

Wisconsin Ethics Commission

Legislative Staff

Legislative Employees' Campaign Activities

Legislative employees may participate in campaigns. Legislative employees may participate in campaign activities. You may, if you wish, support candidates of your choice and assist their campaigns.

If you want to campaign and decide to, then bear in mind:

- a. **Keep campaign activity outside the capitol.** Your campaign activity must be away from the capitol and other state offices.
- b. **EITHER confine campaign activity to evenings, weekends, and scheduled lunch hours OR, if during the normally scheduled business day, then only after notice to the chief clerk that you are taking time without pay or vacation.** EITHER your campaign activity must be outside of your regular work hours OR the chief clerk must have previously authorized you to take time off without pay, or as paid vacation to which the law entitles you.¹

Report hours of paid campaign work. If you accept for campaign work any payment, above and beyond the reimbursement of ordinary expenses you incur to campaign, then, you must report to the chief clerk the dates and hours you worked on campaign activities. Report the campaign time for which you will be compensated to the chief clerk during the week in which you participated in a campaign, even if you will not receive the payment until later.

No one may require you to participate in a campaign or to make a campaign contribution or affect your employment by the Legislature if you do not participate in campaign activities. To implement an agreement that legislative leaders reached with the Elections Board, the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization adopted this rule in 2001:

It shall be part of an employee's term of employment that no decision affecting an employee's continued employment, salary, benefits, or the terms, hours or other conditions of the individual's employment may be based, in any manner or to any degree on the employee's failure to participate in campaign activities or failing to make a political contribution.

¹ *You may not engage in campaign activities while you are on "comp time"*. How you spend your vacation time is your business. If you want to spend your vacation as an unpaid campaign volunteer for a candidate's election, you may. You do not have to tell the chief clerk or the Wisconsin Ethics Commission how you intend to spend or how you spent your vacation; but if you will campaign during your vacation you must tell the chief clerk in advance that you will be on vacation. The legislature established this policy for your protection and the protection of the Legislature as an institution. If someone sees you campaigning during normal office hours, the chief clerk of your house will have records to support your explanation that you were campaigning on vacation time or on your own time.

This is a guide. For authoritative information consult Wisconsin Statutes.

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Campaign activity defined. The term *campaign activity* means activity that does not reasonably and primarily fulfill and arise from official duties and that contributes to, enhances, or furthers a person's ability to run for, or chance of election or reelection to, public office.

Illustrative activities include:

- a. Arranging or assisting with campaign-related event or the raising of campaign contributions
- b. Soliciting, receiving, or acknowledging campaign contributions
- c. Preparing or distributing television, radio, newspaper, or other forms of campaign advertisements
- d. Preparing or designing brochures, literature, nomination papers, or other campaign materials
- e. Distributing or arranging for the distribution of campaign materials
- f. Directing, seeking or coordination of campaign volunteers
- g. Preparing a campaign budget
- h. Directing or participating in “get out the vote” drives
- i. Creating, maintaining, or managing information from a list or database of contributors, supporters, or for any other campaign purpose
- j. Preparing, coordinating, or conducting polling operations for a campaign purpose
- k. Transporting voters to polls or campaign rallies
- l. Preparing campaign finance reports required by law
- m. Directing or participating in candidate recruitment