees are also prohibited from managing or taking an active part in political campaigns during work hours or where such involvement would otherwise interfere with work responsibilities. Under no circumstances may employees use any state property, resources, or materials in conjunctions with any political campaigning.

Use of Institution Facilities in Political Campaigns - BOR Policy 6.14.1

During campaign season, political candidates often ask to campaign on USG campuses, and institution presidents may authorize the use of institution facilities for campaign rallies or speeches. If you get a request for a political candidate to come to campus for a campaign rally, to deliver a political speech, or to otherwise campaign on campus, please contact the University System Office for assistance with handling the request or potentially preparing for the event. These events should follow standard institution policies and practices for renting institutional space. At no time can USG resources be used in a political campaign without adequate compensation or in a way that could convey support by the USG or an institution for the campaign or candidate. This includes the use of student activity fee funding allocated to a registered organization to pay event space fees for a political campaign event (such as a rally or campaign speech) or other campaign expenses.

Should you have any questions about this guidance or wish to discuss it further, please contact the Office of Legal Affairs, Ethics & Compliance at legalaffairs@columbusstate.edu