

Political Campaign Related Activity and Use of County Resources

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines regarding civility in the workplace, political campaign related activities and the use of public facilities, systems, and resources.

POLICY APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all employees in the executive branch departments, offices, and divisions including the Assessor's Office and King County Elections. The policy applies to all career service, provisional, temporary, probationary, and appointed employees.

DEFINITIONS

"Political Campaign Related Activity" means the act or process of supporting a candidate or a ballot measure or soliciting support – financial or otherwise – for or against a candidate for public office or a ballot measure.

POLICY

Workplace Civility

King County supports a wide range of perspectives and beliefs. In a workplace with more than 16,000 employees, it is inevitable that casual discussions involving politics will take place. We cannot and do not want to ban political discussions at work. When these discussions do not interfere with county work, they can be an important part of developing healthy work relationships. However, even when unintended, comments made during workplace discussions can be harmful and, in some cases, may be inappropriate, harassing, derogatory, or discriminatory in violation of King County policies. Regardless of what issues or candidates you support, or what you believe, employees are expected to be civil and respectful to one another in the workplace.

Prohibited Political Campaign Related Activities

Washington State law and King County's Employee [Code of Ethics](#) prohibit employees from using public facilities, systems, or resources to support or engage in political campaign related activities. The purpose of this prohibition is to level the playing field between those who support and those who oppose a ballot measure or candidate. The Public Disclosure Commission has provided an opinion that the prohibition applies any time after a legislative body has "confirmed its interest in moving forward with a ballot measure." Examples of public facilities or resources include:

- Employees spending time on non-county issues during working hours;
- County phones, computers, copiers, fax machines;
- Stationery, postage, agency publications;
- Office space, vehicles, tools;
- Lists of people served by a county office or agency; and

- Electronic files or information.

Political Campaign Related Activities may extend to how an employee chooses to represent themselves online using county resources. Resources such as the county email system or other internal communications, or video conferencing applications, shall not be used to display or share political campaign related images, messages, words, or symbols. This includes:

- Employee's online avatars or profile pictures;
- Email signature blocks; and
- Videoconferencing backgrounds.

Employee use of county systems shall conform with the county's [Acceptable Use of IT Assets policy](#).

Additionally, employees shall not pressure or coerce other employees to participate in political campaign related activities.

County-Sponsored or Allowable Political Campaign Related Activities

County agencies may authorize or assign certain employees to speak about a ballot measure to answer questions and/or present factual information at community forums during regular working hours. In these situations, employees shall:

- Present information and answer questions in a fair and objective manner. For example, county employees may provide undisputed facts or data about the impact on county service levels if new funding is not provided; and
- Avoid stating their own opinions or repeating other's opinions like "we've done everything possible to avoid needing this ballot measure," "we need more service," or "the Executive believes this is critical."

If an employee has not been authorized or assigned to answer questions about a ballot measure, they shall politely respond that they are not authorized to discuss campaign matters. In addition, employees shall not present their personal viewpoints or beliefs as official King County positions nor coordinate with campaigns involved in a ballot measure or a candidate's campaign during regular working hours.

Examples of other allowable, Political Campaign Related Activities include:

- Employees engaging in campaign activities to support a ballot measure or a candidate if it's done on an employee's own time, without county resources and outside of the workplace.
- Employees placing window signs or bumper stickers on their personal cars, even if those cars are parked on county property during work hours.
- Employees informing their coworkers, on their own time and without using county facilities, systems, or resources, of opportunities to participate in political campaign activities.

Accountability

Employees will be held accountable for adhering to this policy and violations may include discipline.

QUESTIONS

Refer questions or comments to your department's [Human Resources Manager](#) or the Department of Human Resources.