



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Frequently Asked Questions about Political Activities

Question 1: The definition of "Political Activity" seems to focus on individual candidates rather than issues. Would the policy govern political activity with respect to referendums that are on the ballot? **Answer:** *The IRS prohibitions, and thus the policy, cover candidates for elective office only, not specific issues. This analysis also would apply to ballot issues.*

Question 2: Faculty and staff are prohibited from engaging in Political Activity "during work hours." How is this defined for faculty members who don't have set work hours? **Answer:** *Essentially, this prohibition would entail not using University resources (mail, computers, e-mail, copiers, faxes, spaces, and of course classroom time) for Political Activities.*

Question 3: Would the policy prohibit including a hyperlink to a candidate website in a CUA e-mail signature line? **Answer:** *Yes, this is prohibited. The University's e-mail system is being used, which would constitute using University resources for Political Activity*

Question 4: Would displaying a candidate's poster in my University office constitute a policy violation? What about displaying a candidate's poster on the bulletin board outside my University office, even though I don't otherwise need permission to post there? **Answer:** *Candidate posters would be prohibited both inside the office and on the bulletin board in the hall, as these are both University spaces.*

Question 5: When speaking to the media, if a staff or faculty employee identifies themselves as a member or head of a political group as well as an employee of the University does that constitute use of the University's name to support a candidate? **Answer:** *No. Simply identifying where the individual member works and their affiliation with the University would not constitute support for a Candidate, so long as the individual makes clear they are not speaking on behalf of the University.*

Question 6: If an employee were to be appointed as an advisor to a politician on a key topic in an election year, would the employee's University affiliation, used to identify them or included in their bio on the politician's website, constitute indirect support for that candidate? **Answer:** *The identification of the employee on the politician's website or via their bio would not, by itself, constitute indirect support for the candidate. So long as no University resources are used to support that candidate, and the employee's activities are conducted on their own time, there would be no violation of the IRS regulations and the policy.*

Question 7: If a faculty member, using University time, a University computer, and University-paid research assistants engaged in serious academic inquiry about the impact of a president's environmental policy, and the faculty member published a scathing critique of that policy in an election year, would that be legitimate academic research and not political activity, even if it was widely disseminated? **Answer:** *Yes, that would constitute academic research on a specific issue and would not constitute Political Activity that violates the IRS regulations or the policy.*

For further information or guidance contact the Office of General Counsel (tel. 202-319-5142).