Legislative Advocacy Guidelines

OKLAHOMA LAW

Any official in this state who shall direct or authorize the expenditure of any public funds under his care, except as specifically authorized by law, to be used either in support of, or in opposition to, any measure which is being referred to a vote of the people by means of the initiative or referendum, or which citizens of this state are attempting to have referred to a vote of the people by the initiative or referendum, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and the office held by such party shall be adjudged vacant and shall be filled in the manner prescribed by law. 26 O.S. § 16-119

There are many ways education leaders and employees can be legally and ethically involved in elections and advocacy. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- Use personal time and funds to support a political party, political action committee (PAC), a candidate or state question.
  - Do Not: Use school property, time or funds for a political party, political action committee (PAC), a candidate or state question. This includes but is not limited to school copiers, telephones, email accounts, computers, paper and supplies.

- On your personal time, outside of work, engage in political activity. Such as placing signs in the yard of your home, donate personal resources to a campaign, placing a campaign bumper sticker on a personal vehicle and attending political forums.
  - Do Not: Use or authorize the use of public funds, property or time to engage in activities to influence the results of an election for state office or a state question.

- Post materials in your office that do not advocate for or against a candidate, state question, or other election BUT offers general information. This information must be factual in nature.
  - Do Not: Post or distribute campaign materials in any building or other property owned, leased or occupied by the State of Oklahoma, except as permitted by law.

- Discuss political issues or state question campaigns that directly benefit your school or organization with others on your personal time.
  - Do Not: Engage in political activities during school hours or while wearing a uniform or school identification in favor of any candidate or a state question campaign.

- Use your personal phone or electronic mail to support a political party a political action committee, a candidate or a state question campaign on personal time.
  - Do Not: Email from your school address to advocate for or against any candidate or to vote for or against any state question or state election.
SCHOOL DISTRICTS MAY:

- Permit teaching about a referendum and election process.
- Have mock elections. Allow students to discuss electoral issues.
- Allow forums or dates on school district property and facilitate such forums.
- Spend money to encourage people to vote and remind them of voting days.
- Provide information to employees and district patrons about a ballot measure and the potential impact on the district. This information must be factual in nature and must not advocate for or against a ballot measure.
- Post-election date on a school marquee. Use school message systems to remind patrons to vote.

*Information adopted from OSSBA’s Legal & Ethical Election & Advocacy Involvement handout.*

Sample Letter to Legislator

Your Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Date

The Honorable (Insert Elected Official)  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Insert Elected Official),

**Paragraph 1:** Introductory paragraph. Introduce yourself, position and school. Include specific action you are requesting the elected official to take. (Example: Please vote NO on HB 1111.)

**Paragraph 2:** A paragraph explaining significance, why this action needs to be taken. Provide support for the action you want taken, may take 1-2 paragraphs (Example: HB 1111 is helpful/harmful to our state’s education system because X, Y, Z.)

**Final Paragraph:** Repeat the action you want taken. Include a sentence thanking the elected official for their consideration.

Sincerely,
(Your written signature)