

CCSD Administrative Guidelines: Employee Conduct Regarding Elections and Work Attire

When political elections/referenda are held, it is important that School District employees maintain their political autonomy in order to ensure a fair election. The legislature has helped to ensure this goal by passing the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Act, which is enforced by the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission. The Act provides for public disclosure of campaign contributions, limits on contributions, and restrictions on lobbying. The Act also regulates the political activity of “public agencies,” which includes school districts.

The pertinent part of the Act that is of concern is O.C.G.A. §21-5-30.2(b), which states:

No agency or person acting on behalf of an agency shall make, directly or indirectly, any contribution to any campaign committee, political action committee or political organization or to any candidate...

The Act then defines “contribution” as:

A gift, subscription, membership, loan, forgiveness of debt, advance or deposit of money or anything of value conveyed or transferred by or on behalf of an agency without receipt or payment therefor, to any campaign committee, political action committee, or political organization or to any candidate for campaign purposes.

The Commission has taken the position that these provisions prohibit any expenditure of any type of school or school district funds toward promoting a particular candidate or referendum. This includes: employee’s time, school facilities, and an employee taking political action in any official capacity. Violations of these rules can result in fines and adverse publicity for the school district and the individual(s) charged. In order to prevent any type of violation in this regard, the following rules must be followed by employees and Board Members alike:

- Employees may only work to promote (or oppose) a candidate or referendum as private citizens on their own time. The First Amendment absolutely guarantees each individual the right to engage in political speech. However, employees may never campaign during school hours or in their capacity as an employee after hours. This prohibits the use of an official title at any time.
- Only private resources can be used to promote (or oppose) a candidate or referendum. No public funds or resources can be used to promote (or oppose) a candidate or referendum. School resources include facilities, copying machines, paper, stationary, phones, audiovisual equipment, computers, vehicles and employee time. Anything that is paid from purchased or maintained with taxpayer dollars may not be used to promote or oppose a candidate or referendum. This would include accessing, monitoring and/or managing social media platforms associated with candidates or referenda utilizing school hardware/software and/or during school/employee time.
- Administrators and supervisors must be careful to avoid any action which may be interpreted as requiring subordinates to vote a certain way or contribute money.
- The services of School Board Members may be considered an in-kind contribution and would thus be a violation. The Commission has not been very clear on this matter; however, the executive secretary has informally indicated that full-time elected officials who engage in campaign activity during office hours will very likely be charged with a violation. School Board Members are free to support or oppose any election effort as private individuals at all times, except during meetings or official functions.
- No campaign posters, literature, or signs may be displayed or distributed on school grounds.
- Employees cannot wear campaign pins or stickers on school grounds or distribute campaign materials on school premises. This includes the distribution of PTA newsletters containing promotional (as opposed to

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educational) articles that are sent home with students.

Employee attire must remain consistent with School Board Policy and School District guidelines including, but not limited to, such issues as remaining free of political speech. Employees should also exercise both care and caution to ensure attire does not create a disruption to the educational or work environment.

Additional Employee Attire Reminders:

To promote safe, healthy learning and work environments and ensure a positive organizational culture for CCSD as an educational institution, school district employees are expected to set good examples in their attire for students, families and fellow workers. As such, employees will adhere to the following guidance regarding attire.

Business casual is the expected attire for employees. Supervisors will determine the appropriate business casual attire for their respective school- or district-level locations. Some employees, based on their identified jobs or duties/responsibilities may be expected to wear job-specific uniforms, as determined by their supervisor.

Additionally, supervisors may allow casual attire on specifically identified days or when participating in or observing celebratory events. These casual attire opportunities will most often be expected to promote school spirit, CCSD, or school/CCSD partnerships, clubs and programs, but can also be utilized to celebrate an identified event or special occurrence and/or themes. Supervisors will determine the appropriate opportunities and schedules for casual attire.

Supervisors can take appropriate action to address instances when employees do not meet these expectations.