



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA BOARD OF ETHICS

Q&A: CITY CHARTER POLITICAL ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS AND THE 2016 ELECTION SEASON

To whom do the City political activity restrictions apply?

Philadelphia Home Rule Charter § 10-107 imposes restrictions on the political activities of City officers and employees.* The restrictions do not apply to spouses or other family members of City officers and employees.

What activities are generally prohibited for most City employees?

Political activity is an activity that helps or hurts a political party, candidate, or partisan political group.

A City employee may not:

- engage in political activity in coordination with a political party, candidate, or partisan political group;
- engage in political activity while on duty, in City uniform, or using City resources;
- use his or her City position for political purposes; or
- be in any manner involved in collecting or soliciting political contributions.

For example, a City employee is prohibited from volunteering for a candidate's campaign, assisting with a campaign event, or distributing campaign literature created by a candidate or political party.

[Board Regulation 8](#) provides a detailed explanation of the political activity restrictions and provides examples. The restrictions apply to the use of social media as explained in Subpart H of Regulation 8.

May City employees display signs or wear buttons that support a candidate or political party?

Yes, as long as the City employees are not: on duty; in uniform or wearing City employee-identifying insignia; or in a City-owned or leased property, such as City Hall.

May City employees attend events related to the Democratic National Convention?

Yes, City employees may attend Democratic National Convention-related events as spectators, whether or not the events are organized by a candidate, political party, or partisan political group. For example, City employees may attend PoliticalFest and company-sponsored welcome events, and they can be spectators at political rallies of a candidate or local political party group.

What are the restrictions on volunteering related to the Democratic National Convention?

The Board issued an [advisory alert](#) providing guidance to City employees regarding Convention-related volunteering. A [separate advisory alert](#) addressed different restrictions for City Council employees.

What should City employees do if they have questions about the political activity restrictions?

This document provides general guidance, but application of ethics and political activity restrictions is fact-specific. City employees with questions should contact the Ethics Board for guidance based on their particular situations. Contact the Board through the [Ask for Advice Function](#) on the [Board's website](#) or at 215.686.9450.

*As compared to most City employees, the political activity restrictions apply differently to: (a) elected officials; (b) City Council employees; and (c) members of City boards and commissions that are advisory and do not exercise significant government powers.