

A Pocket Guide to

Political Activity

by Federal Employees



American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
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2021 Edition



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IMPORTANT: The Hatch Act places additional restrictions on political activity by employees of the Federal Elections Commission, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Secret Service, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Council, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Imagery and Mapping Agency, Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Special Counsel, Office of Criminal Investigations of the IRS, Office of Investigative Programs of the U.S. Customs Service, Office of Law Enforcement of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, Career members of the senior executives service, Administrative Law Judges and Contract appeals board members. For guidance, visit www.afge.org or the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, www.osc.gov.

The Hatch Act Covers “Political Activity,” But **Not** Non-Partisan Issue Education

What is the Hatch Act?

The Hatch Act is a federal law that limits political activity by federal employees who are on duty, wearing a government uniform, in the workplace or in a government vehicle.

What is “political activity”?

“Political activity” is any effort directed toward the success or failure of a political party or candidate for partisan office.

What is Non-Partisan Issue Education?

AFGE activists can talk with other Federal employees about legislative or agency issues such as pay, working conditions, contracting out and personnel reform without violating the Hatch Act. It’s not political activity! You also can contact lawmakers using your personal phone and email.

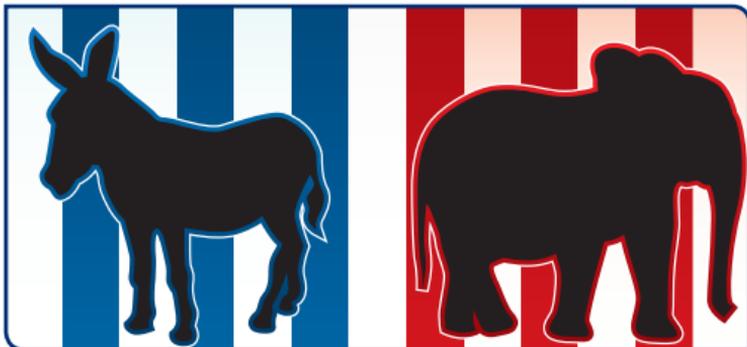
**You CAN be a grassroots
legislative and political activist
without violating the Hatch Act.**

Supporting A Candidate or a Political Party

You cannot engage in political activity for a candidate while on duty, in a government office, in uniform, or while using a government vehicle. You are also prohibited from using your agency business cards or official government job title.

When you are off duty, off site and out of uniform, you CAN:

- Display a bumper sticker on your car (but don't wear a candidate's button to work)
- Express your opinion about a candidate
- Attend a candidate rally
- Put a candidate sign in your yard or windows
- Volunteer on a campaign
- Distribute campaign literature
- Participate in a phone bank
- Give your home e-mail address to a candidate or party



Off site, off duty, and out of uniform

You Can Mobilize AFGE Members, Their Families and Other Union Members to Help Elect Union Endorsed Candidates

You CAN get involved!

Urge members to vote for the candidate(s) endorsed by AFGE or the AFL-CIO

Recruit volunteers for phone banks, neighborhood walks and other election activities

Make speeches about candidates and the issues

Send political materials provided by AFGE or the AFL-CIO (but not materials produced by the campaign) to AFGE members at their home address or home e-mail. Do not use government e-mail or government addresses.

Use union dues to mail political materials produced by AFGE or the AFL-CIO to AFGE members at home.



Voter Registration

When can you conduct voter registration drives?

At any time offsite and not on government time

NOTE: Due to recent advisory opinions by the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), please contact the AFGE General Counsel's Office for further guidance before conducting a voter registration drive at the worksite.

You may be able to sponsor voter registration drives led by outside, nonpartisan organizations, such as the League of Women Voters or the NAACP on federal property, but voter registration cannot be identified with any Candidate or political party.

Registration must be offered to any individual who asks to register, regardless of their party or preferred candidate. You cannot be selective in whom you register to vote.



Voter Registration

When must union-led voter registration stop?

Once AFGE endorses a congressional or presidential candidate, AFGE activists cannot conduct voter registration at a federal worksite, because our efforts may be considered partisan. It may still be possible to sponsor a drive conducted by a non-partisan organization but you should contact the AFGE General Counsel's Office for further guidance. Offsite voter registration may be conducted at anytime when **not** on duty or official time.

Every state has unique laws regarding registering voters. Recently, some of these laws have been changed. Before any voter registration event, please make sure to familiarize yourself with your state's **Voter Registration guidelines**. your Secretary of State or visit their website for Contact more information.

OSC opinions can be found at www.osc.gov.



Do Not Use Government Emails For Political Activities:

Federal employees should not use government computers or government email systems to campaign for or against a candidate or provide election related information.

If you receive a candidate related email on your work email account, you should delete it.

If a candidate related email comes to your home email account, do not access it on a government computer. You are free to read such email on your home computer via your personal email accounts while not on government time AFGE members who want to stay informed

AFGE members who want to stay informed should subscribe to the AFGE Action News with your home email account, and review such material off the clock on your home computer. You can subscribe to AFGE Action News on the AFGE website at **www.afge.org**.

Just as with email, social media is subject to the Hatch Act. Please review the guidance on the Office of Special Council website or contact the AFGE General Counsel s Office for specific questions.

Political Fundraising and Campaign Contributions

As a Federal employee and an AFGE member, you CAN:

Attend political fundraisers, but you cannot host a fundraising event.

Give money to political parties or candidates.

Encourage fellow union members to contribute to the AFGE PAC, as long as you are not on duty or on federal property.

You CANNOT:

Ask for or accept contributions to a political party or candidate.

Stand up at a fundraiser and ask people to contribute to a candidate.

Send out a personal appeal asking others to donate money to a party or a partisan candidate or forward via email an appeal from a social media program such as Facebook.

Use your federal job title when soliciting contributions for a political party or candidate.

Send out or forward an appeal asking for others to donate money to a political party or partisan candidate, including transmission via the internet. This includes liking a fundraiser on Facebook, even if you are not making an ask for funds.

Issue Education Activities **Not** Covered by the Hatch Act

You can conduct a wide variety of activities around issues that affect federal employees without violating the Hatch Act.

As long as you **do not link the issues with the election of a particular candidate**, you can talk freely with other AFGE members and hand out information about:

- Your pay raise
- Underfunding or understaffing at your agency
- The quality of services provided by your agency
- Your rights at work
- Contracting out
- Health care, retirement and other benefits
- Ballot Initiatives



You Can Do Even More Without Violating the Hatch Act!

Invite all employees, AFGE members and potential members to a meeting at work to discuss issues affecting them, then sign up potential members

Post fliers about issues important to federal employees on bulletin boards

Circulate fliers on federal employee issues before and after work at entrances to your worksite

Hold a rally, set up a picket line or hold a press conference on federal employee issues. These are not Hatch Act violations. However, other regulations limiting these types of activities may apply to your or your agency.

You CAN mobilize and organize without violating the Hatch Act!



For More Information and to Get Involved

Use your personal computer at home to visit the AFGE website at www.afge.org.

Find out where candidates stand on our issues

Learn more about PAC

Register to vote and encourage others to register.

Volunteer to get involved in election mobilization activities in your area

AFGE



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