

ENGAGING IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

A WORD
ABOUT
ETHICS

ON-DUTY ACTIVITIES

In what political activities can I engage when on duty?

- None. Federal employees (except Senate-confirmed Presidential appointees) cannot engage in partisan political activities while on Government premises or when on duty.

What other limits apply regarding political activities while at work?

- You cannot:
 - use Government property for political purposes, including using Government equipment to send political e-mails;
 - use your Government position or influence to interfere with an election or to coerce any person to participate in political activity;
 - wear a political button or clothing on duty;
 - display a political banner, sign, sticker, or poster in a Federal office; or
 - consider political affiliation or political activity with regard to a personnel action (except with regard to Schedule C employees and non-career SES appointments).

OFF-DUTY ACTIVITIES

Are there any restrictions when off duty and off Federal premises?

- Yes. You cannot, even when not on duty or on Government premises:
 - ask for or accept a campaign contribution (including by hosting a fund-raiser or asking for contributions by telephone or in a speech) (except from a member of your union in some cases) or
 - run for office in a partisan election (an election that identifies candidates by party) (except as an independent in local races in some areas, such as in Washington, D.C. and its suburbs).
- Note that if you serve for 130 days or less in a 365-day cycle or are an intermittent employee, the off-duty restrictions do not apply to you.

If I am in the SES or NOAA Corps or an ALJ do additional restrictions apply?

- Yes. Career members of the SES, NOAA Corps officers, and administrative law judges also cannot engage in any active campaign activities for a candidate or political party, such as by stuffing envelopes or asking for votes by telephone, and cannot serve as an officer in a political organization or a delegate to a convention.

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States
Department of Commerce

202-482-5384 – ethicsdivision@doc.gov – www.commerce.gov/ethics

January 4, 2016