

1.24 - POLITICAL ACTIVITY, PUBLIC OFFICE, AND USE OF UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Effective: XXXXX, 2026

Purpose: Emporia State University recognizes that employees and students retain the right to participate in public affairs, express political opinions, support or oppose candidates, parties, and causes, and seek or hold public office in their personal capacities.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish rules governing political activity by University employees and students, the use of University resources and identity in connection with political activity, candidacy for public office, service in public or political party office, and related leave or conflict-of-interest issues.

This Policy is intended to complement Policy 1.07, Use of University Property for Free Expression Activities, and shall not be interpreted to restrict lawful expressive activity protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Section 3 of the Bill of Rights of the Kansas Constitution, the Kansas Intellectual Rights and Knowledge Act, Kansas Board of Regents policy, or other applicable law.

Scope: This Policy applies to all University employees and students.

This Policy does not govern the general use of University property for expressive activity, political meetings, public forums, protests, demonstrations, leafleting, invited speakers, counter-expression, or other free expression activities. Those matters are governed by Policy 1.07 and applicable facilities-use, scheduling, and event procedures.

This Policy does not prohibit employees or students from engaging in lawful political expression in their personal capacities, provided they do not misuse University resources, imply University endorsement, interfere with assigned duties, violate applicable law, or otherwise act contrary to this Policy.

Responsible Office: General University; Office of General Counsel; Human Resources

Policy Statement: Employees and students are free to participate in political activity in their personal capacities, subject to applicable law, Kansas Board of Regents policy, University policy, conflict-of-interest requirements, and work-duty obligations.

The University, as a public institution, shall not use public funds, public resources, public employee time, University property, University communication systems, University marks, or official University identity to support or oppose a candidate, political party, party committee, political committee, campaign, or partisan political activity, except as permitted by law and expressly authorized by the University.

Political expression by employees or students shall be understood as personal expression unless the individual has been expressly authorized to speak or act on behalf of the University.

No employee may directly or indirectly use official authority, supervisory authority, or official influence to compel, pressure, coerce, or attempt to influence any employee or student to participate in political activity, join an organization, support or oppose a candidate or cause, or pay or promise to pay any assessment, subscription, contribution, or other thing of value for political purposes.

The University shall not retaliate against an employee or student for engaging in lawful political activity in a personal capacity, for holding lawful political beliefs, or for declining to participate in political activity, except where the individual's conduct violates University policy, materially interferes with assigned duties, creates a conflict of interest, or is otherwise prohibited by law.

Relationship to Other Policies

Use of University property for expressive activity, including political expression, political meetings, public forums, campaign-related speakers, protests, demonstrations, leafleting, tabling, signs, invited speakers, and counter-expression, is governed by Policy 1.07.

This Policy shall not be used to restrict lawful non-commercial expressive activity in outdoor areas of campus that is protected under Policy 1.07.

To the extent a political activity involves use of University facilities, outdoor areas, reservations, amplified sound, structures, security, crowd management, or other event logistics, the activity must comply with Policy 1.07 and applicable scheduling and facilities-use procedures.

In the event of a conflict between this Policy and Policy 1.07 regarding expressive activity on University property, Policy 1.07 controls unless otherwise required by law.

Personal Political Expression

Employees and students may express political opinions, support or oppose candidates, parties, and causes, sign petitions, contribute to campaigns, attend political events, volunteer for campaigns, publish signed statements, and otherwise participate in political activity in their personal capacities.

Employees and students engaging in political activity in a personal capacity shall take reasonable steps to avoid creating the appearance that they are speaking or acting for the University.

ADD CONTENT

Employees and students may identify their University title, position, or affiliation for biographical or identification purposes when appropriate, but they may not use the University's name, marks, logos, letterhead, email signature, office, title, or other official designation in a manner that implies University endorsement, sponsorship, or approval of a candidate, political party, political committee, party committee, campaign, ballot issue, or political cause unless expressly authorized by the University President or designee.

Employees engaging in political activity must do so on personal time and may not allow such activity to interfere with assigned duties or University operations.

Use of University Resources

University resources may be used only for official University purposes and may not be used for unauthorized political activity.

Except as permitted by law and expressly authorized by the University, employees and students shall not use or authorize the use of the following for political campaign purposes or partisan political activity:

1. University funds;
2. University vehicles;
3. University equipment;
4. University supplies;
5. University offices, workspaces, or facilities outside approved use under Policy 1.07;
6. University computers, phones, printers, copiers, or other technology;
7. University email accounts, listservs, websites, social media accounts, or communication platforms;
8. University staff time or student employee time while compensated by the University;
9. University letterhead, envelopes, postage, indicia, mailing privileges, or official stationery;
10. University logos, trademarks, service marks, copyrights, mascots, or other protected marks;
11. the University's name or official identity in a manner that implies endorsement; OR
12. any other public resource prohibited from use by law

This section does not prohibit incidental personal use of University resources that is otherwise permitted by University policy, provided such use does not involve campaign advocacy, does not create additional expense to the University, does not interfere with University operations, and does not imply University endorsement.

This restriction does not prohibit the content-neutral and viewpoint-neutral use of University facilities or outdoor areas under Policy 1.07 when the University is not sponsoring, endorsing, supporting, or opposing the political activity.

Communications With Government Officials

Employees and students may communicate with elected officials, candidates, government agencies, and public bodies in their personal capacities.

Employees communicating in a personal capacity shall not use University letterhead, University email, official University titles, University logos, or other official University designations in a manner that implies the communication is made on behalf of the University, unless expressly authorized.

Only the University President, the President's designee, or other individuals expressly authorized by the University may communicate official University positions to legislators, executive branch officials, agencies, boards, commissions, or other governmental bodies. Employees testifying before the Legislature or another governmental body on behalf of an outside entity shall notify the University's designated representative prior to such testimony when required by Kansas Board of Regents policy or University procedure.

Nothing in this section prohibits an employee or student from testifying, speaking, or writing in a personal capacity, provided the individual makes clear that the views expressed are personal and not made on behalf of the University.

Candidate, Campaign, and Political Committee Activity

Employees and students may support, oppose, volunteer for, or participate in candidate campaigns, political parties, party committees, political committees, and political causes in their personal capacities, subject to applicable law and this Policy.

Employees may not engage in campaign activity during work time unless on approved leave or otherwise outside assigned duties.

Employees may not solicit campaign contributions, distribute campaign materials, organize campaign activity, or expressly advocate the nomination, election, or defeat of a clearly identified candidate while acting within the scope of University employment, using University resources, or while being compensated for University work time.

Students who are also University employees, including student employees, graduate assistants, or resident assistants, are subject to the employee restrictions in this policy while acting within the scope of University employment or while being compensated for University work time.

Political Fundraising

Employees and students may engage in lawful political fundraising in their personal capacities and away from University resources, subject to applicable law.

University facilities and grounds shall not be made available for fundraising events for any candidate, party committee, or political committee, or for filming or otherwise producing partisan political advertisements, except as required by law. Other political meetings, public forums, and expressive activities on University property are governed by Policy 1.07.

Supervisors may not solicit campaign contributions from employees under their supervision. The University shall not discipline an employee for lawfully, willingly, and voluntarily making a political contribution, and employee mailing lists may not be provided for political solicitation or campaign-mailing purposes except as required by law.

Candidacy for Public Office

The filing of a declaration of intent to become a candidate for public office shall not, by itself, affect the employment status or appointment of an employee, except as otherwise required by law.

An employee who becomes a candidate for public office must continue to properly and fully perform all assigned duties unless the employee is on approved leave or has received an approved adjustment to work responsibilities.

Vice Presidents, Deans, Athletics Directors, Executive Officers, members of the President's Cabinet, and other designated leadership employees shall disclose candidacy for public office and service in political party leadership positions to Human Resources and the Office of General Counsel within ten business days of filing for office or accepting such position.

An employee who is a candidate for public office and who fails to properly and fully perform assigned duties while not on approved leave may be subject to appropriate administrative or disciplinary action.

An employee's campaign activities shall not create a conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, misuse of University resources, disruption of University operations, or appearance that the University endorses the employee's candidacy.

Employees seeking public office are encouraged to consult with Human Resources and the Office of General Counsel regarding leave, conflict-of-interest, outside-activity, and public-resource requirements.

Holding Public or Political Party Office

Faculty, administrators, unclassified employees, University Support Staff, and other employees may accept a public office or political party position, whether appointed or elected, if the position:

1. does not create a conflict of interest with the employee's University duties;
2. does not require substantial time away from assigned duties unless approved leave is taken;
3. does not otherwise infringe upon assigned duties;
4. does not involve misuse of University resources;
5. does not imply University endorsement; AND
6. is not otherwise prohibited by law or University policy.

Employees shall disclose public office, political party office, or similar service when required by the University's conflict-of-interest, conflict-of-commitment, outside-activity, or leave policies.

The University may require additional information, impose management measures, require leave, or take other appropriate action when service in public or political party office creates an actual or apparent conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, or interference with University duties.

Leave for Public Office

Leave without salary or other benefits shall be granted to employees elected or appointed to public office that requires full-time service or lengthy sustained periods away from assigned University duties, including Congress, the Kansas Legislature, state office, county office, or other offices or appointments falling within this category.

For employees elected or appointed to Congress or the Kansas Legislature, such leave shall be effective from the date the employee takes the oath of office or from the first day of the legislative session, as applicable, and shall continue until adjournment of Congress or, for the Kansas Legislature, to a date no sooner than the last adjournment in April or sine die adjournment, whichever occurs first, of each regular or special session.

For other public offices requiring full-time service or lengthy sustained periods away from assigned duties, leave shall be effective during the time the employee serves in such office. Leave without salary or other benefits shall not be required for service by a member of the Kansas Legislature on a committee during a period when the Legislature is not in regular or special session, provided the employee declines all legislative compensation for such service. The employee may accept mileage and other expense allowances provided by statute and paid by the Legislature.

Benefits, retirement eligibility, and continuation of coverage during leave shall be governed by applicable law, Kansas Board of Regents policy, University policy, and plan documents.

Classified Service and University Support Staff

Any officer or employee in the state classified service shall resign from the classified service prior to taking the oath of office for a state elective office as required by Kansas law.

To the extent a University Support Staff employee, or any other University employee, is subject to K.S.A. 75-2953 or any successor statute, that employee must comply with the statutory resignation requirement before taking the oath of office for a state elective office.

Employees should consult Human Resources and the Office of General Counsel before taking the oath of office for any state elective office.

Student Political Activity

Students may engage in lawful political activity in their personal capacities, including supporting or opposing candidates, parties, political committees, party committees, ballot issues, and causes.

Student political expression, political meetings, invited political speakers, campaign-related expressive activity, leafleting, demonstrations, protests, and use of University property are governed by Policy 1.07.

Student organizations may engage in political expression and invite political speakers consistent with Policy 1.07, student organization rules, student fee requirements, and applicable law.

Students who are registered candidates for student governance offices may solicit support for their candidacy during the campaign period established by applicable student election rules. Nothing in this Policy prohibits individual students from engaging in lawful political expression outside that campaign period, provided they do not misuse official student election resources, violate applicable election rules, or materially disrupt University operations.

This section does not prohibit students from engaging in incidental personal political expression using generally available University-provided email, internet access, or technology resources when such use is otherwise permitted by University policy, does not use restricted University lists or official University communication channels, does not involve University funds or employee time, does not interfere with University operations, and does not imply University endorsement.

Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Commitment

Political activity, candidacy, public office, or political party office may not create an actual or apparent conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, or misuse of University position.

Employees shall comply with all applicable University and Kansas Board of Regents policies regarding outside activity, consulting, conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, disclosure, and use of University name.

If political activity, candidacy, public office, or political party office may affect an employee's ability to perform assigned duties or may create an actual or apparent conflict, the employee shall promptly disclose the matter to the appropriate supervisor, Human Resources, or other designated University office.

The University may take appropriate content-neutral and viewpoint-neutral action to manage conflicts, including requiring leave, modifying duties, restricting involvement in particular decisions, prohibiting use of University resources, or imposing other appropriate management measures.

Academic Freedom and Classroom Activity

This Policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit classroom discussion, teaching, research, scholarship, debate, or other academic activity involving political subjects, public policy, elections, government, law, social issues, or matters of public concern.

Faculty and instructors retain responsibility for maintaining appropriate academic standards, pedagogical relevance, and classroom order consistent with applicable law, academic freedom principles, and University policy.

Employees may not use instructional authority to require students to support or oppose a candidate, political party, political committee, party committee, campaign, or political cause unrelated to legitimate course objectives.

Enforcement

Suspected violations of this Policy may be reported to Human Resources, the Office of General Counsel, Compliance and Ethics, Internal Audit, or through the University's reporting hotline. Reports shall be reviewed and investigated in accordance with applicable University procedures.

Violations of this policy may result in corrective action, disciplinary action, repayment of costs, loss of access to University resources, referral to appropriate University offices, or referral to appropriate governmental authorities, as permitted by law and University policy. Discipline or corrective action under this Policy shall not be based on the viewpoint expressed by an employee or student.

The University shall apply this Policy in a manner consistent with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Section 3 of the Bill of Rights of the Kansas Constitution, the Kansas Intellectual Rights and Knowledge Act, Kansas Board of Regents policy, and other applicable law.

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Definitions: All words and phrases shall be interpreted utilizing their plain meanings unless otherwise defined in University or Board of Regents policy or by statute or regulation.

Candidate – An individual who has taken action to seek nomination or election to public office under applicable law, including appointing a treasurer or candidate committee, publicly announcing an intent to seek office, accepting contributions or making expenditures for nomination or election, or filing a declaration or petition to become a candidate.

Employee – Any person employed by the University, including faculty, administrators, unclassified professional staff, University Support Staff, temporary employees, student employees, graduate assistants, resident assistants when acting within the scope of employment, and any other person compensated by the University for services.

Official University Purpose – An activity, communication, expenditure, or use of resources authorized by the University and undertaken to advance the University’s lawful mission, operations, programs, or responsibilities.

Political Activity – Activity in support of or opposition to a candidate, political party, party committee, political committee, campaign, ballot issue, or political cause. Political activity includes, but is not limited to, campaign advocacy, political fundraising, campaign volunteering, distribution of campaign materials, public endorsements, political meetings, and political communications.

Public Office – An elected or appointed federal, state, county, municipal, school district, or other governmental office.

University Resources – University funds, vehicles, equipment, supplies, facilities, offices, workspaces, technology, communication systems, email accounts, listservs, websites, social media accounts, employee time, student employee time while compensated by the University, letterhead, postage, logos, marks, names, and other property or resources owned, leased, controlled, or paid for by the University.

University Support Staff – Employees designated as University Support Staff under applicable University and Kansas Board of Regents policy.

Procedures: Procedures related to this policy may address reporting, disclosure, leave requests, conflict review, official University advocacy, student election activity, use of University resources, and approval to use University name or marks.

All procedures linked and related to the policies above shall have the full force and effect of policy if said procedures have first been properly approved by the appropriate University administrator.

[[Hyperlink to General University procedures](#)]

Related Policy Information: K.S.A. 25-4143; K.S.A. 75-2953; K.S.A. 25-4169a, K.S.A. 60-5311 through 60-5313; Kansas Board of Regents Policy Manual, Chapter II, Section C.13, Political Activity; Kansas Board of Regents Policy Manual, Chapter II, Section F.16, Use of Campus Grounds and Facilities

History: Adopted: 03/16/1964 [Approved by BOR and included in UPM as Policy 3V.01]
Adopted: 12/19/1966 [Approved by BOR and included in UPM as Policies 3V.02 and 3V.0201]
Revised: 05/19/1972 [Policies 3V.02 and 3V.0201 amended by BOR]
Revised: 01/21/1977 [Policy 3V.01 revised]
Revised: 10/17/1980 [Policy 3V.01 revised]
Revised: 02/15/1985 [Policies 3V.02 and 3V.0201 amended by BOR]
Adopted: 03/19/2012 [passed by Facilities Council, approved by President, and included in UPM as Policy 3V.03]
Revised: 08/15/2024 [UPM Policies 3V (Including 3V through 3V.04) combined as part of UPM Revision]
Revised: XX/XX/2026 [Policy 1.24 – Political Activity revised for clarity and congruence with other policies]