

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

The following FAQs are intended to help UW Medicine workforce members including faculty, non-faculty healthcare professionals, trainees and staff navigate the applicable laws, policies and rules governing political campaigning and workplace resources. Political campaigning is any activity, including lobbying, that solicits support for or against ballot issues, legislation, or political/electoral candidates. If you have any questions about whether a particular activity is permitted, consult your department chair, director, supervisor or manager before undertaking such an activity.

1. What are the restrictions on political campaigning in the workplace?¹

The WA State Ethics in Public Service Act (Ethics Act) prohibits state employees from engaging in political campaign activities during working hours or using institutional resources at any time for political campaigning. You may not solicit financial or other contributions/services from your UW Medicine colleagues during work time. UW Medicine funds may never be used at any time for political campaigning, such as any payment to a political campaign fund.

UW Medicine entities' resources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Money
- Letterhead and logos;
- Office space and other facilities;²
- Office supplies;
- Equipment (including photocopiers; computers, telephones, and facsimiles machines);
- Electronic resources including email, websites, UW/UW Medicine discussion boards, work cellular phones or other similar resources.

¹ These restrictions do not apply to a small fraction of state employees, such as UW Medicine Executive Leaders as well as the staff of the UW Office of Government Relations, for which political campaigning activities including lobbying are part of the normal and regular conduct of those persons' office or agency.

² University facilities may be used for political activities (including events and forums regarding ballot propositions and/or candidates who have filed for public office) only if the event has been sponsored by an administrative or academic unit and approved by the appropriate committee chair, and subject to the following limitations:

(a) The full rental cost of the facility must be paid and state funds may not be used to pay rental costs or any other costs associated with the event.

(b) All candidates who have filed for office for a given position, regardless of party affiliation, must be given equal access to the use of facilities within a reasonable time.

(c) No person shall solicit contributions on university property for political uses, except in instances where this limitation conflicts with applicable federal law regarding interference with the mails.

(d) University facilities may not be used to establish or maintain offices or headquarters for political candidates or partisan political causes.

2. Can I send my friends and colleagues information about a particular candidate or issue on the ballot?

The Ethics Act prohibits you and other state employees from using your work time or resources to send political messages. However, as a private citizen, you are free to engage in political activities on your own time and with your own resources. Please be aware that your colleagues may have different opinions, and political discussions may create an uncomfortable workplace environment.

3. Can UW Medicine employees borrow an entity's vehicle to drive to an event that advocates for/against healthcare legislation?

No — you cannot use institutional resources, including your work time, to support this or other political activities.

4. I feel strongly about a current issue. I want to write a letter to the local newspaper. Can I sign the letter using my job title or employer's name?

You may use your own credentials such as RN, MD or PhD, but you may not use your job title or refer to your employment with UW Medicine unless you use a disclaimer to indicate the letter represents your personal opinion and not that of UW Medicine.

5. I want to wear my candidate's campaign attire in the workplace and display a sign with the candidate's campaign slogan; is this permissible?

Since displaying political campaign signs or attire in UW Medicine workspace or clinical space could be confusing, upsetting or distracting to patients and potentially cause discomfort among your colleagues even if you are not in a patient care area, UW Medicine employees may not post political campaign signs at their personal workstation or wear political campaign attire while at work. Wearing political campaign attire might also violate entity-specific dress codes or other policies. You should be aware of the rules for each facility at which you work. UW Medicine employees also may not display political campaign signs in public or clinical areas.³

6. I want to distribute political materials in the workplace; is this permissible?

See your entity's policy or consult with your department chair, director, supervisor, or manager. If such activities are allowed, they may only be conducted during your and your colleagues' personal time, without using institutional resources or infringing on the work time of your colleagues.

³ Activities which are endorsed by UW Medicine Executive Leadership and/or which specifically align with the values articulated in the UW Medicine Mission & Vision Statement or the Policy on Professional Conduct are not subject to the standard articulated in this FAQ. Workforce members should consult their management for clarification and, if needed, contact UW Medicine Compliance at comply@uw.edu / 206.543.3098 for further guidance.

REFERENCES:

UW Medicine Compliance Use of Institutional Resources – FAQs:

<https://depts.washington.edu/comply/resources/frequently-asked-questions-faqs/use-of-institutional-resources-faqs/>

UW Medicine Workforce Code of Conduct:

https://depts.washington.edu/comply/docs/UWM_CodeofConduct.pdf

UW Administrative Policy Statement 47.2 – Personal Use of University Facilities, Computers, and Equipment by University Employees:

<http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/APS/47.02.html>

Washington State Ethics in Public Service Act, RCW Chapter 42.52

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=42.52>

Washington State Executive Ethics Board Advisory Opinion 02-02A – Use of Resources Questions and Answers:

<https://ethics.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/AO%2002-02A%20Revised%202017.pdf>

Washington State Executive Ethics Board Advisory Opinion 00-08 – Use of State Resources/Political Campaigns/Officer or Employee Title:

https://ethics.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/advisory_opinions/00-08.pdf

Washington Administrative Code 478-136-030: Use of University of Washington Facilities – Limitations on use:

<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-136-030>