



2016 Guide to State Employees' **Political Activity**



The 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 you are 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 if you choose to:

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


However, be careful about mixing politics and work. If you are on compensated time, other than vacation, personal or compensatory time off, it is inappropriate for you to engage in any of those activities. While at your State job, it is also inappropriate for you to:


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

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 your State duties involve regulatory or licensing activities, it is inappropriate for you to ever solicit or accept a campaign contribution from a person or entity that you license or regulate, even if out of uniform and on your own time.

While these are among the more common issues State employees face, there are other considerations as well. Please talk with your ethics officer if you 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 and resources.

- The most common instances of improper political activity involve misuse of State email
 - ➔ Do not send or respond to political email through your State account at any time
 - ➔ If you receive a political email in your State account, do not forward it to anyone other than your Ethics officer
 - ➔ Do not send, forward or respond to political email through your personal account 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 your personal phone to make political phone calls while at work

In addition to rules explicitly focused on political activity, 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.

If you have any questions about whether your activities will be appropriate under the law and your agency's rules, contact your ethics officer. A list of Ethics officers is available on the OEIG website (inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov)

If you are concerned about inappropriate political activity in your State agency, please contact the OEIG:

1. Call 866.814.1113
2. Fax 312.814.5479
3. TTY 888.261.2734
4. Log on to www.inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov and click on "complaints"
5. Mail your complaint to one of the OEIG offices:

OEIG
69 West Washington, Suite 3400
Chicago, Illinois 60602

OEIG
607 East Adams, 14th Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62701

