

Political Activity Guidelines

In accordance with the Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, 5 ILCS 430/5-15, and the Chicago State University Board of Trustees Regulations, Chicago State University employees are prohibited from engaging in political activity during compensated time other than vacation, personal or compensatory time off. Additionally, University employees are prohibited from intentionally misappropriating any State property or resources (including University property or resources) by engaging in any prohibited political activity for the benefit of any campaign for elective office or any political organization or referendum question.

The Office of Executive Inspector General (OEIG) often receives complaints about inappropriate political activity by State employees. State law and agency policies put restrictions on the kinds of political activity that are appropriate for State employees under certain circumstances.

Many forms of political activity are entirely appropriate for State employees to engage in on their own time and using their own resources. For example, there are no rules prohibiting any of the following activities when the State employee is **not** working:

- Registering to vote, and voting in elections
- Assisting in voter registration drives
- Attending informational gatherings, such as town hall meetings or debates
- Participating in public opinion polling

In addition, when **not** on the job, it may be appropriate for a State employee to:

- Volunteer with a candidate or political party
- Sign or circulate petitions for a candidate or ballot question
- Make campaign contributions

However, State employees must be very careful about mixing politics and work. While a University employee is on compensated time, other than vacation, personal or compensatory time off, it is inappropriate for the University employee to engage in any of the political activities previously referenced or any other political activity. For example, while on the job, it is also inappropriate for University employees to:

- Plan political meetings
- Distribute campaign literature
- Prepare responses to a candidate questionnaire

The Ethics Act provides that it is illegal for any supervisor to intentionally misappropriate the services of any University employee by requiring that employee to perform any prohibited political activity as part of their job duties, as a condition of their employment, or during any time off that is compensated by the University (such as vacation, personal, or compensatory time off).

Any University employee who is offered anything of value for engaging in prohibited political activity, such offer must be reported to the University's ethics officer or the OEIG.

No State employee, candidate for elective office, lobbyist, or representative of any political organization may solicit, offer, receive or give campaign contributions on State property, unless that property has been rented from the State by a private person or entity.

If a State employee's duties involve regulatory or licensing activities, it is inappropriate for the State employee to ever solicit or accept a campaign contribution from a person or entity that the State employee licenses or regulates, even if out of uniform and on the State employee's own time.

While these are among the more common issues State employees face, there are other considerations as well. University employees are encouraged to talk with the University's ethics officer if they have any questions.

As a practical matter, the OEIG sees some issues arise more often than others. Violations of these rules are entirely avoidable if State employees are careful with their use of State time, property and resources, including but not limited to University supplies, telephones, vehicles, tools, copiers, fax machines, email accounts, and computers.

The most common instances of improper political activity involve misuse of State email

- Do not send or respond to political email through a State account at any time
- Should a University employee receive a political email in his or her State account, do not forward it to anyone other than the University's Ethics officer
- Do not send, forward or respond to political email through personal email accounts if on compensated time (other than personal, compensatory or vacation time), or with State computers, State Internet networks, or other State resources

The next most common violation involves misuse of time and telephones:

- Do not make political phone calls while on compensated time (other than personal, compensatory or vacation time)
- Do not use a personal phone to make political phone calls while at work

In addition to rules explicitly focused on political activity, University employees should be mindful of rules relating to any non-work related use of State equipment and resources. Activities that are not directly discussed under rules aimed at political activity may be regulated under rules related to non-work use of State equipment and resources.

Anyone who has questions regarding whether their activities will be appropriate under the law and the University's rules, are encouraged to contact the University's ethics officer, Robin Hawkins at 773/995-3519 or EthicsOffice@csu.edu for additional information.

If you are concerned about inappropriate political activity at Chicago State University, please contact the ethics officer or the OEIG:

OEIG Contact Information

- Phone: 866/814-1113
- FAX: 312/814-5479
- TTY: 888/261-2734
- Online: Log on to www.inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov and click on "Complaints"
- U.S. Mail:

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