

Welcome to the Fourth Issue of Ethics Matters!

You are receiving this communication because you are an employee of the University of Illinois. Part of our role as the University Ethics Office is to help educate our employees on various aspects of University policy and the law. Ethics Matters is a newsletter you will be receiving periodically, dealing with various aspects of daily life at the University of Illinois, which are not necessarily covered during annual ethics training, but which are relevant to your work activities. Each issue will also contain news on upcoming events and deadlines.

This newsletter is another way the University Ethics Office will continue to provide you with helpful information, encouraging open communication. We are always open to suggestions on topics or ways to improve our offerings, so please share your feedback.

You can also find prior issues of Ethics Matters on our web site at: <http://www.ethics.uillinois.edu/ethicsmatters/index.cfm>. If you are having trouble viewing the images below, please right click and select the "Download Pictures" option.

ETHICS MATTERS

A Newsletter from the University of Illinois Ethics Office

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Ethics Office Mission: To be a partner, educator, and source of specialized guidance for the employees of the University.

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Visit our Web Site

Feedback

Prohibited Political Activity :

Upcoming elections and how this impacts you as an employee

Tuesday, November 4, 2008, is the 2008 Presidential Election. There will be many activities on campus and nationwide related to the election over the coming months. So, it is important that as an employee of the University of Illinois, you are aware of the elements of the *State Officials and Employees Ethics Act* that may impact your participation. First and foremost, the law is not intended to hinder or in any way violate your individual freedoms. In fact, the activities defined as "prohibited" per the law are only prohibited while employees are on University time or using University resources or property. If the appropriate benefit time is charged and the activities do not take place on University property, it is permissible for you, while representing yourself individually (not as a University employee), to become involved in such events.

The concept of prohibited political activity is challenging to fully define, so it is always a good idea to consult with the University Ethics Office if you are unsure (866-758-2146).

Some of the main categories of commonly occurring prohibited political activity are explained below. Remember, these are **things employees can not do while working, when on University property, while using University resources (e.g., phone, fax, paper, email, etc.), or when acting as a representative of the University**; but they are things that can take place if the appropriate benefit time is used and University property and resources are not involved:

- **Preparing for or participating in any rally or event** related to a specific

MAIN MATTERS

Prohibited political activity can be conducted when appropriate benefit time is used and employees are not acting as representatives of the University of Illinois.

The Office of Governmental Relations should be contacted when an employee has communications with a state, federal or locally elected official.

Call the University Ethics Office on the Toll-free

Ethics Help Line at 866-758-2146 with questions related to prohibited political activity.

UPCOMING MATTERS

2008 Annual Ethics Training - Online Window

The Inspector General's 2008 online program will be available from October 16th through November 14th.

Handbooks

Request copies of the fifth edition of our *Handbook for Good Ethical Practice*.


University Ethics Office
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Ethics Help Line: 866-758-2146

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Springfield, IL 62703-5407

political candidate, party, or referendum - this includes preparation and circulation of campaign materials, petitions, or literature

- **Soliciting contributions** or votes on behalf of a particular political party or candidate
- **Assisting at the polls** on behalf of any political party, candidate, or organization
- **Surveying or conducting an opinion poll** related to anticipating an election outcome, or participating in a recount challenge related to an election outcome
- **Running for political office**

The law isn't always as clear as we'd like, so here are a few specific examples to better define what is and what is not considered prohibited political activity (can't be performed on University time without appropriate benefit usage; and never on University property or using University resources):

Prohibited Political Activity	Acceptable Political Activity
Wearing a pin or t-shirt in support of the Democratic Party or Republican Party, or a Democratic/Republican candidate	Wearing a pin encouraging others to "vote" that is not specific to any particular party or candidate 
A supervisor requiring an employee to engage in political activity outside of work	An employee independently choosing to engage in political activities outside of work
Distributing, producing, or posting flyers or other campaign literature on campus during lunch or break time	Distributing, producing, or posting flyers or other campaign literature at an off-campus location during lunch or break time
Registering employees to vote in a booth that is clearly designated to one political party or candidate	Registering employees to vote while on their lunch or other designated breaks in a party-neutral booth

Specific examples of things that are expressly prohibited include:

- Placing a collection jar on your desk or even in a break room to solicit funds for a specific political candidate or party
- Attending a rally on University property specific to a political candidate or party - regardless of whether or not you are on University time

The University Ethics Office can not and does not intend to police each of the campuses for political buttons, t-shirts, bumper stickers, etc. Instead, we ask that employees educate themselves and become aware of their responsibilities to the law as it relates to employment with the University of Illinois. Knowing the various aspects of the prohibited political activities section of the *Ethics Act* will simply assist you in acting in a manner that is consistent with the law.

The Office of Governmental Relations

and political activity at the University



In order to

ensure compliance with state and federal lobbying laws, University policy requires employees' communications with state, federal and locally elected officials be reported to the Office of Governmental Relations.

As an individual employee you may, of course, communicate on political subjects on your own time and at your own expense. Clearly, it would be inappropriate for you to give the appearance that you are representing or speaking for the University if you are not specifically authorized to act in this capacity. Personal political communications are not prohibited and do not need to be reported to the Office of Governmental Relations. All questions concerning whether political activities are prohibited and/or required to be reported, as well as political gift and disclosure rules, should be directed to the Office of Governmental Relations (217-333-8634).

A scenario for consideration

Dean Green stops at a local restaurant on her way to a home game and runs into Senator Smith. The Senator asks Green what she thinks about pending legislation that would amend federal immigration law. Green tells the Senator that, in her opinion, the proposed amendments would have a negative impact on the ability of universities to admit and hire students and faculty and would harm their mission.

Who should be contacted?

Because Green's contact and communications with the Senator could imply that she is expressing opinions on pending legislation on behalf of the University, Green should report that contact and the substance of the communication to the Office of Governmental Relations. Green's conduct was not prohibited political activity because Green did not use University resources or act during compensated work hours when expressing personal political views to an elected official.