



What Nonprofit Staff Can Do

Nonprofit staff members often have questions about their personal involvement in political campaigns or work with candidates.

Outside of work, nonprofit employees are free to volunteer for candidate campaigns or engage in other partisan political activities. However, it is important to make clear distinctions between personal and professional efforts, as all voter engagement activities on behalf of your nonprofit must remain completely nonpartisan.

Q: When is it personal time?

A: Outside of normal work hours, nonprofit staff may engage in partisan activities, like supporting a candidate for office. Staff may also take vacation or personal time for the purpose of engaging in political activity.

Q: Can staff be identified with their nonprofit organization when supporting a candidate?

A: Nonprofit staff members may identify their place of employment at a political event. However, staff members who are spokespeople for their organization or are otherwise visibly associated with it should emphasize that they are in attendance as a private citizen and not on behalf of the organization they work for.

Q. Can staff be listed as a supporter of a candidate with the name of the organization?

A: As a rule, it is safer to leave the name of the organization off of any partisan political materials. However, it is permissible to list the organization along with the staff member's name if it is clearly stated that the organization is listed "for identification purposes only."

Q: What about board members and volunteers?

A: While representing the nonprofit organization, board members and volunteers should follow the same protocol outlined for staff.

Q: What if a candidate lists the name of the Executive Director or another employee without their permission?

A: If a candidate lists the Executive Director or any staff member along with the organization's name on campaign material without the appropriate disclaimer (e.g. "for identification purposes only") the organization is not at fault. Ask the campaign to remove your organization's name from the list, and be sure to save a copy of your email or written request for your files.

Separate Your Personal Political Participation from Your Nonprofit Work

- Provide political campaigns or candidates a personal phone number, email address, and times to call you outside of your work hours.
- Don't use any of your organization's resources to support or oppose a candidate – like organizational vehicles, copy machines, paper, supplies, etc.

Nonprofit organizations, themselves, may offer certain resources to candidates such as event space or phones – but only if publicly available to all candidates in a race at their fair market rental value.

Resources

- "Election Activities of Individuals Associated with 501(c)(3) Organizations," Bolder Advocacy (Alliance for Justice), www.bolderadvocacy.org
- "What Nonprofit Staff Can Do: Voter Engagement at Work and Off the Clock" webinar and PowerPoint presentation, Nonprofit VOTE, www.nonprofitvote.org

