

PARTICIPATING IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

ON-DUTY ACTIVITIES

In what political activities may an employee participate when on duty?

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

What other limits apply regarding political activities while at work?

- Federal employees may not:
 - use Government property for political purposes, including equipment, supplies, and services (such as telephones and faxes);
 - use a Government position or influence to interfere with an election or to coerce any person to participate in a political activity;
 - wear a political button on duty;
 - display a partisan banner, sign, sticker, or poster on Federal premises; 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 on an employee's political activities when not on duty or on Federal premises?

- Yes. Federal employees who serve for more than 130 days per 365-day cycle are barred, even when not on duty, from:
 - soliciting, receiving, or accepting campaign funds (such as by hosting a fund-raiser or asking for contributions by telephone or in a speech) and
 - running for office in a partisan election (except as an independent in local races in some areas, such as some D.C. suburbs).

Are these the only restrictions on Federal employees?

- No. Career members of the SES, administrative law judges, NOAA Corps officers, and the Inspector General are also barred from any active participation in a partisan political campaign (including stuffing envelopes or soliciting votes by telephone) and from serving as an officer in a political organization.

Prepared by the Ethics Law Division, Office of the Assistant General Counsel for Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce – January 2, 2004
FOR ADVICE ON THIS TOPIC, CALL THE ETHICS DIVISION AT (202) 482-5384

A WORD ABOUT ETHICS