



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
MARINE CORPS INSTALLATIONS WEST-MARINE CORPS BASE  
BOX 555010  
CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA 92055-5010

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COMMANDING GENERAL'S POLICY LETTER 1-24

From: Commanding General  
To: Distribution List

Subj: POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF ACTIVE-DUTY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Ref: (a) DoDD 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces  
(b) DoDD 5500.07-R, Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)  
(c) 5 U.S.C. Sec §§ 7321-7326, Hatch Act  
(d) DoDI 5400.18, Public Affairs Procedures and Operations for Political Campaigns and Elections  
(e) MARADMIN 086/24, Guidance on Political Campaigns and Activity  
(f) MARDMIN 368/24, Implementing Guidance for Permissible and Impermissible Political Activities Training

Encl: (1) Political Activity Quick Guide  
(2) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces

1. Situation. In accordance with references (a) through (f) and enclosures (1) and (2), almost every year presents Service Members and civilian Department of Defense (DoD) employees with opportunities to be involved in the political process on the local, state, or national levels. Although individual participation in political activities may be encouraged on a private, unofficial basis, such participation is subject to some common-sense limitations. An overview of both permissible and impermissible political activities is presented below.

2. Cancellation. Commanding General's Policy Letter 3-23.

3. Mission. To provide information and guidance to Service Members and civilian personnel assigned to or within Marine Corps Installations West-Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton

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(MCIWEST-MCB CAMPEN) regarding participation in political activities.

4. Execution

a. Active-Duty Members of the Military. Per reference (a), the spirit and intent of the reference prohibits any activity that may be viewed as directly or indirectly associating DoD with partisan politics.

(1) Permitted Activities. Active-duty Service Members may:

(2)

(a) Vote.

(b) Express a personal opinion on political candidates or issues.

(c) Promote and encourage others to vote.

(d) Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing their personal views.

(e) Display one partisan political bumper sticker on a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV).

(f) Use social media to express personal views on public issues or political candidates, much the same as they would be permitted to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper. If a social media site/post identifies the member is on active duty (or if the member is reasonably identifiable as an active-duty member), then the entry will clearly and prominently state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the DoD or the Marine Corps.

(2) Prohibited Activities. Active duty Service Members may not:

(a) Participate in partisan political fundraising activities.

(b) Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election.

(c) Perform clerical or other duties for a partisan political committee or candidate during a campaign (e.g.,

stuffing envelopes, manning a phone bank, precinct walks, distributing campaign literature and buttons, etc.).

(d) Display a large political sign, banner, or poster (as distinguished from a bumper sticker) on a POV.

(e) Display a partisan political sign, poster, banner, or similar device visible to the public at one's residence on a military installation, even if that residence is part of a privatized housing development.

(f) Post or make direct links on social media to a political party, partisan political candidate, campaign, group, or cause; such activity is akin to distributing literature on behalf of those entities, which is prohibited.

b. DoD Civilian Employees. In accordance with references (b) and (c). The rules pertaining to the political activities of civilian DoD employees are more relaxed than those that apply to the active duty military, but are still subject to significant limitations. It is imperative that any political activities not create a real or apparent conflict of interest with the performance of a civilian employee's official duties.

(1) Permitted Activities. All DoD civilian employees may:

(a) Vote.

(b) Express personal opinions about political candidates and issues.

(c) Make monetary contributions to a political campaign or party (except while on duty or using government equipment).

(d) Display a political bumper sticker on a personal vehicle.

(e) Attend political events.

(f) Sign a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot.

(g) Display a political sign at one's personal residence.

(h) Participate in nonpartisan activities that are not specifically identified with a political party, such as a referendum question or a municipal ordinance on for example, tax or environmental issues.

(2) Prohibited Activities. All DoD civilian employees may not:

(a) Participate in any political activity while on duty or in a Federal building.

(b) Use the insignia of a government office or any aspect of one's official authority while participating in political activities.

(c) Solicit, accept, or receive political contributions (regardless of when or where these actions take place).

(d) Display campaign photos, posters, banners, bumper stickers, screen savers, t-shirts, buttons or other campaign materials in a federal building.

(e) Engage in political activity while using a government-owned or leased vehicle.

(f) Host a fundraiser for a partisan candidate.

(g) Run for public office in a partisan election.

(h) Display a large political sign, banner, or poster (as distinguished from a bumper sticker) on a POV while aboard MCIWEST - MCB CAMPEN installations.

c. DoD Facilities and Assets. See references (b) and (d).

(1) Command media outlets will not run campaign news, discussions, advertisements, cartoons or editorials.

(2) Military installations and facilities will not be used by candidates to engage in political activities.

(3) Government resources, to include military bands and color guards, will not be used to support off-installation political events.

5. Administration and Logistics

a. Commanders are directed to disseminate this information to all Service Members and DoD civilian employees under their cognizance. Pursuant to reference (f), Commanders are required to ensure all personnel are trained on this topic by 15 September 2024.

b. Violation of the regulations underlying this Policy may result in appropriate disciplinary or administrative action.

c. Directives issued by this Headquarters are published and distributed electronically. Electronic versions of MCIWEST-MCB CAMPEN directives can be found at: <https://usmc.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/mciwest/SitePages/G1Hub.aspx>

d. For questions or issues related to this Policy Letter, you may seek guidance from the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate or the Western Area Counsel Office.

6. Command and Signal

a. Command. This Policy Letter is applicable to all commands, organizations, units, and activities under the command of MCIWEST-MCB CAMPEN.

b. Signal. This Policy Letter is effective the date signed.



N. I. BROWN

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# Political Activity Quick Guide

## I Am...

### **An Active Duty Member of the Armed Forces**

Active Duty is full-time duty in the active military service of the United States regardless of duration or purpose. Active duty includes the following: full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance while in the active military service at a school designated as a Service school by law or by the Secretary concerned. Additionally, for purposes of DoDD 1344.10, Active Duty also includes full-time National Guard duty.

May...
Register, vote, and express a personal opinion on a political candidate and issues in a personal capacity.
Attend partisan and nonpartisan political fundraising activities in civilian clothes and in a private capacity.
Make a monetary contribution to a political party or candidate running for partisan political office.
Engage in nonpartisan political activity, including issue-oriented campaigns (i.e., tax reform, healthcare).
Assist an elderly neighbor vote by providing her with transportation to the polls on Election Day.
Sign a petition for legislative action if the signing is done in your personal capacity.
Park a personal vehicle with one partisan political bumper sticker in a government parking lot.
Write a letter to the editor, in your personal capacity, expressing your personal opinion on a candidate running for partisan political office.
Place a campaign sign in the yard of your home (not on a military installation).
Join a partisan or nonpartisan club and attend meetings in civilian clothes.
Express personal views on public issues or candidates running for partisan political office on a personal social media platform via personal accounts on social media platforms, making no reference to DoD position.
“Follow,” “friend,” or “like” a political party or candidate running for partisan office on a social media platform.

May Not...
Attend partisan and nonpartisan political fundraising activities in military uniform.
Volunteer to work on a campaign of a candidate running for partisan political office.
Engage in political activity in a federal building.
Use your official position or influence to solicit votes for a candidate running for partisan political office, from your coworkers.
Be listed as a sponsor of a partisan political group.
Speak before a partisan political gathering.
Participate in radio/TV/other program as an advocate for or against a partisan political party, candidate running for partisan political office, or cause.
March or ride in a partisan political parade.
Participate in an organized effort to provide voters with transportation to polls if associated with a partisan political party or candidate.
Work or stand at the polls for a candidate running for partisan political office or political party on Election Day.
Solicit, accept, or receive political contributions.
Use official email or government furnished equipment to engage in political activity.
“Share,” or “re-tweet” links from the account of a candidate for partisan political office on your social media account.

Please note that this Quick Guide is not comprehensive. For complete guidance, reference DoDD 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces*.  
 OUSD(P&R), Office of Legal Policy, CAO 26 Jun 24

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces**

### **Background and Policy Overview**

#### **Q1. What rules and regulations govern political activities by members of the Armed Forces?**

A1. Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 1344.10 lays out the rules and policy concerning political activities by members of the Armed Forces.

#### **Q2. What is DoD policy regarding participation in political activity by members of the Armed Forces?**

A2. It is DoD policy to encourage members of the Armed Forces to carry out the obligations of citizenship such as voting. However, active duty members are specifically prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity, and all members of the Armed Forces should always avoid actions that could reasonably be perceived as implying DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement of partisan political activity.

### **Defining Terms**

#### **Q3. Who are included in the definition of “members of the Armed Forces?”**

A3. As defined by DoDD 1344.10, members of the Armed Forces include members on active duty, members of the Reserve Components not on active duty (including members of the National Guard when in a non-Federal status), and retired members.

#### **Q4. What constitutes “partisan political activity?”**

A4. As defined by DoDD 1344.10, a partisan political activity is “activity supporting or relating to candidates representing, or issues specifically identified with, national or State political parties and associated or ancillary organizations or clubs.”

#### **Q5. What are “partisan political groups?”**

A5. “Partisan political groups” are committees, clubs, and other organizations affiliated with a political party or candidate for partisan political office. The term also includes committees and clubs organized for a partisan political purpose or engage in partisan political activity. Additionally, organizations created to influence the selection, nomination, election, and appointment of candidates to federal, state, or local public office are considered partisan political groups.

#### **Q6. What constitutes “Active Duty” for the purposes of these rules?**

A6. Active Duty is full-time duty in the active military service of the United States regardless of duration or purpose. Active duty includes the following: full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance while in the active military service at a school designated as a Service school by law or by the Secretary concerned. Additionally, for purposes of DoDD 1344.10, Active Duty also includes full-time National Guard duty.

### **Defining Participation – Partisan and Nonpartisan Political Activities**

#### **Q7. In what ways may active duty Armed Forces members participate in political activities?**

A7. Active duty military members may vote and express their personal opinions on political candidates and issues so long as they do not do so as a representative of the Armed Forces. Active duty members may also promote and encourage others to exercise their right to vote but may not use their official authority while engaging in such activity.

DoDD 1344.10 includes several additional examples of permissible participation such as joining a partisan or nonpartisan club, attending political meetings while not in uniform, signing a petition, writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, making monetary contributions to a political campaign, displaying a political bumper sticker on a personal vehicle, and attending (but not actively participating in) political fundraising activities. Please note, the examples described above may have additional nuances and requirements, so ensure you review all available written guidance. Always speak with your chain of command or a Judge Advocate to ensure you are participating properly.

#### **Q8. Regarding political activities, are there any things that active duty military members are prohibited from doing?**

A8. DoDD 1344.10 specifically lists several “must nots” for military members on active duty, as that term is defined in the directive. As a starting point, any activity that can be reasonably viewed as directly or indirectly associating the DoD with partisan political activity or which is contrary to the Directive shall be avoided. Some specific prohibitions include the following: active participation in political fundraising activities, conventions, debates, and political clubs; use of official authority or influence to interfere with an election; publishing partisan political articles, letters, or endorsements that solicit votes for or against a candidate for partisan political office, or soliciting others with respect to fundraising activities.

#### **Q9. Can I ever wear my uniform when I attend political events?**

A9. No; military members must refrain from participating in political activity while in military uniform in accordance with both DoDD 1344.10 and DoDI 1344.01. This prohibition applies to all Armed Forces members.

#### **Q10. What are the rules concerning nonpartisan political activities?**



A10. DoDD 1344.10 does not preclude participation in local nonpartisan political campaigns, initiatives, or referendums. However, members taking part in nonpartisan activities may not wear their military uniforms or use any government property or facility while participating. Members must also ensure that their participation in these events and activities does not interfere with or prejudice the member's performance of military duties. And, as always, a member should never engage in conduct that implies that the DoD has taken an official position on, or is otherwise involved in, the local political campaign or issue.

**Q11. What if I'd like to participate in a political activity but the example is not covered expressly by DoDD 1344.10?**

A11. DoDD 1344.10 also provides a "catch all" provision (para. 4.1.5), which pertains to any activities that are not specifically prohibited by the regulation. It provides: "Any activity that may be reasonably viewed as directly or indirectly associating the Department of Defense or the Department of Homeland Security (in the Case of the Coast Guard) or any component of these Departments with a partisan political activity or is otherwise contrary to the spirit and intention of this Directive shall be avoided." Consult your chain of command or a Judge Advocate if you have a question about a specific type of political activity.

**Non-Active Duty Personnel**

**Q12. As a member of the Armed Forces not on active duty, how may I participate?**

A12. Members not on active duty have fewer specific prohibitions than their active duty counterparts. While non-active duty members have fewer restrictions with respect to partisan political activity, they still cannot wear the uniform to a political event and must not otherwise act in a manner that could reasonably give rise to the inference or appearance of DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement (*See also* DoDI 1334.01, *Wearing of the Uniform*).

**Campaign Limitations**

**Q13. Are there limitations on what a member of the Armed Forces can include in their campaign material and associated content?**

A13. Yes, DoDD 1344.10, para. 4.3 and its subparagraphs, lay out additional limitations for members not on active duty who are nominees or candidates for offices described in DoDD 1344.10, para. 4.2.1. Some examples include being able to mention their military rank, grade, and service affiliation but being required to clearly indicate their retired or reserve status. Members are also required to use a prominently displayed disclaimer regarding DoD endorsement (i.e., "John Doe is a member of the Air National Guard. Use of his military rank, job titles, and photographs in uniform does not imply endorsement by the Department of the Air Force or the DoD"). Additionally, photos of the member in uniform must not be the primary graphic representation in any campaign media and the member must ensure the photograph or depiction accurately reflects their actual performance of duty. For a full and complete list of limitations, please reference DoDD 1344.10 para. 4.3 and its subparagraphs.

**Rules Governing Social Media**

**Q14. How do the rules of DoDD 1344.10 generally apply to social media?**

A14. Military members generally may express their personal opinions on public issues or candidates for public office via personal accounts on social media platforms, such as Facebook, “X” (formerly known as Twitter), or personal blogs, in the same way they could write a letter to the editor of a newspaper. If, when expressing their personal opinions, personnel are identified by a social media site as Service members, the posting must clearly and prominently state that the views expressed are the personal opinions of the individual and do not represent the views of the Department of Defense.

**Q15. Do active duty military members have additional restrictions when it comes to social media?**

A15. Yes, active duty military members are prohibited from participating in partisan political activity; therefore, they must be careful about the kind of political content that they post on their personal social media. For example, while active duty military members may “follow,” “friend,” or “like” a political party or candidate running for partisan political office, they may not post links to, “share,” or “re-tweet” comments or tweets from the Facebook page or “X” (formerly known as Twitter) account of a political party or candidate running for partisan political office. Such activity constitutes participation in partisan political activities, which is prohibited.