POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Office of General Counsel
2017 CSU Advocacy Training Conference
10/16/17
**POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC AGENCIES ARE REGULATED**

Public funds may not be used for campaign activities

The CSU, as a publicly-funded agency, is subject to this restriction
USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Two sources of law prohibiting the use of public resources for campaigns:

1. **Stanson v. Mott** (1976) 17 Cal.3d 206
   
   A public agency may not use public funds to promote partisan positions in election campaigns.

2. **Government Code §8314(a)**
   
   It is unlawful for any elected state or local officer, including any state or local appointee, employee, or consultant, to use or permit others to use public resources for a campaign activity, or personal or other purposes which are not authorized by law.
**What is a “Public Resource?”**

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WHAT CONSTITUTES “USE” OF PUBLIC FUNDS?

“Use’ means a use of public resources which is substantial enough to result in a gain or advantage to the user or a loss to the state or any local agency for which a monetary value may be estimated.”

“Incidental and minimal use of public resources . . . shall not be subject to prosecution”
WHAT IS “CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY?”

“Campaign activity” is an activity constituting a contribution or expenditure to advocate the election or defeat of a candidate or measure.

It does not include incidental and minimal use of public resources.
USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Use of public funds for political campaigns may constitute a gift and/or misappropriation of public funds.

State resources are implicated whenever any state property or asset is used in an election campaign.
THE REASONS FOR THE RESTRICTIONS

The University has the mission to provide students with an education.

The University is not to be a center of propaganda for endorsing particular political views.

State agencies must be politically neutral to promote equity and fairness in the democratic process.

The California Constitution prohibits gifts of public funds.

The University must remain “entirely independent of all political and sectarian influence” (Cal.Educ.Code §66607).

The University, as part of the government, may not “take sides” in election contests or provide an unfair advantage to a particular faction.
PERMISSIBLE: ENDORSE AND INFORM

The University may take a position on an election matter, but cannot campaign for it or use public resources to support it.

While the Trustees can *endorse* a political position, the University *may not advocate* for that position.
NOT PERMISSIBLE: PROMOTE OR ADVOCATE

Cannot campaign for a candidate or ballot measure

Cannot use public resources to support a political position

Cannot hire someone to campaign for a political cause

Examples: bumper stickers, posters, advertisements
The University Can Provide Information

Public resources may be used to provide information to the public about the possible effects of any bond issue or other ballot measure on state activities, operations, or policies.
The University can provide information

Line between unauthorized campaign expenditures and authorized informational activities is not clear

Consider style, tenor, timing, audience, persuasive language, etc.
INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Informational activities must be otherwise authorized by law

- Information must be a fair and impartial presentation of facts

- Publication must avoid engaging in argument

- Publication must not urge a particular vote
INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The closer in time to an election, the greater scrutiny for the publication of political material

A neutral response to a request for information is likely to be permissible
THE LINE BETWEEN PROVIDING INFORMATION AND CAMPAIGNING IS BLURRY

When in doubt...

...CONTACT YOUR CAMPUS COUNSEL
CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS

Student groups must not use CSU funds to sponsor political movements

Organizations should track funding and use separate accounts so they can show public funds were not used
CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS

- Organizations affiliated with the campus (such as Academic Senate) may take positions on matters that go before the electorate.

- However, they cannot spend state funds to publicize that position except to the extent that the position would be included in normal communications about other non-political matters of the group (such as meeting minutes or newsletters).

- The group should include a statement that its position is not endorsed by the CSU.
CSU Auxiliaries

- Auxiliary funds are not “public”

- Auxiliaries may use their own funds for campaign advocacy if the position is consistent with a formal position taken by the Board of Trustees
EMPLOYEES

Employees retain their rights to engage in private political activities

All employees are entitled to make statements in support of a particular candidate, political party, ballot initiative, etc., but must do so in an individual capacity
EMPLOYEES’ ACTIVITY

Activity should be on the employee’s own time

Activity should not be performed in an official capacity with the CSU

The employee should not utilize any CSU resources

The employee should minimize any possibility of confusion of private role and CSU role

The employee should not wear a CSU logo while engaging in a political activity
EMPLOYEES

Endorsements
- All employees are entitled to provide written endorsements or position letters, but only in an individual capacity
- If an employee’s campus title is identified, it should be accompanied by “for identification purposes only”

Campaign Activity
- All employees may appear at candidate rallies or fundraisers, but not in an official role with the CSU
EMPLOYEES

Political Buttons
- Employees may wear political campaign buttons to work

Campus Publications
- University leaders may not state their personal political opinions in a University-funded publication

Voting
- Employees may take time from work, without loss of pay, to vote in a state election if they do not have sufficient time outside of working hours to vote
EMPLOYEES’ EMAIL

Campaign advocacy is not appropriate on CSU-provided email accounts for employees

Example: An employee should not use a campus listserv to encourage recipients to vote for a particular candidate

However, to the extent that personal communication is allowed by the campus, then personal communication about political views must also be tolerated

Example: An employee can express his dissatisfaction with a political figure or law
Students’ Email

Since campus email accounts for students are generally provided for personal use, the campus should not interfere with student communications containing political content.

However, CSU-affiliated student groups can be required to include a disclaimer that their opinions are not necessarily the opinions of the CSU.
Faculty Speech

- Faculty enjoy the right to both free speech and academic freedom.

- Academic freedom allows professors to exercise their professional judgment in teaching and research
  - It is not unrestricted free speech rights.

- Some speech may exceed the protections provided under the 1st Amendment and academic freedom.
  - This includes the use of state funds for political advocacy
Faculty members are obligated to perform the normal and reasonable duties of their positions.

Dismissal of classes as a demonstration in support of a particular social or political movement is considered a violation.

Using classroom time to promote a political position is impermissible.

Reference: EO 79
OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Prohibition on speakers must not be based on the content of their speech

Speech can be limited by reasonable time, place and manner restrictions
OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Outside speakers of every type must be permitted

Outside speakers may present political opinions

Outside speakers may hold political rallies

Outside speakers may advocate for a candidate or position in an election year

This is not an improper use of campus resources, provided that all speakers of all viewpoints have equal access.
Debates are Permitted

- Debates must not be influenced by the University

- Debates should not be limited to a particular party or viewpoint

- Debates must provide all sides with a fair opportunity to present their positions
OUTSIDE SPEAKERS/DEBATES

Over time, there should be balance on various points of view (eg., there should not be 20 Republican candidates and 1 Democrat candidate)

There should be a statement in publications and introduction that the CSU does not support or oppose the speaker’s position/candidacy
**Outside Speakers**

The campus may prohibit outside speakers only when it reasonably appears the speaker will advocate:

- Violent overthrow of the government;
- Willful destruction or seizure of campus buildings or property;
- Disruption or impairment, by force, of the campus’s regularly scheduled classes or other educational functions;
- Physical harm, coercion or intimidation, or other invasion of lawful rights of campus officials, faculty or students; or
- Other campus disorder of a violent nature.
Facilities for Outside Speakers

- Campaigns may book campus facilities
  - Include disclaimer that opinions are not those of the CSU

- Campaigns must be treated equally to other campaigns
  - Similar fees (if any)
  - Similar access to facilities
  - Similar time allowed

Example: Cannot give preferred campaigns free use all day of the largest arena while giving other campaigns a small classroom for an hour at a price.
Facilities for Campaign Advertising

- CSU campuses may be used for filming a political advertisement
  - Comply with time, place, and manner requirements
  - Cannot film in a manner to suggest CSU endorsement of the message

Example: Do not allow a candidate to be filmed next to the signage identifying the campus
LEAFLETS/POSTERS

- Campaign posters and leafletting are permitted
  - Provided there is no use of public funds for production
  - Subject to reasonable time, place and manner restrictions
WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS:

Gather the team

1. UPD
2. Maintenance
3. Facilities
4. Student Affairs
5. Faculty Leadership
6. Risk Management
7. Human Resources
8. Campus Counsel
9. Others relevant to the event
WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS:

Strategize

1. Logistics
2. Safety
3. Messaging
4. Compliance with Time/Place/Manner
WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS:

Inform

1. Notify campus community
2. Educate about free speech rights
3. Remind of core values
4. Affirm commitment to equality, inclusivity, and tolerance
5. Disclaim association
WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS:

Confer

1. Meet with the controversial speaker
2. Meet with opposition to the speaker
3. Identify potential security issues
4. Make agreements to minimize disruptions

Examples: Unmarked vehicle, rear entrance, designated areas for protest, questions submitted in advance and read by moderator
WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS:

Prepare Venue/Security

1. Ticketing
2. Venue size
3. Entry for attendees
4. Special entrance for speaker
5. Sanitize for weapons
6. Restrict vehicle access
7. Security check point
8. Police presence
9. Remote viewing
10. Remove everything portable
11. Have contact number for leaders of sponsoring group and oppositions
WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS:

Insure Balance

1. Allow alternate viewpoints
2. Invite debate and discussion
3. Provide a forum for counter position
4. Schedule a concurrent attractive event
5. Allow peaceful protest
WHAT THE CAMPUS SHOULD NOT DO:

- Erase or deface offensive statements
- Remove offensive posters or leaflets
- Confiscate offensive signs
- Attempt to prohibit offensive speakers
- Permit violence
- Allow disruption of the event
FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE:

OGC Handbook of Election Issues:

American Council on Education
Questions?