



MEMORANDUM

To: University System Presidents, VPAA's, CBOs, and Legal Affairs
From: USG Office of Legal Affairs
Date: January 14, 2019
Subject: Policy Guidance on Political Activity

This memorandum serves as our periodic guidance regarding free expression and employment. With the approach of the 2019 legislative session, we are providing our guidance to summarize certain University System of Georgia (USG) policies related to political activity questions we often receive during the legislative session. This guidance seeks to address some specific situations at the intersection of free speech and employment in the USG. Please feel free to share this information with your campus communities.

Employee Expression of Political Opinions

The USG respects the free expression rights of USG employees to share their own views on political issues. Sharing these views should be done only in employees' personal capacities and in a manner that does not interfere with work, does not involve improper use of state resources, and does not create the appearance that the employee is speaking on behalf of the USG or its institutions. Employees desiring to express personal political views should make it clear that their views are personal in nature and do not represent the views of the USG or its institutions. For example, employees desiring to express personal views to elected officials or other third parties: (1) must make it clear that their views are personal in nature and do not represent the views of the USG or its institutions, and (2) may not use state resources (including work email) or work time to communicate these views.

In addition, employees are prohibited from using any USG registered trademarks when expressing personal opinions on political issues, unless they are otherwise specifically authorized to do so.

Employee Involvement in Political Campaigns

Individuals may not hold elective political office at the state or federal level while employed by the USG. Any employee seeking elective office must notify his or her direct supervisor and request a leave of absence without pay prior to qualifying as a candidate.

Employees are also prohibited from managing or taking an active part in political campaigns during work hours or where such involvement would otherwise interfere with work responsibilities. Under no circumstances may employees use any state property, resources, or materials in conjunction with any political campaigning.

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Thank you for all you do on behalf of student education and success in Georgia and for your attention to this guidance as we begin the new year. Should you have any questions about this guidance or wish to discuss it further, please contact the USG Office of Legal Affairs at 404-962-3255.