

The purpose of this document is to provide direction regarding permitted and prohibited political activities for classified employees within agencies of the State of West Virginia or affiliated county or municipal agencies with the Division of Personnel (DOP). The following summarizes various provisions of State and federal law. It is suggested that this information be posted or circulated to employees within each Department/Bureau/Division. The issue of political activities for State employees is complex and requires determination of the application of the appropriate State and/or federal law. The intent of this document is to provide some clarification on this matter. Specific questions regarding this issue should be directed to DOP, Employee Relations Section at (304) 414-1853.

Political activities of employees classified under the DOP merit system are delineated in West Virginia Code § 29-6-20 and Section 16 of the DOP *Administrative Rule*.

EMPLOYEES MAY	EMPLOYEES MAY NOT
1. Serve as a poll clerk or worker.	1. Sell tickets to political affairs to employees in the classified service.
2. Be a candidate for or serve as a delegate to any state or national political party convention.	2. Serve as a campaign financial agent or treasurer for a political committee or candidate.
3. Voluntarily campaign for a candidate or party during non-work time, off of state property, and without the use of state supplies or equipment within the provisions of Election Guidelines and law, so long as they are not paid a fee other than actual expenses incurred.	3. Be a candidate for any partisan or non-partisan national, state-paid public office, or court of record, including local.
4. Voluntarily sell tickets to political affairs to individuals other than employees in the classified service during non-work hours.	4. Be a member of any national, state, or local committee of a political party.
5. Voluntarily erect campaign signs on private property, as long as the property is not used as a state office or official office site by the state.	5. Hold any paid elective or appointive office.
6. Voluntarily attend political dinners, rallies, and dances.	6. Solicit or receive any assessment, subscription, or contribution from employees in the classified service.
7. Voluntarily serve on campaign committees for a candidate, so long as not receiving compensation for services.	7. Use or promise to use, directly or indirectly, any official authority or influence, whether possessed or anticipated, for the purpose of influencing the vote or political action of any person.
8. Be a candidate for paid local partisan or non-partisan elective office (except a court of record) by taking a leave of absence commencing with the filing date.	8. Post or distribute campaign literature in a state office building or during work hours. This includes employee organization bulletin boards.

Time Off for Voting [W. Va. Code § 3-1-42]

Employees may be granted time off from work in accordance with W. Va. Code § 3-1-42, which states:

“Every person entitled to vote at any election who may be employed by any person, company, or corporation on the day on which such election shall be held in this state, shall, on written demand of such employee, made at least three days prior thereto, be given a period of not more than three hours, if necessary, between the opening and the closing of the polls on such day, for the purpose of enabling such person to repair to the place of voting to cast his vote and return, without liability to any penalty or deduction from his usual salary or wages on account of such absence, except that any employee, who has three or more hours of his own time away from his work or place of employment at any time between the hours of the opening and the closing of the polls on election day and who fails or neglects to vote or elects not to vote during such free time away from his work or employment, may be subject to wage or salary deductions for the time actually absent from his work or employment for voting in such election.

In essential government, health, hospital, transportation, and communication services and in production, manufacturing, and processing works requiring continuity in operation, the employer may, upon receipt of such written demand for voting time off, arrange and schedule a calendar of time off for any and all of his employees for voting so as to avoid impairment or disruption of essential services and operations, but every such schedule or calendar of time off for voting so arranged shall provide ample and convenient time and opportunity for each employee of such services or works to cast his vote as herein provided.”

Promise of Employment or Other Benefits [W. Va. Code § 3-8-12(e)]

“A person may not, directly or indirectly, promise any employment, position, work, compensation or other benefit provided for, or made possible, in whole or in part, by act of the Legislature, to any person as consideration, favor or reward for any political activity for the support of or opposition to any candidate, or any political party in any election.”

Election Day Holiday

Section 14.1.a. of the DOP *Administrative Rule*, entitled official holidays, states, in pertinent part, that “Employees shall be released from work with pay ... any day on which a state-wide election (Primary, General, or Special) is held” This section shall not apply to local (e.g., county or municipal) elections.

Federally Funded Programs [Hatch Act]

The Federal Hatch Act governing state and local employees found in 5 U.S. Code §§ 1501-1508, applies to any “individual employed by a State or local agency whose principal employment is in connection with an activity which is financed in whole or in part by loans or grants made by the United States or a federal agency but does not include – (a) an individual who exercises no functions in connection with that activity”

In certain areas the federal statute is more restrictive than the current law found in Chapter 29, Article 6 of the West Virginia Code, as amended. Therefore, to the extent, those employees are covered by the Hatch Act, the provisions of W. Va. Code § 29-6-1 *et seq.* would apply.

W. Va. Code § 29-6-1 *et seq.* permits an employee to be a candidate for election to a local level paid partisan or non-partisan office, except for courts of record, by taking a leave of absence without pay for the period of candidacy commencing with the date of filing for such candidacy. A leave of absence is not necessary to be a candidate for an unpaid elective office permitted by statute. The Hatch Act does not allow a state employee whose principal employment is in connection with an activity that is financed in whole or in part by federal funds to be a candidate for partisan elective office. More information regarding the Hatch Act can be found at:

Links to West Virginia Code and other references:

- **W. Va. Code § 3-1-42** – Time Off for Voting
- **W. Va. Code § 3-8-12(e)** – Promise of Employment or Other Benefits
- **W. Va. Code § 29-6-1** – Civil Service System
- **W. Va. Code § 29-6-20** – Favoritism or discrimination because of political or religious opinions, affiliations, or race; political activities prohibited
- **5 U.S. Code §§ 1501-1508** – Political Activity of Certain State and Local Employees (Title 5, Part II, Chapter 15, Sections 1501 through 1508)
- **Federal Hatch Act**
- **WV DOP Administrative Rule** – Election Day Holiday (Section 14.1.f)
- **WV DOP Administrative Rule** – Political Activities (Section 16)