POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Hatch Act limits certain political activities of Federal employees. In this context, "political activity" refers to any activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, partisan political group, or candidate in a partisan race. With the increased use of social media the Office of Special Counsel has provided some additional guidance to help Federal employees understand what is and is not allowed under the Hatch Act with respect to such use.

If you are using social media to express your political views, you can generally avoid violating the Hatch Act if you: (1) do not engage in political activity while on duty or in the workplace; (2) do not engage in political activity in an official capacity at any time; and (3) do not solicit or receive political contributions at any time. The following are some practical pointers that will help to clarify the limitations.

- $ Do not use your Federal job title when using social media in a personal, unofficial capacity. (However, you may use your title as part of a biographical sketch when it is self-evident that you are not posting in an official capacity, such as posting a resume or listing employment history on a social network profile such as LinkedIn®).
- $ While off-duty and off-premises, you may write a personal blog expressing your political opinion or expressing support for a political party, group, or candidate; however, do not use your official title or try to bolster your opinions by including the fact that you are a Federal employee.
- $ Do not post anything on social media that contains a request for funds for a political party, group, or candidate.
- $ Do not "like," "share," "tweet," or "retweet" any items on Facebook® or Twitter® that include a request for funds for a political party, group, or candidate. (You would be rebroadcasting the fund request and it would be considered fundraising by you.)
- $ Do not post or share a posting on social media that contains a link to the contributions page or fundraising page of a political party, group, or candidate.
- $ You may display campaign logos or candidate photographs as your cover or header photo at the top of your social media profiles on your personal Facebook® or Twitter® accounts.
- $ You may also display campaign logos or candidate photographs as your profile picture on your personal Facebook® or Twitter® accounts, but if you do, you cannot take any action on that account (even unrelated to political activities) while on duty or in the workplace.
- $ If you are a career SES employee or NOAA Corps Officer, you may not post items that link to the website of a political party, group, or candidate. However, you may "like" a social media post from a political party, group, or candidate and may comment on such an entity's social media pages when not on duty or in the workplace.

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