



U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street, N.W., Suite 218
Washington, D.C. 20036-4505

TWO VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES SERVE SUSPENSIONS FOR VIOLATING THE HATCH ACT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ann O'Hanlon, (202) 254-3631; aohanlon@osc.gov

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Two employees of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently served suspensions for sending partisan political e-mails while on duty and in the federal workplace.

The first employee served a 14-day suspension without pay as a penalty for sending several e-mails directed at the success of then-candidate Barack Obama while in her government office and using her official VA e-mail account. These e-mails included requests from the Obama campaign to persuade people to vote for Obama and volunteer for and donate money to the Obama campaign. The employee also sent one e-mail that disparaged then-Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin, also while at work and using her government e-mail account. All of the employee's e-mails included her official title and contact information at the VA.

The other employee served a 21-day suspension without pay for sending multiple e-mails advocating for the Democratic Party and then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama. She sent these e-mails while at work, using her government e-mail account despite receiving a daily reminder on her computer warning employees of the Hatch Act and its restrictions.

Both employees admitted in settlement agreements with the Office of Special Counsel that they violated the Hatch Act's prohibitions against engaging in political activity while on duty and in a federal building.

The Hatch Act restricts the political activity of individuals employed or holding office in the executive branch of the federal government. An employee covered by the Act is prohibited from, among other things, using her official authority or influence to affect the result of an election by, for example, using her official title while engaging in political activity. In addition, a covered employee may not engage in political activity while on duty or in a federal building or knowingly solicit, accept, or receive political contributions.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.