

Political Activities by Military Members¹

With election season in full swing, it seems that political candidates and issues are everywhere. While the First Amendment's free speech rights are the law of the land, military members must abide by certain restrictions when participating in political activities. Due to the fact that our boss, the commander in chief, is elected every four years, the military must remain politically neutral. The line is essentially drawn at partisanship.

With that being said, it is perhaps easiest to illustrate what political activities military members can participate in by discussing what we cannot do. Members cannot participate in partisan political events, fundraisers, rallies, conventions, or campaigns; participation is anything more than mere attendance as a spectator. Members cannot publish political articles, letters, or endorsements. Members cannot use their official positions to interfere with an election, affect an election, or solicit votes for a particular candidate or issue.

Additionally, members cannot serve in a position of leadership or sponsor a partisan political club, or speak before a partisan political gathering. Members cannot participate in a radio, TV, or other discussion advocating for or against a partisan political cause. Members cannot march or ride in a partisan political parade. Members cannot display large partisan political signs on private vehicles; bumper stickers are acceptable. Finally, members cannot promote partisan political dinners or fundraisers.

The above list, of course, is not exhaustive. Every political activity is a little bit different, however, the line is generally drawn at partisanship. If you have any questions about what political activities you may or may not participate in, stop by the legal office located on the

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second floor of building 1118, or call 803-895-1560 or DSN 965-1560. Walk-in legal assistance is offered Mondays and Fridays from 9-10 a.m., and Wednesdays from 1-2 p.m.

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