



FAQs about School Board Elections

School board elections are coming up, and there are many common questions about what schools and employees should or should not do regarding providing information and supporting or opposing candidates. Here are answers to some of those questions:

District / College Administration

What does the district or college need to do to prepare for school board elections? What information do we need to provide to potential candidates?

Districts should direct interested individuals to the county elections office for more information about where and how to file. Districts should consider preparing candidate packets that provide information to prospective candidates including campaign finance rules, information about duties and responsibilities, district policies regarding board operations, meeting schedules and time commitment expectations, and contact information for district officials.

What are the legal restrictions for employees regarding election activities?

The fundamental rule is that while on the job during working hours, public employees cannot promote or oppose any political committee, candidate nomination or election, initiative signature gathering, ballot measure, or recall of a public office holder. These restrictions only apply when employees are "on the job during working hours." The law explicitly protects public employees' right to express personal political views on their own time.

For salaried employees like administrators, determining what constitutes "on the job during working hours" can be more complex than for hourly workers. An administrator or other salaried employee should clearly document when they are acting in their personal capacity and announce to audiences when they are speaking as private citizens rather than school district representatives.

May a candidate use district or college facilities for election-related events?

Yes. If the district chooses to make its facilities available for election-related events, you must provide the same opportunity to use the facility to all candidates in the school board election. If one candidate or group supporting a candidate request to use your facilities for political purposes, then the district must allow the same access to all candidates. All candidates must be subject to the same facility rental process and must be charged the same rental fee, if applicable.

Can candidates distribute campaign materials at school events or on school grounds?

Yes, candidates can campaign and distribute campaign materials at school events or on school grounds. However, district or college employees may not assist the candidate in distributing campaign materials. Additionally, if any candidate is allowed to distribute materials, all candidates must be granted equal access under the same conditions.

Can the district or college allow the public to comment in support or opposition of a school board candidate on its official social media pages?

Yes. If the district or college allows public comments on its social media posts, then it must ensure that comments that support or oppose a candidate or any other political issues are treated equally. You should not delete comments from social media posts based on the viewpoint of the poster.

District/College Employees

Can I discuss school board elections with students, colleagues, or the public while at work?

Yes, but only to a certain extent. While on the job you must remain strictly neutral about school board elections. This means that you can share factual and impartial information about the election process – such as when the election will be held, how to register to vote, or where to find candidate information – but you cannot promote or oppose any candidates. Additionally, you may open and read emails that contain political advocacy, but you may not send or forward such emails during work hours. Finally, district employees may wear clothing or political paraphernalia while at work so long as it does not violate district policy.

Am I allowed to publicly support or oppose a school board candidate? What about if my social media profile identifies me as a district employee?

Yes, you can publicly support or oppose school board candidates. However, there are two restrictions: (1) you cannot promote or oppose the election of a school board candidate when you are on the job during working hours and (2) you should make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the school when you express support or oppose a candidate. You can only publicly support or oppose candidates in your personal time, when you are not acting in your official capacity as a school district employee.

You also should not post material to an official school social media account that contains political advocacy. This includes “re-posting” or sharing a post or news article that contains political advocacy. All material shared on an official school social media account must be impartial, even if the link, article, or other materials were not created by the school. Additionally, you cannot pursue political advocacy on a social media page when you speak on behalf of the school, or if you are exercising your authority in your job role in those posts. The best practice is to avoid making posts on the same page that include details of both your employment role and your personal life.

Additional Resources

[OSBA's Running for a Board Webpage](#)

ORS Chapter 255 [Special District Elections](#); Chapter 332: [Local Administration of Education](#) (332.118-138 regarding school district elections; Chapter 334 [Education Service Districts](#) (334.025-100 regarding ESD boards); Chapter 341 [Community College Districts](#) (341.326-379 regarding board elections)

[Secretary of State's Restrictions on Political Campaigning by Public Employees](#)

[Oregon Government Ethics Law: A Guide for Public Officials](#)

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