

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Political Do's and Don'ts for Soldiers

1. **PURPOSE.** To explain permissible and impermissible political activities by soldiers.

2. **EXAMPLES OF PERMISSIBLE POLITICAL ACTIVITY.** A soldier on active duty may—

a. Register, vote, and express a personal opinion on political candidates and issues as a private citizen, but not as a representative of the Armed Forces.

b. Promote and encourage other soldiers to exercise their voting franchise, if such promotion does not constitute an attempt to influence or interfere with the outcome of an election.

c. Join a political club and attend its meetings when not in uniform.

d. Serve as an election official, if such service is not as a representative of a partisan political party, does not interfere with military duties, is performed while out of uniform, and has the prior approval of the installation commander.

e. Sign a petition for specific legislative action or a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot, if the signing does not obligate the soldier to engage in partisan political activity and is done as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Armed Forces.

f. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing the soldier's personal views on public issues or political candidates, if such action is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign or concerted solicitation of votes for or against a political party or partisan political cause or candidate.

g. Make monetary contributions to a political organization, party or committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates, subject to the limitations under 2 U.S.C. §441a and 18 U.S.C. §607.

h. Display a political bumper sticker on the soldier's private vehicle.

3. **EXAMPLES OF PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.** A soldier on active duty will not—

a. Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election, affect the course or outcome of an election, solicit votes for a particular candidate or issue, or require or solicit political contributions from others.

b. Be a candidate for civil office in Federal, State, or local government, except as authorized in AR 600-20, or engage in public or organized soliciting of others to become partisan candidates for nomination or election to civil office.

- c. Participate in partisan political management or campaigns or make public speeches in the course thereof.
- d. Make a campaign contribution to another member of the Armed Forces or to a civilian officer or employee of the United States for promoting a political objective or cause.
- e. Solicit or receive a campaign contribution from another member of the Armed Forces or from a civilian officer or employee of the U.S. for promoting a political objective or cause.
- f. Allow or cause to be published partisan political articles signed or written by the soldier that solicit votes for or against a partisan political party or candidate.
- g. Serve in any official capacity or be listed as a sponsor of a partisan political club.
- h. Speak at a partisan political gathering of any kind for promoting a partisan party or candidate.
- i. Participate in any radio, television, or other program or group discussion as an advocate of a partisan political party or candidate.
- j. Conduct a political opinion survey or distribute partisan political literature.
- k. Use contemptuous words against the officeholders described in 10 U.S.C. §888 (e.g., the President, Vice-President, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, etc.).
- l. Perform clerical or other duties for a partisan political committee during a campaign or on an election day.
- m. Solicit or otherwise engage in fundraising activities in Federal offices or facilities for a partisan political cause or candidate.
- n. March or ride in a partisan political parade.
- o. Display a large political sign, banner, or poster (as distinguished from a bumper sticker) on the top or side of a private vehicle.
- p. Participate in any organized effort to provide voters with transportation to the polls if the effort is organized by, or associated with, a partisan political party or candidate.
- q. Sell tickets for, or otherwise actively promote, political dinners and similar fundraising events.
- r. Attend partisan political events as an official representative of the Armed Forces.
- s. Display political banners/signs in yards of on-post government housing or in Federal offices or buildings.

4. **CONCLUSION.** The spirit and intent of these different laws and regulations are to prohibit any activity that may be viewed as directly or indirectly associating DOD with partisan politics.